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**The Romanian Agency of Quality
Assurance in Higher Education**

Policy Paper

**Institutional policies and strategies
in Higher Education**

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POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abbreviations:

AL – Adult Learning

ECA – European Consortium for Accreditation

HE – Higher Education

EHEA – European Higher Education Area

ENQA – The European Association for Quality Assurance în Higher Education

EQAR – European Quality Assurance Register

ESU – European Student Union

ERA – European Research Area

ET2020 – Education and training 2020

IPE – Inter-Professional Education

LLL – Lifelong learning

NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training

PPP – Public-Private Partnership

ICT – Information, Communication and Technology

VET – Vocational Education and Training



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FOREWORD

Policy Paper-2015 is a synthesis of the main trends in higher education and an attempt to present a perspective addressed to decision-making organizations regarding the key policies in the field. It is one of the results of the project *“Development and consolidation of quality culture at the level of Romanian Higher Education system - QUALITAS”*, funded from the European Social Fund through the Sectoral Operational Program Human Resources Development 2007-2013, agreement POSDRU/155/1.2/S/141894, at the request of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

Policy Paper-2015 has the purpose to offer decision-makers recommendations, concrete policies regarding the assurance and improvement of quality in the National Higher Education System with a view to enhancing competitiveness of university environment at national and international level. It formulates a relational basis on which we can implement the change and development processes in higher education in Romania.

Overall, **Policy Paper-2015** presents the conclusions drawn from the institutional analysis performed in Barometer of Higher Education System Quality 2015, by formulation of policies regarding the improvement of quality in Higher Education System and represents a reflection exercise on the role, the main changes and challenges which the higher education is facing. The document presents also a thorough analysis from theoretical and empirical point of view of policies and strategies which exist at national and European level.

We believe that **Policy Paper-2015** presents concrete proposals addressed to the Higher Education System, meant to overcome the main difficulties which higher education institutions have to face in quality assurance.

Finally, we want to thank all the partners participating in the project, institutions or personalities from education field, for their significant contributions to the realization of this Policy Paper.

Project Manager QUALITAS,
Professor Engineer Iordan Petrescu, Ph.D

² **Obiectivul general** al proiectului QUALITAS constă în asigurarea calității în sistemul de învățământ superior din România prin dezvoltarea unei culturi organizaționale centrate pe îmbunătățirea continuă a calității în cadrul instituțiilor de învățământ superior, formarea de competențe manageriale la nivel instituțional și de sistem, premise fundamentale pentru creșterea calității programelor de studii, dar și a relevanței acestora pentru integrarea pe piața muncii și pentru societatea bazată pe cunoaștere.



POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

1. The Systemic dimension

The evolution of the higher education system in Romania will meet the expectations and challenges that the European university system will face in the next period, in line with the following projected milestones:

- = The new diversity of the institutional university landscape that will not necessarily cause more convergence in the higher education system (here we consider the possible extinction of some educational institutions, their merging or association or institutional innovation in the area of professional training and continuing education for adults);
- = the need for more transparency and higher effectiveness, in the sense that the contribution of higher education to development and to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth must become effective and rhythmically related to visible and measurable indicators;
- = the constant challenge to contribute in a significant, visible and transparent way to the agenda of the Romanian economic growth and to the increase of employability and economic productivity;
- = the need for a consistent, coherent and institutionally substantiated response to democratic challenges and those of massification (with openness to the global analysis) and to the diversification of entry and access routes;
- = the urgent requirement from the society for high transparency towards real economic performance and the desiderates of openness to society (“the third mission of Romanian universities”);
- = the personalized challenge of the new social dimension of higher education cannot be ignored: the new student profile, their new expectations and estimated or anticipated reactions;
- = a more pragmatic and efficient response to new developments and key implications of qualifications, competencies and abilities at European / national level, which should exploit the added value of academic mobility;
- = the new challenge of research and innovation, in the sense that higher education institutions should become the pillars of national and European innovation processes, as open and accountable centers of research, innovation and development;
- = the need to promote a new culture of academic governance, accountable and efficient, and to develop a new model for professionalization of university managers;



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- = the global and regional challenge of internationalization of higher education in Romania, which will become the key to solving the increasing issue of demand for high quality education, both for students and teachers;
- = the need for assumed strategic and public coherence in the medium and long term, with policies based on evidences and able to respond to priority needs of higher education system.

2. The Institutional dimension

European priorities for institutional modernisation of universities within the EHEA context:

- = supporting the mission for diversification and growth of institutional autonomy;
- = promoting an adequate system of supporting and funding of higher education institutions;
- = promoting LLL - Lifelong learning as an institutional policy to increase employability;
- = ensuring quality and transparency;
- = developing and supporting the European academic mobility;
- = increasing professional recognition and mobility at the level of educational cycles and between them;
- = building bridges between EHEA and ERA by strengthening institutions which offer high quality doctoral studies;
- = growing mobility in the research area by exploiting postdoctoral studies;
- = developing a global commitment to promote European higher education in Asian, African, Latin American areas.

2.1. The Yerevan Declaration:

- = The first priority is enhancing / strengthening the quality and relevance of teaching and learning, with all the meanings previously adopted;
- = The second priority is the employability of graduates on the longitudinal route of their professional lives;
- = The third extremely important dimension is the transformation of systems / higher education institutions in more inclusive and transparent systems;
- = The fourth dimension, but not least, is the development and implementation of courageous structural / institutional reforms to ensure high chances of success both at social and individual / personal level.



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2.2. Report of the European Commission and European Parliament

In the spirit of this report, the following trends and future lines of action are to be noted, formulated as expectations of the Commission in this regard:

- The European Union wants closer cooperation between universities, companies and research centers. The agenda is a part of the Commission's broader strategy, Europe 2020 "to promote economic growth and employment in which education plays a key role (...) Public authority responsible for higher education should ensure the existence of a sustainable, well-funded framework to support higher education institutions' efforts to improve the quality of teaching. Moreover, each institution should develop and implement a strategy for the support and on-going improvement of the quality of teaching and learning, devoting the necessary level of human and financial resources to the task, and integrating this priority in its overall mission, giving teaching due parity with research."
- Higher education institutions should encourage, welcome, and take account of student feedback which could detect problems in the teaching and learning environment early on and lead to faster, more effective improvements. In this respect, the needs' analysis and student barometers indicated the following specific competencies for the teachers: centring the academic teaching and learning on students, on students' development, using active-participative strategies, applying academic group management, diversifying the evaluation techniques centered on student performance and competencies etc. Even from the students' perspective (see also the Report of European Students' Union (ESU), 2013, Quest for Quality for Students: Survey on Student's Perspectives (Brussels, ESU), improving the professional development system of academic staff should be made by focusing on quality axis – the educational performance. On the same subject, the students' participation, the Commission Report to the Council, European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Report on Progress in Quality Assurance in Higher Education (Brussels, 21.9.2009 / 22.09.2010), underlines that "Students' participation in quality assurance as a basic rule in European higher education has gained ground in recent years, although this involvement remains often restricted to certain aspects or procedures. The involvement of business representatives and non-residents varies significantly from the internal quality assurance to external quality assurance and is generally stronger in agencies' evaluation committees than in decision-making bodies" (see also the earlier mentioned document, COM (2009/2010) 487 final).

The curricula should be developed and monitored through dialogue and partnerships between teachers, students, graduates and actors in the labour market, based on new teaching and learning methods so that students can acquire relevant competencies that increase their chance of being employed.



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Also, student performance should be assessed in terms of clear learning objectives previously agreed and developed in collaboration with all the faculty members who participated in their development. Higher education institutions and national policy makers should undertake, in cooperation with students, guidance, tutoring, mentoring and tracking systems to support young people from entering their higher education until graduation and beyond.

Higher education institutions should introduce and promote transversal, transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to teaching, learning and assessment in order to assist students to deepen their knowledge and develop their entrepreneurial and innovative spirit.

The report also recommends that higher education institutions should develop and implement the overall internationalisation strategies as part of their mission and their duties, thus promoting greater mobility both on the horizontal and vertical axis (the Commission Report to the Council, European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Report on Progress in Quality Assurance in Higher Education (Brussels, 21.9.2009 / 22.09.2010).

3. Responsibilities in the Internal and External Quality Assurance

Three principles of accountability can be identified in the quality assurance area:

First, the relationship between the state and quality assurance agencies should reflect a healthy balance between accountability and independence, based on clear rules of engagement agreed by both parties. While state and society in general have a legitimate interest in ensuring the quality of higher education, especially in countries where private and cross border providers multiplied, the quality assurance agencies should enjoy sufficient autonomy to fulfil their responsibilities in an effective manner. Abuses should be avoided by both parties: governments should not allow politics and lack of confidence to affect their relationship with the agencies, and the latter should not be too lenient towards the suppliers of questionable quality or too rigid towards innovative institutions.

Secondly, to make a significant difference, quality assurance should not focus on the way institutions operate, but on the results that they actually achieve. To use the distinction proposed by Stein (2005), procedural accountability, which is primarily concerned with rules and procedures, is less meaningful than substantive accountability, which focuses on the essence of the research, teaching, and learning in tertiary education institutions. It may be easier to monitor the first type of accountability, but it is without doubt more relevant to concentrate on the second, notwithstanding its complexity and the difficulties involved in measuring the acquisition of skills, the achievement of students' learning outcomes and the added value.



Eventually, the most effective accountability mechanisms are those that are mutually agreed or are voluntarily embraced by quality assurance agencies and tertiary education institutions. This agreement ensures a greater sense of responsibility for the assessment and feedback processes and a full sense of responsibility to the quality assurance instruments.

3.1. Reconciling the Quality Assurance Procedures

Quality assurance agencies are still a relatively new feature of the European Higher Education Area. They will have to demonstrate their independence and professionalism in order to enhance stakeholders' confidence.

Agencies will have to further convince their European counterparts that they offer a sufficient level of comparability, which is important as a precondition for mutual recognition of qualifications and promotion of student mobility.

There is a risk that agencies may have become too numerous, while their size remains rather low (the possibility of junctions between agencies can be considered through quality assurance networks already existing at European level).

Agencies could also consider broadening the scope of their activities, in order to find more appropriate approaches to lifelong learning, distance and online higher education, professional training, transnational and private higher education.

Making a clear distinction of roles between ENQA, EQAR and the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), with a stronger focus on quality assurance benefits for users could increase the efficiency of the European quality assurance infrastructure.

3.2. A Reevaluation of European Standards and Orientation

European Standards and Guidelines could be further developed to enhance coordination of quality assurance with the development of the European higher education, which could consider the following three aspects:

- Compliance with the main structure (three cycles) as a basic requirement for quality in European Higher Education Area;
- Within the European Higher Education Area, quality standards would encompass priorities such as the ability to obtain employment and mobility;
- The standards of internal quality assurance systems in higher education institutions could also appear in other key dimensions such as the quality of student services in general, career guidance/obtaining employment for students and graduates, financial management capacity development and implementation of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.



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3.3. An Integrated Framework of Education, Training and QA

National quality assurance agencies should be encouraged to develop activities beyond their borders and to seek the recognition of their decisions in other countries, for example, through conventions of mutual recognition.

Higher education institutions could be encouraged to use the services of agencies registered outside their country by clarifying the portability of national accreditation within the European Higher Education Area and also the issue of quality assurance for cross-border higher education within the European Higher Education Area.

Given the growing importance of joint and double degree courses in Europe, clear principles might be useful to avoid the need for multiple accreditations.

The Commission supports the development of transparency tools complementing quality assurance, especially those that offer “a comparative vision of higher education institutions and their programs.”

Based on the needs identified at national level and in view of the principle of policies compatibility with European standards in education and the context outlined by the priorities and trends stated at this level, as they are synthesized in the *Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training* (2015), we can substantiate the analysis within a framework that gives us a broad, transnational perspective and which is found at the intersection of several areas.

According to the latest reports from the European Commission, Council and Parliament, such an integrated framework on education and training at all levels is a priority, justified by the need for flexibility and permeability in learning experiences, which calls for coherence in policies from the early childhood education up to the level of pre-university education, higher education, vocational education, adult training and learning. At the same time, policies in this area must be recalibrated in order to include both economic challenges related to the labour market integration and the role of education in promoting equity and non-discrimination, and as well as the transfer of fundamental values, intercultural competences and active citizenship principles.

From the analysis of the European Commission, Council and Parliament across all the 28 member countries, some trends and recommendations emerge, covering all educational levels and focusing on priorities in order to achieve the goals of ET 2020. Of these, for the purpose of this document, we will focus on priorities for higher education, while having in mind the aspects related to technical and vocational education, as well as adult learning in the wider area of lifelong learning, thereby supporting an integrated approach at systemic level.

According to the European Commission, Council and Parliament, higher education (HE) should support the knowledge-based economy for HE to respond in an effective way to the demands of a society and a labour market continuously changing, by ensuring that modernisation is based on the synergy between teaching, research and innovation, connecting HE institutions, local communities and regions, as well as innovative approaches to improve the relevance of the curricula, including information and communication technologies (ICT). Also, the increase of completion



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rates remains a challenge in many Member States, particularly within disadvantaged groups. The graduates of vocational education and training (VET) record positive rates of labour market integration – the apprenticeships and dual VET schemes are particularly important as they support the acquisition of relevant competencies that facilitate the transition to the labour market. Promoting workplace learning should be continued, along with a better anticipation of competencies needed in the labour market. In addition, strategies for lifelong learning are needed in order to ensure permeability between different forms and levels of learning, between education and training to the labour market, especially since the adult education is the basis for up-skilling and re-skilling (professionalization and re-professionalization).

Also, another point of interest relates to supporting internationalisation in HE by developing strategic partnerships and joint courses, promoting mobility for students, staff and researchers, along with facilitating learning mobility through transparency, quality assurance, validation and recognition of competencies, together with a better monitoring of mobility. Finally, the development of stronger links between education, business environment and research, as well as the involvement of social partners and civil society in the achievement of the ET 2020 goals (made in 2009) are encouraged:

- = Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality;
- = Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training;
- = Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship;
- = Developing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship at all levels of education and training.

Thereby, the priorities arising based on the analysis of documents promoted at European level concern:

- = Relevant and quality competencies, with a focus on learning outcomes for employability, innovation and active citizenship;
- = Inclusive education, equality, non-discrimination and promotion of civic competences;
- = Open and innovative education and training, with a focus on adapting to the digital age;
- = Strong support for teachers;
- = Transparency and recognition of competences and qualifications in order to facilitate learning and workforce mobility;
- = Sustainable investments, performance and effectiveness of education and training.

The structure below (in tabular format included in Annex 1) reflects the European priorities centered on HE, along with the directions recommended by the European institutions, to which are added educational policy proposals for each priority and the actual measures proposed for implementation.



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4. Priorities

4.1. Priority 1. Relevant and quality competencies, with a focus on learning outcomes for employability, innovation and active citizenship.

As apparent from the answers given by teachers, the new generations are increasingly less willing to learn by methods considered “traditional”, thus highlighting a change in the teaching and learning methods, especially since these processes are influenced by new technologies and the development of digital literacy. In response to this, there is a trend towards the increased use of online platforms (MOOCS, Moodle, Blackboard, Googlesites, etc.) by teachers as teaching materials and the interaction with these platforms for communication between teacher and student. Also, while the perception of teachers on the extent to which the faculty/department contributes to train the skills of using a foreign language and the computer/modern technology is mostly a positive one, it is not the same for the entrepreneurship spirit.

Thus, *a first line of approach* could be *strengthening the development of transversal competences and key competences*, focusing on entrepreneurial, linguistic and digital skills. To achieve this, a proposal would be to create entrepreneurial hubs at regional level, around large universities, providing entrepreneurial, digital and linguistic training for high school and HE graduates (transversal program that can be designed as a training program or specialisation program for bachelor/master degree) and could contribute to the development of graduates’ transversal competences and key competences.

A *second line of approach* to strengthening this first priority formulated at European level is *the reaffirmation of strategies for lifelong learning*, which addresses the educational transition stages and those between vocational education and training (VET), higher education (HE) and adult education (AE), including non-formal and informal learning, as well as the stage covered from education and training to the labour market.

Although the responses of students in terms of preparation for the labour market show that the majority (51%) seems to trust the quality of higher education, stating that there is an applicability of the information, content and lessons learned during their student life in their professional life, there is a 25% share of students who think that, during faculty, they acquire to a small extent the abilities and skills they need at work. The students’ opinion is also shared by teachers, who consider that the most part that graduates find it easier to find a job in their field they prepare, without considering that the things learned in college and those requested at employment are different. However, it stands out a contradiction between these views and those offered by employers, who state in the interviews conducted that educational offer of universities is not correlated to the practical field.



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In order to support the acquisition of skills and correlate them directly to the experience in the labour market, a proposal refers to supporting lifelong learning strategies and recognition of internships within industry through certifications and credit points. One line of *approach* in this respect is to *promote the labour market and social relevance of higher education*, including better forecasting of labour market needs, new forms of curriculum, more learning activities based on practice and increased cooperation between institutions and employers.

According to students, universities offer a wide range of internships, which are seen by students as helpful in preparing them for the labour market, in contrast with the employers' opinion, who consider these internships as insufficient, failing to contribute to the real development of practical professional skills. Therefore, initiatives in this regard should be continued and supported, *a proposal* being *the development of cooperation between higher education institutions and employers*. This can be achieved by creating Advisory Councils of universities, composed of representatives of business environment, institutions, NGOs, media, etc., thus meeting the needs expressed by employers, who now believe that the relationship with academia is sporadic and unpredictable, centered particularly on professional practice for students. Also, a Centre of career guidance and counselling could be established/promoted in each faculty, involving representatives from the private sector or it could be also considered introducing components such as a "Community Project" where students participate in an internship in a company/organization/institution, and the bibliography, reports, course sheets, learning objectives etc. are made collaboratively by student, teacher-tutor, employer-mentor. This cooperation could contribute to a better prediction of labour market needs in medium and long term, thereby supporting the anticipation and the development of educational programs that meet those needs.

4.2. Priority 2. Inclusive education, equality, non-discrimination and promotion of civic competences.

One line of approach which isn't necessarily apparent in the responses to the questionnaire applied, but is an important direction at European level and should be considered with a view to increasing the quality of higher education in Romania, is *addressing the diversity of learners and increasing access to inclusive and quality education and training for all* (including those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds). This can be achieved by increasing access to the labour market for all, through the implementation of tax deductions for employers that integrate graduates coming from disadvantaged groups (minorities, people with disabilities, etc.) into the labour market. This initiative must be accompanied by increased access to quality education for all, which, in a first stage, can be achieved by facilitating distance education (especially for people with disabilities) by introducing video-conferencing systems (live broadcasts of courses with the possibility of virtual interaction between student-teacher-colleagues).



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In terms of quality assurance, it can be considered broadening the scope of activities of quality assurance bodies by defining procedures for quality assurance programs and courses provided online and training programs for adults, provided by state and private accredited institutions.

Another line of approach under this priority is about dealing with gender differences in education and promoting more balanced educational choices from gender perspective. This is possible by promoting gender equality in higher education, a proposal in this regard being the introduction of excellence grants for women in science and technology and for men in humanities, traditionally associated with women (Pedagogy for example).

4.3. Priority 3. Open and innovative education and training, with a focus on adapting to the digital age.

In order to support this priority related to open and innovative education and training as they are described at European level, a *line of approach* could be to develop the participatory governance by fostering the involvement of learners, teachers, parents and the local community – civic groups, social partners and private environment. In this way, it can be considered the route “from education to vocation” – facilitating the transition of graduates to the labour market. This can be achieved by creating regional centers in major academic centers, based on public funding and contributions from the private sector, providing training opportunities for academia and the private sector, dedicated to graduates of any level who can't find a job within six months from graduation, with a component of adult education for reprofessionalization.

Another proposal relates to the implementation of a transition phase to the labour market (for beneficiaries aged 18 to 24 years) – composed of opportunities for training, education and support in finding a job or the guarantee of a place of practice/apprenticeships for people under 24 who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs).

Regarding quality assurance in higher education, the answer of academic staff to the questionnaire conducted indicates in a proportion of 42% that the most effective way of assessing the quality of study programs in higher education is the evaluation based on a national system of performance indicators reported by universities. In other words, we can consider this as the expression of preference for a standardized evaluation and reporting system, which could contribute to a limitation of subjectivity, and *a proposal* in this regard could be *redefining performance indicators at institutional level*, involving all stakeholders (higher education institutions, teachers, students and employers).

Thus, quality assurance would be achieved by focusing on the processes of quality assurance (internal quality management at all levels, study programs, departments, institutions) and on outcomes (learning outcomes) – through the transition from procedural accountability to substantial accountability. This transition should be



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also supported by a transparency of internal quality assurance process in higher education.

Another line of approach could be the development of synergies between education, research and innovation, with a perspective on sustainable development. Although from the academic staff point of view, the mission of universities is teaching (to a large and very large extent – 79%), rather than research (to small and very small extent – 61%), and attracting research grants is regarded by teachers as a less important criterion in the evaluation of universities, the European priorities and the development potential of the research area (probably underestimated today in the absence of best-practice models or a successful precedent) *a proposal* relates to the development of education, research and innovation in HE and community for sustainable development. This could be achieved either by making it possible for higher education institutions to be contracted by companies for conducting research and by supporting the collaboration between HE and Research & Development departments of companies, either through the establishment of so-called “idea banks” within HE institutions, financially and logistically supported by the private sector, aiming to monitor the evolution and conduct research in a field for its sustainable development. Another proposal made to develop research would be to support initiatives promoting research ethics, impartiality and scientific rigour and the development and implementation of membership procedures of HE institutions to the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

4.4. Priority 4. Strong support for teachers.

The two main lines of approach to this priority target the *recruitment, selection and training of the best and most suitable candidates for the teaching profession*, along with *increasing the attractiveness and prestige of the teaching profession* (through comprehensive strategies).

These lines may be followed by increasing the attractiveness of the teaching profession for graduates of higher education by implementing a program to attract the best graduates of HE into the teaching career – a program providing training, support for relocation, a monthly, determined period stipend for working within disadvantaged environments.

Currently, the recruitment, selection and training of future academics is deficient; young performers are usually selected and they begin teaching without any kind of didactic training or with a general and insufficient training in psycho-pedagogical modules which are basically designed for primary and secondary school teachers. The teachers in higher education also need a professional and adapted training system, which can be thought as a master degree and/or mandatory postgraduate courses.

Moreover, another component is the professionalization of university management, which can be achieved by implementing modular training programs for future



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managers (middle and top management). Also, the administrative management has to be taken over by specialized, non-academic personnel.

4.5. Priority 5. Transparency and recognition of competences and qualifications in order to facilitate learning and workforce mobility.

An important *line of approach* is to support the mobility of students, personnel and researchers, as well as the strategic partnerships and joint courses through the development of internationalization of higher education. According to students' responses, there is a major orientation towards recognition of utility which a study period at other university has (76% of respondents consider it useful to a large and very large extent). However, less than half of respondents plan to follow a period of study / research or work in another country. A proposal in support of this line would be, firstly, is to simplify the process of recognition of qualifications and diplomas from exchanges and mobility. Then it could be useful to introduce, within each area of specialization, an international foreign language in order to allow access of foreign students to mobility.

Not in the least, it can be considered the component of internationalization of quality evaluation process by implementing a procedure supporting international participation in internal/external evaluation of institutions of higher education, thus providing a more specific context for transparency, comparability and transfer of best practices.

4.6. Priority 6. Sustainable investments, performance and effectiveness of education and training systems.

In order to support sustainable investments, also welcoming the development of cooperation between higher education institutions and labour market, *a line of approach* in this regard could be the development of a regulatory framework to facilitate the operation of PPPs in institutions of higher education, to support *the development of public-private partnerships* (PPP) between universities and businesses, particularly in research. The junction with innovation and entrepreneurship can be stimulated by the development of a flexible framework for initiating and encouraging spin-offs from higher education institutions

5 Annex. Priorities at the European level, focused on Higher Education

European priority	Approaches	Educational policy proposal	Proposed measure
1	1.a. Strengthening the development of transversal competences and key competences, focusing on entrepreneurial, digital and linguistic skills.	Entrepreneurial Hub – the development of transversal competences and key competences of graduates	Establishing regional entrepreneurial hubs around major universities, which provide entrepreneurial, digital and linguistic training for high school and HE graduates (transversal program which can be designed as a training program or specialization program – bachelor / master)
	1.b. Reaffirming lifelong learning strategies and those addressing transition stages as well as between VET, HE and AL, including non-formal and informal learning, as well as from education and training to labour market	Supporting lifelong learning strategies	Recognizing internships in industry by certifications and credit points
	1.c. Promoting the labour market and social relevance of higher education, including a better projection of labour market needs, new forms of curriculum, more practice-based learning and increased cooperation between institutions and employers	Supporting cooperation between higher education institutions and employers	Creating advisory councils in universities, composed of representatives of businesses, institutions, NGOs, media, etc.
			Developing a “Community Project” type where students participate in an internship in a company/organization/institution, and the bibliography, reports, course sheets, learning objectives

			etc. are made collaboratively by student, teacher-tutor, employer-mentor.
			Establishing a career guidance and counselling center in every university, involving representatives from the private sector
2	2.a. Addressing the diversity of learners and increasing access to inclusive quality education and training for all (including those from disadvantaged backgrounds)	Increasing access to employment for all	Implementing tax deductions for employers that integrate graduates coming for disadvantaged groups (minorities, people with disabilities, etc.) into the labor market.
		Increasing access to quality education for all	Facilitating distance education (especially for people with disabilities) by introducing video-conferencing systems (live broadcasts of courses with the possibility of virtual interaction between student-teacher-colleagues).
		Broadening the scope of activities of quality assurance bodies	Defining procedures for quality assurance programs and courses provided online and training programs for adults, provided by state and private accredited institutions.
	2.b. Addressing gender differences in education and promoting more balanced educational choices from the gender perspective	Promoting gender equality in HE	Introducing excellence grants for women in science and technology and for men in humanities, traditionally dedicated to women (Pedagogy for example).

3	<p>3.a. Developing the participatory governance by fostering the involvement of learners, teachers, parents and the local community – civic groups, social partners and private environment</p>	<p>From education to vocation – facilitating the transition of graduates to the labor market</p>	<p>Facilitating the transition from education to labor market by creating regional centers in major academic centers – Bucharest, Iași, Cluj, Timișoara, Brașov Galați, etc., (public funding + private sector, training for academia + the private sector), for graduates of any level who can't find a job within six months from graduation, with a component of adult education for re-professionalization).</p>
			<p>Implementing a transition phase to the labor market (for beneficiaries aged 18 to 24 years) – composed of opportunities for training, education and support in finding a job</p>
			<p>The guarantee of a place of practice/apprenticeships for people under 24 who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs).</p>
		<p>Redefining performance indicators at institutional level involving all stakeholders (higher education institutions, teachers, students and employers)</p>	<p>Quality assurance by focusing on the processes of quality assurance (internal quality management at all levels, study programs, departments, institutions) and on outcomes (learning outcomes) – through the transition from procedural accountability to substantial accountability</p>

		More transparency for the process of internal quality assurance in higher education	
	3.b. Developing synergies between education, research and innovation, with a perspective on sustainable development	Developing education, research and innovation in HE and community for sustainable development	Making it possible for higher education institutions to be contracted by companies for conducting research / the collaboration between HE and Research & Development departments of companies
			Establishing the so-called “idea banks” within HE institutions, financially and logistically supported by the private sector, aiming to monitor the evolution and conduct research in a field for its sustainable development
		Supporting initiatives promoting research ethics, impartiality and scientific rigor	Developing and implementing membership procedures of HE institutions to the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers
4	4.a. Recruitment, selection and training of the best and most suitable candidates for the teaching profession	Increasing the attractiveness of the teaching profession for graduates of higher education	Implementing a program to attract the best graduates of HE into the teaching career (nationwide implementation of a program similar to “Teach for Romania”) – a program providing training, support for relocation, a monthly, determined period (minimum 2 years) stipend for working within disadvantaged environments

	4.b. Increasing the attractiveness and prestige of the teaching profession (through comprehensive strategies)	Professionalization of university management	Implementing modular training programs for future managers (middle-management – department managers and top management – dean, rector)
5	5.a. Supporting the mobility of students, personnel and researchers, as well as the strategic partnerships and joint courses through the development of internationalization of HE	Supporting the mobility in HE and development of internationalization	Simplifying the process of recognition of qualifications and diplomas from exchanges and mobility Introducing, within each area of specialization, an international foreign language in order to allow access of foreign students to mobility
		Internationalization of quality evaluation process	Implementing a procedure supporting international participation in internal/ external evaluation of institutions of higher education, thus providing a more specific context for transparency, comparability and transfer of best practices
6	6.a. Exploring the potential of IPE (interprofessional education) by promoting funding models to attract actors, capital and partners from the private sector	Developing a regulatory framework to facilitate the operation of PPP in HE	Developing public-private partnerships (PPP) between HE and business environment in research



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