



Activity Report

of the

Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher
Education

2014

THE ROMANIAN AGENCY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Full Member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education - ENQA

Registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education - EQAR

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARACIS	Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
BFUG	Bologna Follow-up Group
CEENQA	Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
CNATDCU	National Council for Attestation of Academic Titles, Diplomas And Certificates
CPE	Permanent Ethics Commission
ENAE	European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
FEN	External Non-refundable Funds
GD	Government Decision
LEN	National Education Law
MEN	Ministry of National Education
OUG	Government Emergency Ordinance
QAN	Quality Audit Network
NRE	National Register of Evaluators
ROF	Regulations for Organization and Functioning
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
UEFISCDI	Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation
WISE	World Innovation Summit for Education

FOREWORD

This report was drawn up for the period 17.01.2014 – 31.12.2014 and corresponds to the first year of mandate of the renewed membership of the ARACIS Council, which started its activity in January 2014. In the first part of 2014 the ARACIS management team and the president went through an interim period (17.01.2014 – 19.05.2015), which ended with the competition for the completion of ARACIS Council.

The report was drawn up based on the documentation resulted from the activity of all decision-making structures, coordination, execution and control structures operating in ARACIS. It was presented and analysed in the Executive Bureau of ARACIS and was approved by ARACIS Council. In its final form, the Report is published on the website of the agency.

PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

This report highlights the activity carried out by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in 2014, year marked by the changing of management team of the Agency, which generated a new start.

During the period March-April 2013, the ARACIS Council organized the competition for filling one third of the vacancies following the end of mandate by a part of the members. Thus, according to the provisions of legislation on the organization of activity of ARACIS, the ARACIS Council was completed and partially renewed and continued its activity until December 2013, when the other two thirds of members ended their second mandate of activity, according to the legal provisions. Thus, starting in January 2014, ARACIS Council organized the election of the interim president and delegated to a new management team the task to prepare and organize the competition for the completion of the Council and run all the current activities.

The activity of ARACIS Council in 2014, performed in the first part of the year by a lower number of members, was very challenging, due to the complexity of the current activity. In addition, running the two EU funded very important projects, for both the agency and quality assurance in higher education in Romania, initiated previously by ARACIS, was made difficult by legislative change and constraints in the starting and carrying out of those projects. In addition to the time to perform current evaluation activities, which represent the object of ARACIS mission, the ARACIS management team of the projects and the other staff involved dedicated to the two projects much extra-work time. The activity in the two projects started effectively in the second semester of 2014, to be completed in 2015.

At the same time, ARACIS answered all requests of universities and members of university communities (teaching staff and students or graduates), applied a new procedure and reopened the platform for recruitment of new evaluators in the National Register of Evaluators (NRE), revised and amended the Regulations for Organization and Functioning of ARACIS and organized the competition for filling vacancies in the technical area, communicated with the Ministry of National Education and responded to all the requests submitted by state institutions or from the public, strengthened the relationships with various international bodies, among which, of higher importance, those with ENQA, EQAR, CEENQA, ENAEE and not only. At international level, ARACIS was involved as partner in the IMPALA project development, implemented by the German Agency for Quality Assurance (EVALAG) from Baden-Württemberg land.

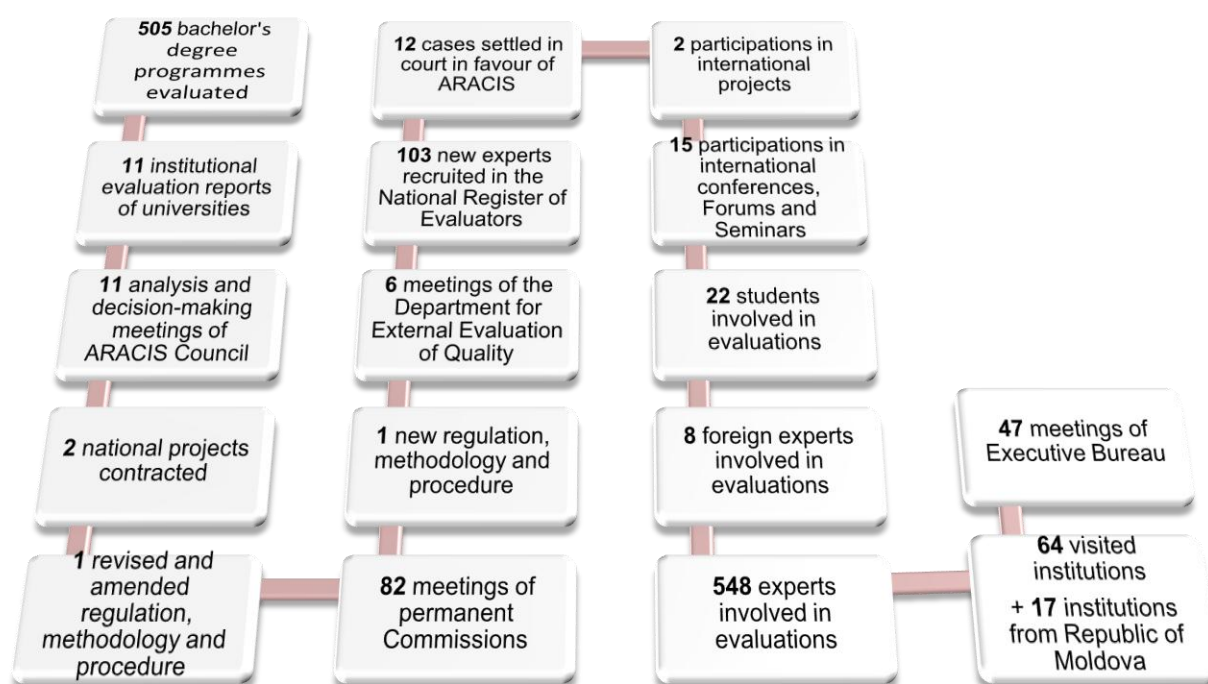
For accomplishing the two projects, the work teams included representatives of the permanent technical staff of ARACIS, representatives of ARACIS Council and evaluators from NRE, where each member of the teams had precise tasks related to the accomplishment of project objectives in which he/she activated. The year 2014 was very rich in various and complex activities and their execution and in fact, the fulfilment of ARACIS objectives for this year was possible thanks to the involvement of all those who activate in the Agency.

I take this occasion to express my sincere thanks to all those who worked in the Agency, but also to our collaborators outside of it, who, as a team, understood the importance of the activity of ARACIS and of quality assurance in higher education in Romania and firmly and convincingly worked for the accomplishment of objectives undertaken by the agency.

**ARACIS President,
Prof. Eng. Iordan Petrescu, Ph.D.**

ACTIVITY REPORT OF ARACIS FOR THE YEAR 2014

Synthesis of activities carried out by ARACIS in the year 2014



1. GENERAL ASPECTS

1.1 Legal framework of functioning, organizational structure and resources of ARACIS

1.1.1 *Legal framework of functioning*

Romania, as a signatory state of Declaration of Bologna (1999), became part of European Higher Education Area (EHEA), vast process of reorganization of higher education in signatory states. Quality assurance of education represents a main objective of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

In Romania, in order to evaluate the quality assurance of education, the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) was founded, which works based on the provisions of national laws in force and the External evaluation methodology, standards, reference standards and list of performance indicators of ARACIS, approved by Government Decision (GD) no. 1418/2006.

The activity of ARACIS is regulated by the following normative acts:

- National Education Law no. 1/ 2011, as subsequently amended and supplemented;
- Government Emergency Ordinance (OUG) no. 75/2005 for quality assurance of education, as subsequently amended and supplemented;
- **Government Decision no. 1731/2006** on tariffs/fees for the conduct of reviews, approving the higher education institutions' study programmes authorization and accreditation fees, and the fees for external evaluation of quality in education of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

For organizing and rendering efficient its activity, ARACIS has drawn up its own Regulations for Organization and Functioning (ROF), which is approved by the Council.

In the European Higher Education Area, ARACIS is member with full rights in the *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ENQA* and is regularly subject to the international external evaluation procedures set out for maintenance of this status.

ARACIS is registered in the *European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education – EQAR* and is regularly subject to the international external evaluation procedures set out for maintenance of this status.

ARACIS can be member also in other organizations or international networks of agencies for quality assurance in higher education.

1.1.2 *Mission and goal of ARACIS*

The mission of ARACIS is to perform the external evaluation of quality of education offered by the higher education institutions and applies to all the organizations providers of education operating on the territory of Romania and to the Romanian education providers which legally operate on the territory of other states, according to the legal regulations in

force in Romania, and as applicable, on the territory of the state where they operate, with the purpose:

- a) To attest the capacity of organizations providers of education to reach quality standards and thus, to satisfy the expectations of beneficiaries;
- b) To contribute to the development of an institutional culture of quality in higher education;
- c) To assure the protection of direct and indirect beneficiaries of study programmes by production and dissemination of coherent and reliable, public and accessible software information about the quality of education offered by the higher education institutions;
- d) To propose the line ministry (Ministry of National Education) strategies and policies for the purpose of continuous improvement of the quality of higher education, in close correlation with the secondary education, with the requests of employers and with the European and international practices;
- e) To contribute to promotion of quality higher education in Romania at international level;
- f) To assure a better correlation between the competences required on labour market and the education offer oriented to the learning outcomes for enhancing the degree of occupation of jobs for the new graduates both on national and European level.

The main objective of activity of ARACIS represents the assurance of quality higher education and professional training for the development of a competitive human capital.

1.1.3 Organizational structure of ARACIS

ARACIS is a public autonomous and independent institution, of national interest, with legal personality and with own income and expenses budget. ARACIS is fully funded by own incomes.

At the beginning of the year 2014, the Regulations for Organization and Functioning (ROF) of ARACIS, and the Organization Chart were revised, amended and supplemented. In the new form, they were approved by ARACIS Council on 29.05.2014.

The organizational structure ([*Annex1 – Organization Chart*](#)) of ARACIS includes:

- The Council;
- The Executive Bureau of the Council;
- The Department for External Evaluation of Quality;
- The Department for Accreditation;
- The Permanent Specialty Commissions of Experts;
- The Advisory Commission;
- The Ethics Commission;
- The Technical Department which is structured in 4 (four) specialized divisions:
 - The Quality Assurance Division;
 - The Economic Division;
 - The Organization, Human Resources and Public Procurement Division;
 - The Division for International Relations, Projects and Cooperation;
- And two departments subordinated to the President of ARACIS:

- The Internal Public Audit Department;
- The Legal Department.

ARACIS Council (or *Council*) is composed of 21 members selected by public competition according to own procedure of ARACIS, which include criteria regarding professional and scientific competence, professional prestige etc., among whom: **17** professors and/or associate professors, who have full-time appointments (permanent tenure) or who continue their teaching activity with the approval of University Senate; **two** students, representatives of student federations at national level; **one** representative of trade union in education and **one** representative of employers. Any person who fulfils the moral and professional criteria of selection established by procedure and publicly announced can enrol in the competition, regardless of ethnic origin, gender, religion or other criteria which could be discriminatory. The members of ARACIS Council cannot hold public dignity positions or university rector position ([Annex 2 – Members of Council](#)). The Members of the Council sign with the Agency a contract for four (4) years (students are appointed annually).

The Council is the collective management structure of ARACIS, which ensures the programmatic orientation of the Agency. The members meet every month in ordinary as well as in extraordinary meetings, whenever it is necessary, when convened by the president, or of the vice-president, in the absence of the president.

The Council fulfils a series of assignments as they were presented in ROF.

The Executive Bureau of ARACIS Council is the operational management structure of ARACIS, composed of president, vice-president, general secretary of ARACIS Council, director of the Department for External Evaluation of Quality and director of the Department for Accreditation. It meets in ordinary meeting every week as well as in extraordinary meeting whenever it is necessary, when convened by the president or vice-president. In the regular meetings of the Executive Office takes part a representative of students from ARACIS Council.

The Department for External Evaluation of Quality and the **Department for Accreditation** are composed of experts in quality assurance, members of the ARACIS Council, and are coordinated by the directors of each department. The two departments are regularly meeting for analysis and debates regarding the evaluation of study programmes and institutional evaluation. Following the debates the two departments draw up their own reports and forward to the ARACIS Council informed proposals regarding the degree of fulfilment of standards and quality indicators for the study programmes and higher education institutions evaluated.

The Technical Department of ARACIS is an executive structure with 54 positions. In 2014 there were 34 filled-in positions with active personnel.

The Advisory and Audit Commission of ARACIS activity is composed of personalities of academic world and is designed to check and support the decisions of the Agency ([Annex 3 – Advisory Commission](#)).

The Permanent Ethics Commission (CPE) of ARACIS is composed of three persons, of whom one *president* and *two members*. The records of documents, correspondence are assured by a Commission secretariat, which draws up the minutes of the meetings. The mandate of CPE is for 4 years. The Permanent Ethics Commission ensures the observance of *Code of ethics and norms of conduct*.

The Permanent Specialty Commissions of Experts. ARACIS Council set up, based on GD no. 1418/2006, to operate a number of *14 commissions of speciality permanent experts*. They are subordinated to ARACIS Council. The Commissions of Permanent Experts carry out their activity based on the *Regulations approved by ARACIS Council* and are assisted in their activity by a body of evaluators of ARACIS, who are included in the ***National Register of Evaluators*** (NRE). It is composed of professors and associate professors from Romania and abroad, with recognized professional activity and moral integrity, competence and experience in assurance of quality of education at national and international level. In order to become evaluators in the National Register of Evaluators of ARACIS, the applicants go through a transparent selection process which is regulated by a public procedure, approved by ARACIS Council.

1.1.4 Financial activity of ARACIS

The incomes of ARACIS come from own sources, according to the legislation in force, respectively from taxes charged for authorization of temporary functioning and/or for accreditation of study programmes and for regular evaluation, from financial incomes, respectively interests and from External Non-refundable Funds (FEN).

In the year 2014, ARACIS Council approved an income budget (*Figure 1*) in amount of 27.285.625 lei and an expenses budget of 27.285.625 lei, of which for projects funded by external non-refundable funds (FEN) 17.310 lei. On 31 December 2014, ARACIS recorded incomes in amount of 17.310.783 lei, of which 114.283 lei from FEN, while the expenses were in amount of 9.242.741 lei, of which 1.819.861 lei for projects with financing by FEN (*Figure 2*).

Figure 1 – Income and expenses budget of ARACIS for 2014

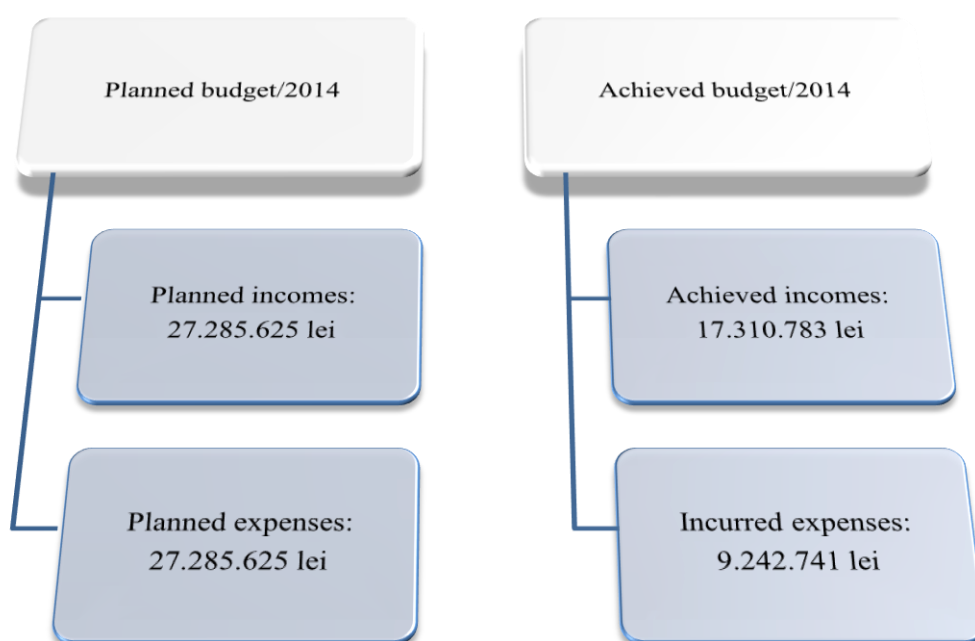
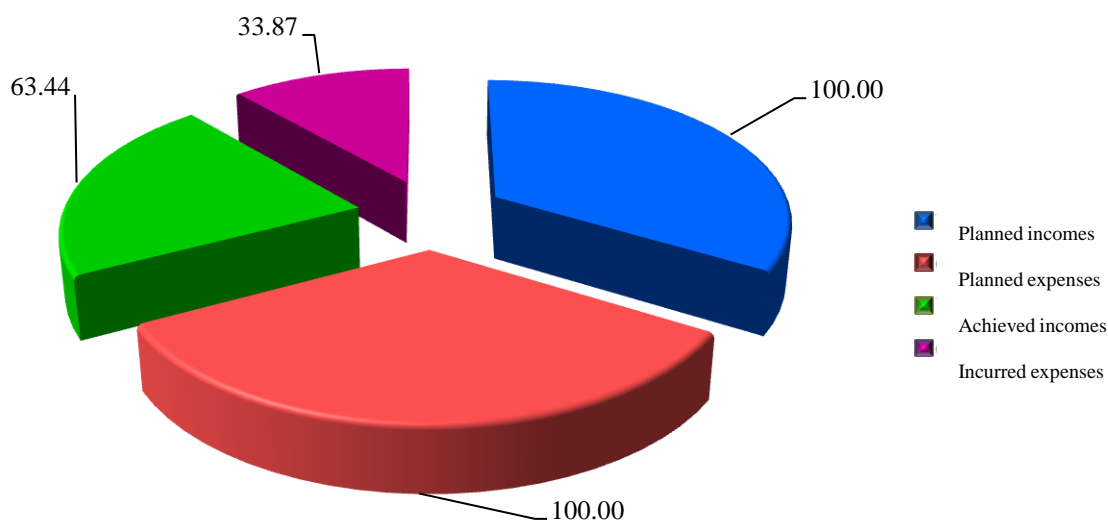


Figure 2 - Income and expenses budget of ARACIS for 2014 (%)



The non-realization of planned income budget and planned expenses budget was due to projects with non-refundable financing, respectively the conclusion with delay of six months of contracts. Under these conditions, the realization plans were delayed for the following year and the start of carrying out of activities took place by the end of the year 2014, as it was not enough time necessary to carry out the specific procedures of each type of activity.

The economic-financial activity of ARACIS, for the fiscal year **1 January – 31 December 2014** will be checked by the Court of Accounts of Romania in the year 2015. The outcomes of this check will be included in the Activity Report of ARACIS for the year 2015.

1.1.5 Legal activity of ARACIS

In the year 2014, there were filed complaints in court (**12** files) against the conclusions of certain evaluation reports made by external evaluation commissions of ARACIS. For all the cases the defences were filed de facto and de jure by drawing up statements of defence and enclosing supporting documents. All the cases pending before the courts of law were won by the Agency.

In the year 2014, there were signed a number of 919 Civil Contracts of collaboration with expert evaluators. For the year 2014 a number of 22 decisions of Executive Bureau were drawn up and 70 Decisions of ARACIS Council were made. All the documents which make the object of Agency's activity are recorded and archived according to the legal provisions in force.

The following activities were also carried out:

- Documents from the Public Procurement Department and from the Human Resources Department were approved from legality point of view;

- The answers to the letters received from legal persons (institutions, universities and ministries) and the answers to the letters received from natural persons by email or post were approved from their legal nature point of view;
- Legal opinions were drawn up at request of Executive Bureau of ARACIS, for certain letters and notices;
- All the drafts of Services Agreement which ARACIS uses in the evaluation activity and signs with the higher education institutions and the drafts of Civil Collaboration Contracts which are signed by ARACIS with the expert evaluators from the country and abroad were drawn up and updated;
- All the legislative novelties which are connected with the activity of ARACIS, departments (according to their object of activity) and members of Executive Bureau of ARACIS Council were transmitted in due course.

1.2 Internal Quality Assurance

As ENQA Full Member, the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education of Romania understands its rights and obligations undertaken according to its status. In this respect, ARACIS is constantly preoccupied with internal quality assurance and fulfilment of European Standards regarding the quality assurance of related activities.

Thus, ARACIS is self-evaluated every year and is regularly evaluated externally by the teams of international experts in coordination of ENQA. The next external evaluation of ARACIS will be completed in 2018.

As we presented in the first chapter of this report, ARACIS is an independent and autonomous organization and has clearly defined its mission, goal and objectives and they are found in the public documents of the Agency. By its current activities, in the year 2014, ARACIS has fulfilled the objectives scheduled for the realization of its mission. In the activity carried out, such as provisional authorization to function/accreditation and/or periodic evaluation of study programmes/ and/or institutional evaluation etc., ARACIS acted based on own Methodology and own procedures, which are public and known by all the parties involved in quality assurance of higher education. The activity of ARACIS and its outcomes are recognized by the interested parties (MEN, higher education institutions, employers, public etc.).

For the realization of quality assessment activities, ARACIS collaborates with experts who come from all the universities from the country, included in the National Register of Evaluators (NRE) and who went through a transparent selection procedure, for registration in NRE, procedure which includes criteria regarding personal expertise, integrity and professional ethics. The participation in selection for registration in NRE is a personal commitment of each candidate expert. ARACIS uses for this purpose an electronic platform which allows for the participation of the candidate expert in a two-stage *online* evaluation. Thus, the quality of experts is a permanent and constant preoccupation of ARACIS.

In 2014, a number of **103 new experts** were included in NRE being admitted after they went through the specific procedure. The detailed situation by specialty commissions is presented in *Table 1*.

Table 1. Number of evaluators admitted in NRE upon specialty commissions

Commission	Number of evaluators admitted in the year 2014
C1 – Exact sciences and natural sciences	3
C2 – Humanities and theology	9
C3 – Legal sciences	6
C4 – Social, political and communication sciences	6
C5 – Administrative sciences, education and psychology	6
C6 – Economic sciences I	15
C7 – Economic sciences II	16
C8 – Arts, Architecture, Urban Planning, Physical Education and Sport	11
C9 – Agricultural sciences, forestry and veterinarian medicine	5
C10 – Engineering sciences I	7
C11 – Engineering sciences II	12
C12 – Medical sciences	3
C13 – Distance learning and part-time education	4
Total evaluators admitted in the year 2014	103

In evaluation of institutional quality, the Agency collaborates with foreign experts. In the year 2014, a number of **8 foreign (international) experts** participated in institutional evaluations made by ARACIS. Also, ARACIS involves students in the quality assessment activities and the selection of students is made by the student organizations and by their representatives. In the year 2014, 22 students participated in institutional evaluation commissions, who attended training programmes and were evaluated.

The quality assessment activities made by ARACIS experts are completed with detailed reports and synthetic reports, public documents, which can be read and/or downloaded from the website of the Agency. For the evaluation of study programmes, the visit commissions draw up the “Visit Sheet”, together with a series of annexes, representing documents in which the observations of expert evaluators are written down on the occasion of visits. The reports (are drawn up, apart from the visit sheets, on the occasion of institutional evaluations) are related to what the commissions of expert evaluators found in the institutions, depending on the type of evaluation, about the correspondence between what the institutions claim to fulfil from the point of view of standards and quality indicators and what turns out to be relevant and confirm the internal quality assurance performance, according to ARACIS

Methodology. Those reports make the object of analyses and decisions regarding the authorization/ accreditation and quality judgments given. Also, the reports represent documents which serve to the settlement of complaints or disputes.

1.3 Internal audit of ARACIS

Being an organization of public interest, autonomous and independent, ARACIS takes public responsibility and liability. For this, in its organizational structure, according to the law, it has an internal audit Department which applies specific procedures for regular evaluation of ARACIS activities at the level of each structure and makes recommendations for possible remedies. As for external audit, at economic financial level, ARACIS is evaluated by the Court of Accounts of Romania, which draws up and presents a report which includes observations and recommendations.

During the year 2014, depending on the needs identified, the following audit missions were organized:

- Audit mission regarding the drawing up and circulation of primary technical operational and accounting documents;
- Counselling mission for elaboration of procedure regarding the carrying out of direct public procurement activity at ARACIS level;
- Audit mission regarding the performance of regular inventory, settlement and valorisation of differences.

In its steps regarding internal quality assurance, ARACIS is preoccupied to meet the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). According to ESG, the Agency must be periodically evaluated by an international panel coordinated by ENQA (“ENQA coordinated review”) and draws up a Progress Report between two regular evaluations.

ARACIS was evaluated by ENQA in the year 2013 and received the confirmation of status as -“full-member” Agency for five years, since 28 October 2013, decision confirmed by the General Meeting of ENQA from Dublin, Ireland, according to the letter received from ENQA, dated 28 November 2013. In the same letter, a “Progress Report” was required, which presents the way in which the recommendations included in the Report of the panel coordinated by ENQA were applied, the panel who made in 2013 the external evaluation of ARACIS. The Progress Report is scheduled due by October 2015.

In 2013, a plan of measures was drawn up regarding the recommendations made by ENQA experts, approved by the Executive Bureau of ARACIS and by the Council, which permanently followed up the stage of their realization for drawing up the Progress Report in 2015.

The external evaluation report of ARACIS, made in 2013 under the coordination of ENQA, was sent to EQAR on 29 November 2013, as basis for the renewal of registration of Agency in the Register.

By the letter of 26 May 2014, the registration of ARACIS was confirmed for five years by decision of “The Register Committee” of 22 May 2014, until **30 September 2018** (5 years from the date of submission by ARACIS of the External Evaluation Report made by

ENQA). In the letter of EQAR, it is mentioned that ARACIS has to present a report on “substantive changes” of its Methodology regarding the external evaluation of Master’s Study Domains, when this change becomes operational and begins to be applied. Also, in the letter of EQAR, it is explicitly requested that ARACIS should include the students in evaluation teams of all study programmes, by considering this requirement in the category “*Flagged*”, which means that a special attention must be paid to it and must be observed for the next external evaluation and for the request for renewal of the status of agency registered in EQAR. This request must be based on an external evaluation by a panel coordinated by ENQA. In the documents received from EQAR, it is recommended that ***ARACIS should request the external evaluation by ENQA at least 10 months before 30 September 2018.***

1.4 Synthesis of specific activities carried out

In this chapter, we present the activities carried out and how the organizational structures of ARACIS have cooperated internally and with the interested parties (i.e. universities).



During the year 2014, ARACIS Council met **11** times for analyzing the activity of the Agency and of making the specific decisions.

Also, in 2014, ARACIS received 450 official letters, respectively requests from natural persons and 30 legal documents related to disputes. ***The Executive Bureau of the Council met in ordinary meetings 47 times.*** On these occasions they analyzed the requests received and formulated resolutions which they transmitted directly to petitioners or subjected them to analysis and approval by ARACIS Council.

In all the cases, regardless of the form of transmission of requests (letters, e-mail, phone calls etc.), the replies met the legal deadline and were drafted within the limits of ARACIS competences.

In 2014, some complaints were submitted by a few higher education institutions evaluated (public and private universities) which were aimed at certain outcomes of evaluations. For analysis and settlement of complaints, as applicable, the specific procedure of ARACIS was applied.

Also, during the year 2014, the Executive Bureau of ARACIS met with the rectors of higher education institutions, presidents of associations or foundations, university teaching staff, journalists, students etc. and replied in writing to the requests of higher education institutions from Romania.

In 2014 ARACIS carried out public procurement procedures, to provide the agency with goods and services aiming to perform its scheduled activities (e.g. call for tender for price of airline transport services, reports for other public acquisitions, documents drawn up in

the Financial Accounting Department, documents elaborated in the projects implemented by ARACIS etc.).

The whole activity carried out by ARACIS in the year 2014 represented actually the collaboration between all the structures interested in quality assurance in higher education in Romania. ARACIS was an active partner for Romanian universities, consistently and constructively supporting by the activities and projects carried out, their efforts in the quality assurance and improvement process.

Also, ARACIS continued the cooperation with ARACIP, by presentation of common proposals of projects and by participation in a series of public events and meetings with impact on the educational system of Romania.

2. EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

2.1 External evaluation of quality

2.1.1 *Basic principles of external evaluation*

The external evaluation of academic quality is carried out in the following cases:

- a. For the provisional authorization: provisional authorization of a study programme to operate; institutional provisional authorization for a higher education institution is granted by the MEN on the basis of a minimum number of study programmes with provisional authorization to operate, according to the law;
- b. For the accreditation of a study programme (programme accreditation) or of a higher education institution (institutional accreditation);
- c. For periodic evaluation, at intervals of five years, of academic quality of education and research activities from an accredited higher education institution and/or study programmes.

Accreditation is the quality assurance procedure by which the observance of standards for the functioning of the organization provider of higher education and study programmes is certified and granted, following an external evaluation.

The provisional authorization to operate (to function) of study programmes and/or institutional authorization represents the first stage of accreditation process and is materialized with the result of external evaluation by ARACIS based on the self-evaluation report proposed by the requesting institution. The provisional authorisation to operate (function) is the act which confers the higher education institution or the organization provider of education the right to carry out the educational process and to organize, as applicable, the admission to study programmes. The provisional authorisation to operate (function) of a study programme is granted, based on the favourable permit of ARACIS (or another agency registered in EQAR), by Government Decision, initiated by the Ministry of National Education (i.e. MEN).

Accreditation is proposed and is granted based on the results of the external evaluation process carried out by ARACIS (or another agency registered in EQAR), as recognition of the

academic quality of a higher education institution or an organization provider of education which was authorized to work temporarily and which fulfils the minimum requirements of standards and performance indicators regarding the quality of education.

The accreditation of a study programme is awarded by Government Decision initiated by the Ministry of National Education, based on the approval of ARACIS (or of another agency registered in EQAR). The accreditation of a higher education institution, regardless of name: university, study academy, institute, school or organization provider of education, is made by Law, promoted by Government, at the initiative of the line ministry (MEN), based on the approval of ARACIS (or another agency registered in EQAR).

Thus, the accreditation involves going through two successive stages:

- a. The provisional authorization to operate, which gives the right to carry out the educational process and to organize, as applicable, the admission to studies;
- b. Accreditation, which grants along with the rights set out by let. a), the right to issue diplomas, certificates and other study documents recognized by MEN and to organize, as applicable, the graduation examination for first cycle (bachelor's), second cycle (master's) and third cycle, (doctoral/ Ph.D.) degrees.

The periodic external evaluation of academic quality of accredited higher education institutions is carried out for regular certification, at intervals of five years, of academic quality of educational and research services as part of the educational process run by an accredited higher education institution.

It includes the following essential components as follows:

A. ***External evaluation at institutional level***, for:

- 1) Evaluation of managerial activity and institutional structures;
- 2) Evaluation of financial activity;
- 3) Evaluation of internal quality assurance procedures;
- 4) Evaluation of quality condition at institutional level resulted from the analysis and correlation of all the information available, corresponding to ARACIS Methodology.

B. ***External evaluation of quality of study programmes***, by checking the fulfilment of requirements based on which the provisional authorization to operate and/or accreditation of programmes and institutional accreditation were granted.

C. ***External evaluation of master's study domains***

For this type of evaluation the methodology is under elaboration. In 2014 the Specific Procedure for Regular External Evaluation of Accredited Master's Study Domains was approved.

2.1.2 Evaluations carried out by ARACIS

In the year 2014, ARACIS recorded a number of **505 requests for evaluation of study programmes** for provisional authorisation to operate, respectively accreditation and regular evaluation and **11 requests, respectively institutional evaluation reports**, which were acted upon by conclusion of contracts and by realization of evaluations. The outcomes of evaluation

of study programmes were analysed, based on visit sheets and enclosed documents, in the permanent commissions which during the year 2014, had 82 meetings. The outcomes of institutional evaluations were analysed, based on the reports and enclosed documents, in the Department for External Evaluation of Quality which proposed the judgment and transmitted to the ARACIS Council its proposals for making the decision.

Following all the evaluations made and decisions taken by ARACIS Council, reports were drawn up on the approval of ARACIS regarding the condition of study programmes and higher education institutions with regard to quality assurance, which were transmitted to MEN for the formulation of own policies and making own decisions regarding the functioning of higher education and establishment of schooling numbers.

In *Tables 2, 3* and *4*, we present the situation of study programmes from the universities of Romania, evaluated by ARACIS in the year 2014. Most of evaluation activities targeted accredited study programmes, regularly evaluated for maintaining the accreditation. Only 17% of total study programmes were new study programmes proposed for provisional authorisation to operate. Among them, 12% did not obtain the judgment which allows them to function. With reference to the study programmes regularly evaluated, most of them (99.99%) obtained the maintenance of accreditation and from those subject to accreditation, 99.97% were accredited.

Table 2. Study programmes (SP) evaluated in the year 2014 depending on the type of evaluation (AP/A/EP)

Total number of evaluated SP by form of studies	Number of evaluated SP for provisional authorisation to operate (AP)	Number of evaluated SP for accreditation (A)	Number of regularly evaluated SP for maintaining the accreditation (EP)
451 (IF) <i>day courses/full-time</i>	67	99	285
41 (ID) <i>distance learning</i>	9	3	29
13 (IFR) <i>reduced frequency/ part-time</i>	9	-	4
TOTAL = 505	85	102	318

Table 3. Study programmes evaluated in 2014, depending on the judgment given

Total number of evaluated SP by form of studies	Number of SP which received the judgment:		
	“Confidence”	“Limited confidence”	“Lack of confidence”
451 (IF)	416	20	15
41 (ID)	41	-	-
13 (IFR)	9	4	-
TOTAL = 505	466	24	15

Table 4. Results of evaluation of study programmes in the year 2014

	Judgment received	IF	ID	IFR
Number of evaluated SP for provisional authorisation to operate	“Confidence”	50	9	7
	“Limited confidence”	7	-	2
	“Lack of confidence”	10	-	-
TOTAL = 85		67	9	9
Number of SP evaluated for accreditation	“Confidence”	89	3	-
	“Limited confidence”	7	-	-
	“Lack of confidence”	3	-	-
TOTAL = 102		99	3	-
Number of SP periodically evaluated for maintaining the accreditation	“Confidence”	277	29	2
	“Limited confidence”	6	-	2
	“Lack of confidence”	2	-	-
TOTAL = 318		285	29	4

In the year 2014, the Department for Accreditation of ARACIS carried out its activity according to its prerogatives set out in the Regulations for organization and functioning of the Agency:

- Elaboration with the support of staff from technical department of ARACIS, of internal reports of ARACIS for validation of results of evaluation missions of study programmes for provisional authorisation to operate, accreditation or maintenance of accreditation;
- Organization and administration of the database regarding the evaluation of study programmes;
- Management and update of register of evaluators of ARACIS.

As for the higher education institutions, in the year 2014, according to GD no. 580 of 9 July 2014 (for university year 2014-2015), the situation was as follows:

- State universities: **55** – *all evaluated at least once*;
- Private accredited universities: **37**, *of which 4 function in liquidation with all programmes from the structure (according to proposals made after the evaluations of ARACIS), and other 3 are in process of special monitoring. All these universities were evaluated at least once by ARACIS* ;
- Private universities authorized to function temporarily: **10** (one of them organizes only master's degree programmes) ; *except for the one which organizes only master's degree programmes, the others were not evaluated yet at institutional level.*

2.1.3 Institutional evaluations

In the year 2014, a number of 11 higher education institutions were evaluated (regular institutional evaluations of bachelor's degree: 55 IF + 4 ID + 1 FR). The judgments given after the institutional evaluation were:

- 4 – high degree of confidence,
- 6 – confidence,
- 1 – lack of confidence.

2.1.4 Evaluation of Master's Study Domains

In the year 2014 we initiated the activities of elaboration of regulations for evaluation of master's study domains. The evaluation of master's study domains responds to the desire of universities to render flexible the training offer by 2nd cycle of university studies to meet the requests of employers. These activities will also continue in the year 2015. The Specific Procedure for External Regular Evaluation of Accredited Master's Study domains was approved by Order of the Ministry of Education and Research and published in the Official Gazette, Part I no. 236/2014.

In 2014 ARACIS evaluated 158 master's degree programmes at the full-time form of education and two at the part-time form of education, according to the existing Methodology of evaluation of study programmes. Details about these procedures can be found on the website of the agency at the address http://www.aracis.ro/fileadmin/ARACIS/Legislatie_-_Proceduri/2014/Proceduri_privind_acreditarea_sau_evaluarea_periodica_a_domeniilor_de_studii_universitare_de_master.pdf.

3. INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY OF ARACIS

3.1 Activities of ARACIS as ENQA Full Member

For fulfilling the standard of ENQA regarding the active involvement in the activities of the association, ARACIS participated in a series of events organized by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education:

- 22 – 23 January 2014 – Paris (France) – the Works of the Work Group “*Excellence in higher education*” (participants: Radu-Mircea Damian –Director, Division of International Relations, Projects and Cooperation, ARACIS);
- 03 – 04 April 2014 – Paris (France) – Works of “*Staff development group*” (human resources development) (participants: Oana Sârbu – Head of Department, Department of Experts and Inspectors Specialized in Accreditation and Quality Assurance, ARACIS);
- 24 – 25 April 2014 – St. Petersburg (Russia) – Forum of ENQA members; themes: review of ESG, preparation of Strategic Plan of ENQA for the period 2016 – 2020 (participants: Iordan Petrescu – ARACIS President, Radu-Mircea Damian –Director, Division of International Relations, Projects and Cooperation, ARACIS);

- 16 – 17 October 2014 – Zagreb (Croatia) – General Meeting of ENQA; theme: Strategic Plan of ENQA for the period 2016 – 2020 (participants: Iordan Petrescu – ARACIS President, Radu-Mircea Damian –Director, Division of International Relations, Projects and Cooperation, ARACIS);
- 04 – 06 November 2014 – London (United Kingdom) – “*QACHE Expert Forum*” organized in the project “Quality Assurance of Cross-border Higher Education (QACHE)” coordinated by ENQA) (participants: Iordan Petrescu – ARACIS President);
- 06 – 07 November 2014 – Bucharest (Romania) – “*Staff development group*” Works – human resources development, (participants: Oana Sârbu – Head of Department, Department of Experts and Specialized Inspectors in accreditation and quality assurance, ARACIS) – the meeting was organized by ARACIS;
- 24 – 26 November 2014 – Bucharest (Romania) – Conference “*Future of Higher Education – Bologna Process Researchers*” (second edition); themes: internationalization, financing, excellence and diversification of mission of higher education institutions, social dimension, quality assurance, impact of Bologna Process in European Higher Education Area and outside of it etc. (participants: Iordan Petrescu – ARACIS President, Radu-Mircea Damian –Director, Division of International Relations, Projects and Cooperation, ARACIS).

3.2 ARACIS – Agency registered in EQAR

In the year 2014, ARACIS got actively involved in the activities organized by EQAR, and participated by representatives in:

- EQAR Seminar organized in Bayreuth (Germany) during the period 29 – 30 April 2014; participants: Iordan Petrescu – President of ARACIS and Radu-Mircea Damian –Director, Division of International Relations, Projects and Cooperation, ARACIS;
- Event “Members Dialogue” in which were discussed the final outcomes of the project *Recognizing International Quality Assurance Activity in the European Higher Education Area (RIQAA)*, which was carried out in Palermo (Italy), during the period 21 – 22 October 2014; participants: Radu-Mircea Damian –Director, Division of International Relations, Projects and Cooperation, ARACIS.

3.3 Activities of ARACIS in ENAEE and EQANIE

ARACIS considers important its participation in ENAEE (*European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education*) especially in view of the need for Romanian graduates of study programmes in the field of “Engineering Sciences” to benefit from the same rights in the European labour area. The collaboration between ARACIS and ENAEE has strengthened with the recognition of the Agency as member of this network. For this purpose, the president of ARACIS participated during 19 – 20 November 2014, at Brussels (Belgium),

in the meeting carried out for the signing of Mutual Agreement for recognition of all members in the ENAEE Network.

ARACIS has proposed for the following years to take the necessary steps at internal and national level, together with the universities that develop study programmes in the field of “Engineering Sciences” to enforce the standards of ENAEE for evaluation of study programmes in that field concomitantly with European standards which are now used. Also, ARACIS proposed to make a Register of Evaluators from the economic environment who will participate in the evaluation of engineering study programmes.

The participation in the works of EQANIE (*European Quality Assurance Network for Informatics Education*) was limited to the reception of information on the activity of the network. No meetings or other actions were carried out because it acknowledged a lower engagement of specialized commission in international activity, although it was promoted by the Executive Bureau.

3.4 Activities in CEENQA

In the Central and East-European Area, the “*Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education*” (CEENQA) was created given the need of collaboration regarding the quality in higher education between close countries from the point of view of education system, level of economic development etc. ARACIS considered necessary the adherence to this network for the purpose of exchange of good practices and collaboration for quality assurance.

During the period 23 – 25 May 2014 in Pristina (Kosovo), the General Meeting of CEENQA (*Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education*) took place in which participated Mr Radu-Mircea Damian, Director of Division of International Relations, Projects and Cooperation of ARACIS and Mrs Cristina Ghitulica – member of ARACIS Council. In the meeting four members were elected in the Management Council of CEENQA, among whom the representative of ARACIS, Mrs. Cristina Ghitulica.

3.5 Participation of ARACIS in collaboration with MEN in the activities of BFUG

In the year 2014, in collaboration with and with the financial support of MEN, ARACIS, by its representatives (Radu-Mircea Damian – Director, Division of International Relations, Projects and Cooperation, ARACIS and Cristina Ghitulica – member of ARACIS Council), participated in a series of works of Bologna Follow-up Group. The works of BFUG were carried out during: 09 - 10 April 2014, in Athens (Greece), 17 - 19 September 2014 in Rome (Italy) and 26 - 27 November 2014 in Rome (Italy). Within the works carried out during the period 17 - 19 September 2014, in Rome, the final form of Standards and guidelines for quality assurance – ESG was discussed in order to be presented for approval to the ministers responsible for higher education in the European Higher Education Area.

The participation in works of BFUG represented the involvement of ARACIS, by the Ministry of National Education, in the European structure which coordinates the Bologna Process, in which the quality assurance role is considered essential.

3.6 Participation of ARACIS in other international events

During the period 03 - 07 November 2014, in Doha (Qatar) the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) took place. From ARACIS Mr Radu-Mircea Damian participated – Director, Division of International Relations, Projects and Cooperation of ARACIS. The participation was fully financially supported by the organizers. The purpose of this meeting was to get in touch with the current trends in the field of education. As for ARACIS, we noted the constant preoccupation for quality assurance in the field of education at all levels. In the sections dedicated to higher education we identified some current problems regarding the role of universities in society, which is sometimes contested by invoking the new forms of studies based on IT technologies – such as “Massive Open Online Courses – MOOC”. In this respect, the opinion of the majority of participants in that session was that the universities have to continue to play an important role in education and research and the software technologies can contribute to the fast online information of those who use them and assure the complementarity with the studies in university, which benefit from the presence of teaching staff. There was also underlined the role of learning, as the accumulation of knowledge is essential for innovation, being facilitated by the wide information offered by the extension of communication capacity by Internet.

4. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

The main means of presenting the information regarding the activities of ARACIS represents the webpage of the Agency (www.aracis.ro).

In addition, in the year 2014, the Division of International Relations, Projects and Cooperation of ARACIS (DRIPC) monitored all the references about ARACIS which appeared in the national press and made a centralization of articles about education which appeared in the central press included in the “Revista preseii” (Press review) which was sent to the members of ARACIS Council.

For the purpose of information about the quality assurance activity at European level and not only and to disseminate own experiences regarding the quality of higher education in Romania, ARACIS uses electronic and printed means of information. Thus, ARACIS, in the year 2014, continued the subscription to two journals:

- *Journal of the European Higher Education Area*, RAABE
- and
- *Quality in Higher Education*, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

Also, in 2014, ARACIS published in the field of quality assurance through its representatives:

- R.M. Damian, Oana Sârbu, 2014, *Quality Audit in the European Higher Education Area. A comparison of approaches*. Agency Reports: II4 Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), Facultats Verlags – und Buchhandels AG, Wien, 2014;

- Manuela Brusoni, R. M. Damian, J. Grifoll, S. Jackson et al., 2014, *The Concept of Quality Assurance in Higher Education*, ENQA Occasional Paper 2014, ISBN 978-952-5539-73-8 (web publication: <http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/publications/>); ISSN1458-1051.

5. PROJECTS

5.1 National projects

5.1.1 “QUALITAS” Project

In April 2014, ARACIS started the realization of the project “*Development and consolidation of quality culture in Romanian higher education system - QUALITAS*” (contract POSDRU/155/1.2/S/141894), in partnership with the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA). The implementation period of this project is between April 2014 and December 2015. The carrying out of the project began on 1st September 2014.

The general objective of the QUALITAS project is quality assurance in higher education system in Romania by development of an organizational culture focused on continuous improvement of quality in higher education institutions, formation of managerial competences at institutional and system level, fundamental premises for increasing the quality of study programmes and their relevance for the labor market.

The operational objectives of the project are:

- 1) Evaluation of the quality of national higher education system for substantiating and validating the proposals of adjustment of quality evaluation and quality assurance policies and methodologies.
- 2) The development and implementation of internal quality assurance system in universities, both at institutional and study programme level, by supporting and forming the structures involved in design and development of study programmes and internal quality assurance commissions.
- 3) Self-evaluation and regular external evaluation of universities and study programmes offered by them, but also the formulation of proposals for adjustment and continuous improvement of evaluation methodology and guidelines. For the implementation period of the project, a number of 20 public and private universities will be evaluated at institutional level and will be performed an analysis of educational system and an exchange of good practices at international level.
- 4) The improvement of university management and increase of capacity of higher education institutions to provide relevant qualifications for the labor market and to support a knowledge-based economy, by elaboration of recommendations based on national and European similar experiences and participation of the target group in training sessions, workshops, conferences etc. The project was designed for a target audience formed by: 125 experts in evaluation and accreditation from the quality assurance commissions in higher education, at national level; 140 members of quality assurance commissions at university/faculty level; 75 members of commissions/

management structures of universities and faculties; 10 persons involved in elaboration of policies in higher education; 20 persons involved in development and management of qualifications at university/faculty level; 30 students and 10 persons involved in the development of university study programmes.

- 5) Continuous development of a relevant base of indicators for measuring the quality of higher education, differentiated by types of universities and fields, for institutional diversification of higher education.
- 6) Internationalization of preoccupations with quality assurance, exchange of good practices and cooperation with similar agencies from the European Higher Education Area for assuring the convergence of national policies with relevant European policies. In the project there will be elaborated a Quality Barometer of Higher Education System which will be both a guide and an instrument of acknowledgement, analysis and correlation of complex phenomena existing in Romanian academic environment.
- 7) Provision of a framework of communication and cooperation between relevant organizations in higher education system for increasing the capacity of consistent strategic action at systemic level. In the project there will be elaborated a Policy Paper with the purpose of offering the decision-makers recommendations, concrete policies for assurance and improvement of quality of National Higher Education System, for enhancing competitiveness at national and international level of university environment.

The project is organized in *five work packages*, as follows:

- a. Package I – *Project management and monitoring activities*
- b. Package II – Quality evaluation and accreditation, which aims at external and internal evaluation of 20 universities and evaluation of quality of national higher education system and identification of pathways for improvement of evaluation and quality assurance system in higher education.
- c. Package III – *Elaboration of quality evaluation indicators and compatibility at system level*, in which the primary, secondary and tertiary quality indicators for internal quality assurance will be elaborated.
- d. Package IV – *System analysis: quality in Romanian higher education*, in which we will make three surveys on representative samples of employers, university teaching staff and students for measuring their perception of policies and quality of Romanian higher education system. Also, in this work package there will be drafted a Higher Education Quality Barometer and a document “Policy Paper” regarding the conclusions detached from the institutional analysis which will recommend improvement policies of higher education quality.
- e. Package V – *Internationalization, exchange of good practices, communication in quality assurance of Romanian higher education* in which will be accomplished the participation of experts in quality assurance at international conferences on relevant themes for the field of quality assurance in higher education, organization of a workshop in the quality assurance field, carrying out of eight training sessions of relevant actors at system level and communication, information and advertising activities.

5.1.2 “ACAD-INOV” Project

Just as the case of *QUALITAS project*, the realization of *ACAD-INOV* project started in April 2014. This project is entitled “*Virtual community for quality assurance and perfection of strategic and innovative management in technical universities and composites, for increasing the relevance of higher education for labour market*” (contract POSDRU/155/1.2/S/141884) in partnership with four universities of Romania – Politehnica University of Bucharest, University “Dunarea de Jos” of Galati, Technical University “Gheorghe Asachi” of Iasi, University “Transilvania” of Brasov and the company S.C. ARWEN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES S.A. (S.C. RED POINT S.A.) from Iasi. The implementation period of this project aims at an interval between April 2014 and November 2015. The carrying out of the project started on 1st September 2014.

The general objective of the project is the improvement of university management by development of managerial competences, strategic planning and communication competences for increasing the relevance of higher education for the labor market and for the knowledge-based society.

The specific objectives of the project *ACAD-INOV* are:

- 1) Foundation, development and consolidation of a network between partner universities for the formation of a good practice academic community, for the purpose of developing managerial and strategic planning competences, for quality assurance of education for enhancing the relevance of higher education for the labour market. The purpose of these partnerships is to promote in the context of supporting economic development, an innovative optimized mechanism of strategic management for self-evaluation of higher education quality.
- 2) Elaboration of specific evaluation instruments, respectively a system of reference indicators and procedures, quality assurance mechanisms and quality management at partners level, for the purpose of completing the current evaluation methodologies, specific to the technical and mixed universities. We will aim at realization of innovative actions of self-evaluation of study programmes and their correlation with the labor market, by using *software tools* developed in the project.
- 3) Development and implementation of software solution for elaboration, review and testing of reference indicator systems and quality assurance and quality management mechanisms; development of training and self-training mechanisms of the staff with assignments in quality field from partner universities, for improvement of activities in the field of strategic management and quality assurance.
- 4) Training of teaching staff for quality assurance commissions from universities both at university and faculty level, by developing competences for perfection of strategic management, internal evaluation methods of higher education institutions' performances and evaluation of study programmes offered by them.

5.2 International projects

5.2.1. “IMPALA” Project

The project entitled “*Analysis of impact of external quality assurance in higher education, pluralist methodology and implementation of a formative trans-disciplinary impact evaluation method (IMPALA)*” is funded by the Framework Programme LLP Erasmus – Lifelong Learning. This project is carried out for a period of three years (2013-2016).

ARACIS is a partner organization in the **IMPALA** project, project coordinated by EVALAG (Evaluation Agency Baden-Württemberg, Germany). The partner institutions in this project are: AQU Catalonia (Barcelona, Spain), FINEEC (Helsinki, Finland), ARACIS (Bucharest, Romania), University of Stuttgart (Stuttgart, Germany), Autonomous University of Barcelona (Barcelona, Spain), University of Applied Sciences Jyväskylä (Jyväskylä, Finland), Technical University of Civil Engineering of Bucharest (Bucharest, Romania), Prof. Dr. Bjørn Stensaker (Faculty of Education Sciences, University of Oslo, Norway), ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Brussels, Belgium) and ESU (European Union of Students, Brussels, Belgium).

The purpose of the project is “the development and implementation of a methodology for analysis of impact of external quality assurance procedures (External Quality Assurance - EQA) on higher education institutions”. Also, the project has the main objective to provide further information on the results, expectations, effects and impact of external quality assurance procedures in higher education in the four partner universities.

Expected outcomes of the project:

- Development and implementation of a methodology regarding the procedures related to external evaluation of quality in higher education institutions. This methodology must be flexible and easy to adjust to various external quality evaluation procedures;
- The engagement in impact analysis of members of academic community, including students;
- Analysis and comparison of impact of different external quality assurance procedures and the perception of different actors on the impact of these procedures;
- Analysis of the role of external quality assurance procedures in changing and improving the procedures of supporting a quality culture in higher education institutions;
- Improvement of understanding the causal relationship between quality assurance and organizational change;
- Active cooperation of European higher education institutions;
- Future cooperation of European quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions (developmental analysis of “*benchmarking*” type in the practice of quality assurance and quality management).

In the year 2014, ARACIS organized in Bucharest one of the work meetings of **IMPALA project**, during the period 10 – 11 April. This was the second meeting of partners in the project. ARACIS participated by: Radu-Mircea Damian – Director, Division of International Relations, Projects and Cooperation, project manager from ARACIS; Oana Sârbu, Head of Department, Department of Experts and Specialized Inspectors in Accreditation and Quality Assurance; other persons involved in organization of event were: Ion Tanase, Economic Director, Mihaela Raileanu – DRIPC, Mihaela Bajenaru – Expert;

Mihai Marcu – expert; Camelia Vasile – Financial Department). The purpose of this meeting was to evaluate the stage of the project and to plan the future activities, among which the elaboration of evaluation questionnaire which the four partner universities will apply for quality assurance impact analyses.

In the year 2014 (18 - 20 May) in Mannheim (Germany), another meeting of project partners took place on the theme of improvement, for perfecting the evaluation questionnaire mentioned above. From ARACIS the following persons participated: Radu-Mircea Damian – Director, Division of International Relations, Projects and Cooperation, project manager from ARACIS, Vasilica Stan – General Secretary of ARACIS Council.

5.2.2 “AQUA-TS” Project

The “Automated Quality Control System (AQUA-TS)” is a Leonardo da Vinci project with duration of two years (2013 – 2015) which has the purpose to design, build and implement operational tools for measurement and control of indicators of the type External Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) in collaboration with the target groups and the interested parties. ARACIS is partner in AQUA-TS project.

This project tackles issues of implementation of European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) from the tourism sector by testing of tools in compliance with the collaboration methodologies and by the approach of *job shadowing*. In the project, which was dedicated to a specific sector of activity, we identified the key challenges in tourism regarding the Vocational Education and Training, related to the need of increasing at European level the quality of VET training in tourism, to make it more attractive for the workforce. The project approaches all the actors interested in this sector, which facilitates the creation of sharing opportunities and comparison of initiatives. This will lead to the development and implementation of a *bench-learning* tool for the parties interested in vocational education and training from tourism at European level, with possibilities of generalization to other sectors, offering a common training framework. For ARACIS, the participation in the project offers the opportunity to identify the common points between external evaluation of quality of university study programmes and VET programmes, and approach differences. In the prospect of undertaking by higher education institutions of training by tertiary non-university study programmes, which will be externally evaluated by ARACIS, the agency will be in a privileged position from the point of view of experience it will gain by participation in this project.

6. COOPERATION

6.1 At national level

ARACIS collaborates at national level with the universities, with MEN, with different bodies which work for higher education or whose object of activity is in connection with economy and labour market.

In this context, in the year 2014, ARACIS had more occasions of collaboration with universities apart from those which aim at quality evaluation (e.g. for revision and change of

specific Standards by fields), participated in the meetings of the National Council of Rectors etc.

As for the collaboration with other organizations/institutions/agencies, in the year 2014, ARACIS carried out permanent consultation with MEN, with the National Council for Attestation of Academic Titles, Diplomas and Certificates (CNATDCU) and with the Executive Unit for Financing of Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation (UEFISCDI).

6.2. At international level

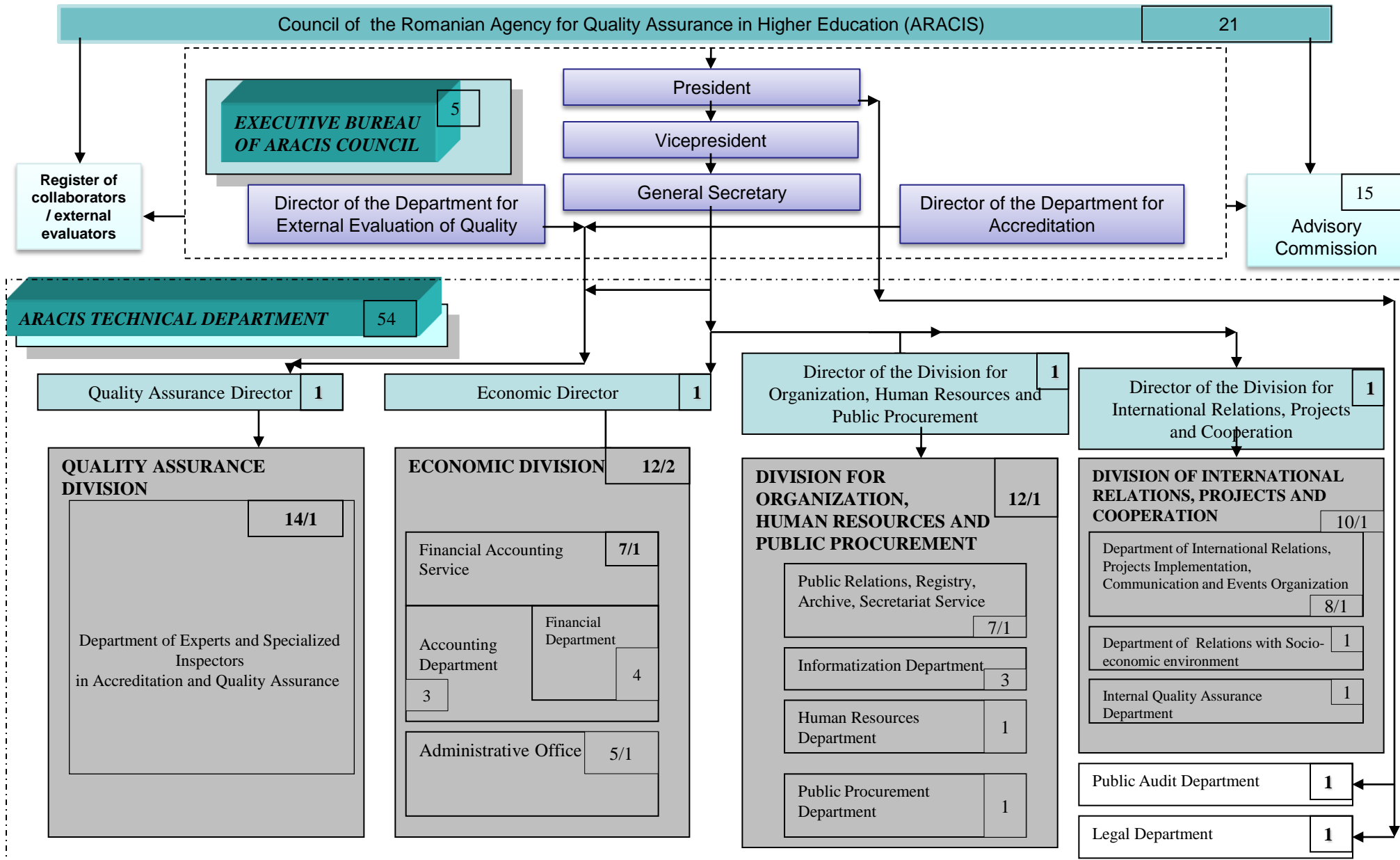
In the year 2014, ARACIS developed collaboration relations with different international bodies whose object is in close connection with quality assurance in higher education. Thus, DRIPC contributed to the adjustment of Evaluation Methodology of 17 universities from Republic of Moldova (evaluation contract concluded between ARACIS and the Ministry of Education of Republic of Moldova). Also, ARACIS extended the collaboration relationships with other agencies. Thus, on 16 October 2014, in Zagreb (Croatia) the Memorandum of cooperation was signed between ARACIS and NEAA (National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency of Republic of Bulgaria).

During 17 – 19 December 2014, in Brussels (Belgium), the meeting of Committee for Education of Council of Europe took place and Mr. Radu-Mircea Damian – Director, Division of International Relations, Projects and Cooperation, from ARACIS participated in this meeting.

ARACIS also participated in the activities of cooperation network QAN (Quality Audit Network), being the only agency from Eastern Europe accepted in QAN (since 2012); the activity of ARACIS in this cooperation network was carried out without interruption since 2012. In 2014 the participation of ARACIS was online because its representatives could not participate in the meeting from Glasgow (UK). The outcomes of QAN activity were published in 2014 (R.M. Damian, Oana Sârbu, 2014, “Quality Audit in the European Higher Education Area. A comparison of approaches.” Agency Reports: II4 Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, *Facultats Verlags – und Buchhandels AG*, Wien).

ANNEXES

ARACIS (31.12.2014)



Structure of ARACIS Council in the year 2014

President:

1. Prof. Petrescu Iordan, Ph.D .

General Secretary:

2. Prof. Stan Vasilica, Ph.D.

Director of the Department for External Evaluation of Quality:

3. Prof. Popa Ion, Ph.D.

Director of the Department for Accreditation:

4. Delegation - Prof. Popa Ion, Ph.D.

Members:

5. Prof. Lascar Ioan, Ph.D.
6. Prof. Luca Iamandi, Ph.D.
7. Prof. Bodiu Andrei, Ph.D.
8. Associate Professor Corbu Nicoleta, Ph.D.
9. Prof. Georgescu Puiu Lucian, Ph.D.
10. Prof. Grigoras Gheorghe, Ph.D.
11. Popescu Cristi – student
12. Sheila Abdulamit – student

Advisory Commission of ARACIS

Acad. Ionel Haiduc – President of Romanian Academy

Prof. Dinu Airinei, Ph.D. – "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi

Prof. Cezar Birzea, Ph.D. – National School of Political Science and Public Administration of Bucharest

Prof. Oprea Calin, Ph.D. – „Nicolae Titulescu” University of Bucharest

Prof. Dumitru Gaspar, Ph.D. – West University of Timisoara

Prof. Viorel Lefter, Ph.D. – Bucharest University of Economic Studies

Prof. Mircea Miclea, Ph.D. – "Babes-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca

Prof. Mircea Cristel Muthu, Ph.D. – "Babes-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca

Prof. Delia Marina Podea, Ph.D. – „Vasile Goldis" Western University of Arad

Prof. Gheorghe Popa, Ph.D. – „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi

Prof. Alexandru Popovici, Ph.D. – Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti

Prof. Zoltan Rostas, Ph.D. – University of Bucharest

Prof. Gheorghe Solomon, Ph.D. – University Politehnica of Bucharest

Prof. Emilian Stancu, Ph.D. – University of Bucharest

Prof. Paul Serban Agachi, Ph.D. - Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca

Prof. Mircea Ivanescu, Ph.D. – University of Craiova

Prof. Adrian Miroiu, Ph.D. - National School of Political Science and Public Administration of Bucharest

Prof. Mihai Octavian Popescu, Ph.D. - University Politehnica of Bucharest