HIGHER EDUCATION REFORMS IN EASTERN EUROPE. A HUNGARIAN-ROMANIAN CASE STUDY

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Abstract. *The paper analyzes, comparatively, the Hungarian and Romanian higher education systems, based on four dimensions: history, structure and financing, internationalization, quality assurance. The perspective of the analysis is the integration of European ways to reform the university, pursued by the Bologna process, and the replacement of traditional, nation (or groups of nations) - specific models, with a unified, common market-driven model of education. While Hungary fell into the sphere of influence of the Humboldtian model, Romania was more inclined towards the Napoleonic model, although its period of flourishing was very short. The challenges that both countries have to face, as well as their strengths and weaknesses are reviewed in this analysis synthesizing the main features of the two systems, in the light of the European vision.*

Keywords: higher education, Hungary, Romania, Bologna process.

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1. Introduction

Comparative research in higher education is quite popular, recently, given the issues raised by the Bologna process, and the worldwide trend to classify institutions and systems of higher education. Kogan et al. (2006) have edited a book on *Transforming Higher Education*, taking a comparative perspective and reviewing the systemic reforms affecting, during 1970 and 1990, education in Northern Europe and in the UK. A recent study by Frølich et al. (2010) compares funding systems of higher education in Northern Europe and Portugal. Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2010) address market orientation of universities, in England and Israel. The matter of quality assurance in English and Czech universities is investigated by Mertova and Webster (2009), from the perspective of the academic staff in the two countries.

It may be inferred from the quoted references that comparative approaches to higher education, either holistic, or focusing on particular fields (market orientation, quality assurance) are usually narrow in scope – two or three countries comparisons, and target either similarities (countries belonging to the same cultural cluster), or dissimilarities – Northern vs. Southern Europe, Europe vs. Middle East. The first inference may be explained by the many country-specific differences in higher education systems, which may limit the relevance of large cross-country comparisons (Winterton, 2009). As far as the second inference is concerned, our approach will take the first option, of examining, comparatively, two systems supposed to be rather similar, the Hungarian and the Romanian systems of higher education.

In 2010, Sursock and Smidt published the latest TRENDS report, evaluating a decade of change in European higher education. The preamble of the report draws attention to the regional and community-dependent differences between higher education institutions, which have to be accounted for. Thus, the Bologna process puts forward the Europeanization, as "the regional version of internationalization or globalization" (Teichler, 2004, p.4). When asked to list the three most important reforms implemented in their country in the context of the Bologna process, Hungarian respondents (belonging to the National Rectors' Conference and to the HEIs) have made only one choice, that is, *research policies*. Neither funding and autonomy, nor quality assurance were mentioned. The so-called 'triple helix' of the universities and their partners in the public and private sector, and its effects on European research policies, may provide an argument for the choice made by Hungarian respondents. As far as the effects of the EHEA on their institution are concerned, for both Hungary and Romania, between 50 and 70% of the universities declare that they have been very positive.

The systems we analyze belong to the Eastern European cluster, have experienced post-communist transition and are recent members of the EU. This is why our assumption is that their educational systems and their challenges in managing the Bologna process are similar. Our approach starts from a comparative analysis on data from the European Values Survey (4th wave, 2008), based on the variable *how much confidence in education system*. The results are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1

The level of confidence in the national education system

How much confidence in education system	Very much	Much	Not very much	None at all
Hungary	8.1	43.3	40.6	8.0
Romania	27.4	46.6	21.7	4.3

Source: European Values Survey (2008).

The data indicate that Romanians tend to be more confident in their education system. However, responses are unspecific, as the stakeholders of the educational system, in general, and of higher education, in particular, are not directly targeted. If we correlate the respondent's education level with the confidence in the education system, the results are the ones presented in Tables 2 a) and 2 b):

Table 2a

The level of confidence by level of education (Romania)

How much confidence in education system / Education level	Very much	Much	Not very much	None at all	Total
Lower	10.6	16.4	5.5	1.1	33.7
Middle	14.4	25.0	11.2	1.6	52.3
Upper	3.6	6.3	3.1	0.8	13.9
Total	28.7	47.8	19.9	3.6	100

Source: European Values Survey (2008).

Table 2b

The level of confidence by level of education (Hungary)

How much confidence in education system / Education level	Very much	Much	Not very much	None at all	Total
Lower	3.2	19.0	11.4	2.9	36.5
Middle	3.9	21.9	19.5	3.5	48.8
Upper	1.4	6.5	5.7	1.1	14.7
Total	8.6	47.4	36.5	7.4	100

Source: European Values Survey (2008).

It may be seen that the surplus of confidence, in the case of Romania, comes from the lower and middle educated people. The figures for upper educated people are roughly comparable, between the two countries, leading us to the presumption that the levels of confidence in higher education systems are basically the same. The structure of the samples, in terms of proportions of lower, middle and upper education, being similar, we base our analysis on this hypothesis, that not only the two systems are comparable, but the common perception on the systems of higher education in the two countries is comparable.

2. Literature review

Kaderábková (2008) assesses, in a comparative perspective, the competitiveness of the Visegrad countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia), based on their level of Lisbon strategy implementation. Her conclusions underline the weak points of the EU-4, which lag behind the EU-25 in matters like R&D expenditure, patent applications, and percentage of high-tech exports. A similar analysis for Slovenia is performed by Kovacic (2007), while Laužacka et al. (2009) take a more education system-specific approach, discussing the evolution of the concept of *competence* in Lithuania, during the communism to post-communism transition. They discuss a phenomenon, which may be regarded as common to all ex-communist countries in Eastern Europe, the substitution of the *competence* concept, under the Soviet influence. It was mainly replaced by *qualifications*, which were formally acquired, once and for all, and rather narrow in scope. Personal initiative and personal influence on the career choice or path was practically annulled. The post-communist opportunism and apathy that Laužacka et al. diagnose further complicate the attempt to regain the true sense of *competence*. Thus, before talking of convergent frameworks of competences, the concept has to be rebuilt, in ex-communist countries, making sure that it means the same thing to everyone.

Mitter (2003) takes a comparative Central and Eastern European perspective, comparing educational systems in Russia, Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic, in the wider framework of political and social transformations, after the fall of communism.

Talking also about changing mentalities, Jones et al. (2011) discuss student attitudes on entrepreneurship lectures in Polish universities. While the concern for business creation (see, for instance, the University of Twente), science parks, incubators, is popular in Western universities, the authors assess the viability of this trend in an emerging EU country. Their assumption is that, after the fall of the communist regime, people in Eastern Europe want to live better, and doing business is seen as a vector of an improved living standard, explaining why the entrepreneurial orientation is present in these countries. Their research shows that, although Polish students have a high entrepreneurial intention from the beginning, their enrolment in dedicated lectures attracts additional students and provides the emergent entrepreneurs with the skills needed to successfully start and run their businesses.

Packham et al. (2010) enlarge the scope of the research, by comparing entrepreneurial education in France, Germany and Poland. While the issue of transferring Rhineland capitalism to Poland is quite in focus, little attention was given to transferring academic practises. Still, the willingness of Eastern European students to start businesses may compensate the lack of expertise in the field of providing entrepreneurship lectures. While German students regarded lectures in entrepreneurship more like an educational experience, and opted for an employee career, Polish students were highly motivated to really start a business soon after graduation.

Iakovleva et al. (2011) assess student entrepreneurial orientation in 13 countries, among which Romania, Russia, Ukraine and Czech Republic, from the developing cluster. Their comparative analysis, between developed and developing countries shows that theories working in developed economies can be successfully applied to developing economies, which enables good practices transfer.

It may be seen the interest arisen, in research, by entrepreneurship education in Eastern Europe, which is a natural reflection of the discussion on the transformations of the market, in post-communist countries (see, for instance, Hashi and Krasniqi, 2011). Still, this attractiveness of the entrepreneurship topic leaves many other aspects underexplored. Secondly, traditional pairs, as Germany-Poland, are analyzed, while little emphasis is placed on comparing countries belonging to the same Eastern cluster.

Here, we have identified a methodological research gap:

a) the studies dedicated to higher education in Eastern Europe are, mainly, questionnaire-based, targeting well-defined samples of students/ professors, on rather narrow issues, lacking the "bird's eye view" on the evolution of the system;

b) the comparative perspective, inside the Eastern European cluster, is limited.

The wide, policy-level approaches to the transformations of the Eastern European education are concentrated in the early 1990s, when the new world was *in the making*. As time passes, more focused approaches replace this general picture, allowing for similarities tracking and for providing comprehensive explanations for observed phenomena.

Our attempt brings together two Eastern European countries, recent members of the EU, whose educational systems are not only supposed to be similar, but which have historical ties going back to medieval times. Thus, comparing Hungary and Romania, on more general rounds, can provide insights into the mechanisms of educational reforms in Eastern Europe and into the similarities of their strong and weak points.

3. Methodology

Our comparative analysis of Hungarian and Romanian higher education systems is based on four levels. One of the pillars of the analysis is history, with the significant divide in pre-modern, modern, communist and post-communist époques. Central Europe is perceived as a "shared history", which delineates a geographic space. In this context, our focus on history, in this region, appears as legitimate. The pre-modern stage is characterized by fragmentary approaches to higher education foundation, which is in the logic of the region, disputed between empires, languages, identities. Given that the communist forced uniformity has met a rather fragile system, which had gone through only several decades of modernity, in the European spirit, our hypothesis is that fragmentation will continue, as a trend, in the post-communist period, postponing integration.

The second pillar of the analysis is structure and funding, following the historical premises into the actual ways of configuring the higher education system in Hungary and Romania. The present structure of the system outlines reminiscent traits and breakdowns, while the funding schemes illustrate a model of limited autonomy towards political power. We hypothesise that, as centralism remains a feature of post-communist societies, that the two systems are much similar in their funding allocation mechanisms, leading to perceived scarcity of resources.

The core principles of the European higher education integration are internationalization and quality assurance. The need for common standards, on the one hand, which make possible student and staff mobility, and the need for clear, accountable standards, on the other, create the premises of a unified system, whose standards are the same, while its means may be different. This motivates our inclusion of internationalization and quality assurance among the dimensions reviewed when comparatively analyzing the two systems. The differences in means of achieving the standards agreed across Europe may transform the integration in European higher education, pursued by the Bologna process in a vision without a ground. How effective the national means are, in achieving internationalization and quality standards, in the two countries in focus, is another one of our research questions. Our third hypothesis, referring to internationalization and quality assurance, is that both are incipient processes, for both countries, whose efforts should be increased in these areas.

Considering the four dimensions, we perform a descriptive analysis of the two systems, synthesizing their evolution and the significance of the reforms they went through, in the last years, for the creation of a European dimension in higher education. Romania's cultural pattern, as outlined by the historian Lucian Boia, implied an obstinate orientation towards the West, with French periods alternating with German periods, while tending to ignore the Central European model. In this context, we find instructive an examination of the evolution of two neighbouring countries, which are presumed to exhibit similar patterns of conceiving their higher education systems.

After 1989, Hungary applied a shock strategy as far as its economic system was concerned (Kornai, 2000), while Romania adopted a slower change, blocked by powerful inertial forces (Brătianu, 2008). The analysis we perform aims to identify whether these patterns are preserved in higher education reforms.

4. A comparison of educational reforms in Hungary and Romania

4.1. From early to late modernity

Hungary's higher education system goes back to medieval times. Its' first university was founded in 1367, in Pécs, by King Louis the first. Pope Urban V, who confirmed the new university in a Bull from September 1367, wished that it lasted forever: "in the city of Pécs there should be, and remain forever, a university with faculties of Canon Law and Roman Law, together with other accepted faculties,

except for that of theology". Actually, the university was in place only until the beginning of the 15th century.

One hundred years after its foundation, in 1467, King Matthias sets another university, in Pozsony. After another century, in 1581, Prince Báthory István reformed education in Transylvania, and founded a Jesuit college in Cluj. In 1635 bishop Pázmány Péter founded the University of Nagyszombat, later the University of Pest. In the late 17th century, the university awarded doctoral degrees, in the form of university disputations, taking place monthly, on a Saturday afternoon.

The first higher education institutions in Romania, in the late Middle Ages, were the Academies. In 1640, the Moldavian prince Vasile Lupu had founded, in a renowned church in Iasi, the *Academia Vasiliana*, lead by Sofronie Poceapski, ex-rector of the Kiev College. In 1694, in Bucharest, Constantin Brâncoveanu sets the Princiary Academy, functioning in the St. Sava Monastery. These schools, however, were not teaching in Romanian, but in Latin, Slavonic and, later, Greek.

Modern times allowed old universities to be reformed, and to serve the interests of the nation-states, which were beginning to affirm their identity.

In the 18th century, under the rule of Maria Theresa, the University of Nagyszombat was reformed, subordinated to the state, and a faculty of medicine was added to it. The Jesuits, who had previously ruled the university, kept control only over the philosophy and theology faculties, until the abolition of their religious order, in 1773, when the university became totally state-owned. It was, then, moved to Buda, in the royal castle. On June 25th, 1780, on the 40th anniversary of the queen's coronation, the university was officially reopened.

In 1782, an engineering institute was added to the university, which was later transformed by the minister Eötvös József, in 1870, in the József Nádor Technical University. This was the first technical university in the world.

In the 19th century, in 1866, Hungary had almost 5000 students, and their number increased to almost 19,000 in the ante-bellum period, in 1913. After the Trianon, the University of Kolosvár (founded in 1872) was moved to Szeged, and the University of Pozsony was moved to Pécs. In 1920, a Faculty of Economics was added to the József Nádor Technical University.

In 1835, Prince Mihail Sturdza opens the *Academia Mihaileana*, considered to be the first modern university in Moldavia, teaching in Romanian language. This Academy will soon become, in 1860, Romania's oldest university, the University of Iasi. Under the same ruler, Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza, the University of Bucharest was founded, in 1864. A law of secondary and higher education was issued in 1898.

In Transylvania, a university is set in 1872, in Cluj, in Hungarian language, on the premises created, from the Middle Ages, by Báthory. After the First World War, in 1919, the Romanian university is founded, in Cluj.

In Bucovina, the University of Cernăuți was founded in 1875, by Franz Joseph, in German language. After the end of WWI, when Bucovina was included in the Great Romania, the university was renamed Carol the first, teaching in Romanian.

The characteristic of the pre-modern and early modern higher education, in Romanian territories, were the teaching in other languages than Romanian, and the link between school and church, which explains the prevalence of Slavonic and Greek, as teaching languages. Obviously, in territories not belonging to Romania, before 1918, the teaching language was the language of the Empire. So, it was only a century ago when the higher education system was unified and Romanian universities became representative institutions.

Between the two world wars, the majority of the 11,747 Hungarian students were enrolled in humanistic faculties, while only 11% studied medicine and 7.2% studied engineering (academic year 1937/1938).

The years between the two world wars were characterized by a European vocation of Romanian universities. Their graduates were pursuing PhDs abroad, especially in France, which generated, in the 1930s, a joke: Romania has five universities, the fifth being… the Sorbonne.

After the Second World War, Hungarian universities were transformed according to communist demands. A University of Economy was founded in 1948, The Technical University of Miskolk in 1949, the University of Transport in 1951. In the 60s, after the repression of the 1956 revolution, the statute of the universities improved, as they gained a relative autonomy. In the 70s, art colleges and physical education colleges were added to the university network.

In Romania, according to Nicolescu (2002), there was an overlap between political affiliation and managerial/ teaching positions in universities, which lead to high centralization and professional compromise. When, in Europe, policy makers started to discuss about common policies in higher education (Gavari, 2008), in Romania, the communist regime was destroying the values that have flourished in the system during the 1920s-1930s.

Curriculums were distorted, with some disciplines inflated, according to the claimed needs of the communist state, and other subjects becoming taboo (Marga, 1994). In the early phases of communism, students themselves were discriminated based on their social background, a discrimination which, practically, did not stop until the fall of the regime. In the 1970s, a large number of students were enrolled in evening classes, and the places for day courses were diminished. Also, places were very limited for some fields – humanities, social sciences, as industry was considered the priority.

4.2. Post-1989 transformations

The main phenomenon emerging in Hungarian higher education after 1989 was the rapid increase in enrolment, compared by Berde and Ványolos (2008) with the situation in the Western universities after WWII. The trend is similar in all post-communist countries in the region. While in US and the Western European countries the peak in enrolment was two decades before, in the 70s and 80s, in Hungary the number of students increased four times, from 1989 to 2005, according to a 2006 statistics of the Ministry of Education. Possible explanations may be increasing

demands from the job market, which began to liberalize and absorb skilled workforce, and status-related issues. After 50 years in which the university graduate position was somewhat prohibitive, people reacted to the possibility of an enlarged access to university studies. As demand exceeded, at a certain moment, the offer of the state-supported institutions, private education began to flourish, in post-communist countries. In Romania, due to the lack of proper legislation, the proliferation of universities, mainly private, was somewhat chaotic, quantitative, but not qualitative.

Berde and Ványolos (2008) outline the fact that the pattern of growth of private higher education is different, in Hungary, as compared with the other countries in the region. By the end of the 90s, the students enrolled in private universities amounted to 13% of the total student population, and the proportion remained fairly constant in the 2000s. Same as in Romania, private universities in Hungary are also publicly funded. Although state funding is predominant in Hungarian higher education system, after 2000 it is declining, giving place to tuition-based financing.

In Romania, after 1989, the reforms in education, as in other fields, were regarded with lots of hope. But, according to Birzea (1996), things did not advance that smoothly. This was mainly because the previous 'elite' did not disappear at once, after the Revolution. Their willingness to further control social processes affected education as well. Against this background, Birzea analyzes the choice facing all CEE countries: *continuity*, or *breakdown*?

The landmark of continuity is not, in itself, very clear. Should it be the inter-bellum European vocation, but then, what should be restored? The institutions as they were – which, in our opinion, would be a mistake – or the spirit infusing those institutions? Should it be the reforms of the late 70s, in Hungary, for instance? In Romania, as well, the period between 1964 and 1978 is characterized by some efforts towards normality. Should it be the reforms from 1989 on, whose contradictions and abandonments depending on political shifts lead to distrust and apathy in the system (because, obviously, only something which is rotten has to be reformed so many times…)?

Breakdown was not an option taken into account in Romania, partly due to the reasons mentioned above. It has opted rather for the *reforms of reforms*, than for a radical change.

Reisz (1994), somewhat on the contrary, notices that, at the lowest levels in the system, that is, professors themselves, the change of political regimes removed barriers in redesigning curriculums, eliminating obsolete and politicized subjects and aligning teaching with present-day research interests. The factory-like image of the university, producing skilled workforce, not according to market needs, but to political planning, was replaced by autonomous institutions, still state funded, but otherwise able to adjust their offer to the market demand.

According to Kolodko (2009), who performed an analysis of the transformations Poland underwent in two decades of post-communism, only a mix of

the system change policy and of the development policy may yield good results. The question is whether Romanian, as well as Hungarian higher education system has succeeded in configuring this desirable mix.

5. Structure and funding of the two higher education systems

5.1. Structure

According to Mureşan (2008), there are two types of countries facing the Bologna process: those who had, already, a higher education system organized by cycles, and those having to redesign entirely their system. Romania already had cycles, before Bologna (university studies, deepened studies, transformed into master, and PhD), but had to readjust the corresponding number of years and the curriculums. This creates another challenge: either the same amount of subjects is split differently between cycles, or the system as a whole is reorganized. In theory, the second process should take place (Brătianu, 2005), but in practice, the first strategy is more at hand.

According to the Trends 2010 report, by 2010 both Hungary and Romania reported an 85to 100% implementation of the Bologna cycles.

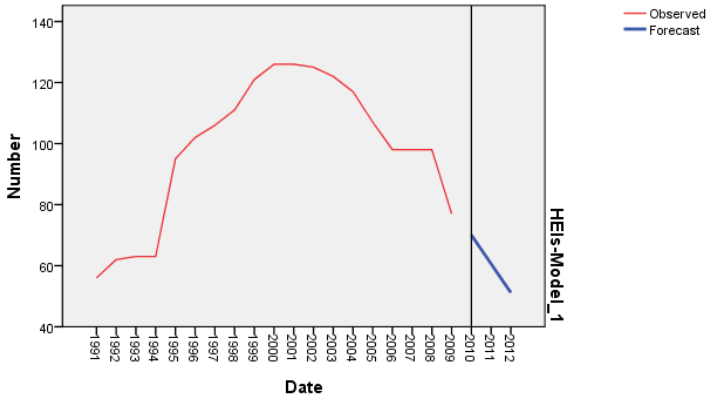
The higher education institutions in Hungary used to be subordinated to five different ministries, until the law of 1993, which reunited them under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. The law amendment in 1996 split higher education in four levels: *higher vocational training*, lasting for two years, *colleges*, lasting for 3-4 years, *universities*, lasting for 4-6 years, *doctoral and other postgraduate programs*, lasting for 2-3 years. A university grants master degrees in at least two subjects, and also doctoral degrees, thus differentiating from colleges. The system is somewhat similar to the German one, with the shorter-term *Fachhochschule* and long-term universities.

The same amendment allowed universities to merge. Thus, from 89 HEIs before the amendment, in the year 2000 (one year after Hungary has signed the Bologna declaration) there are 12 state universities, 11 state colleges, 26 church-owned HEIs, and 6 foundation colleges. From 199 qualifications granted by universities, and another 214 provided by colleges, the system is left with 107 bachelor qualifications, which should better approach labour market demands. The same dispersion of academic specializations is quoted as a minus of the Romanian HE system (National Reform Programme, 2011), leading to a waste of resources. However, the consortia that the new law of education puts forward may not be the best strategic response to this challenge, as long as economic grounds of mergers prevail over teaching and research motivations.

In Romania, universities are subordinated to the Ministry of Education, having several denominations, along the communist and post-communist period. The ministry consults with the National Council for Scientific Research, The National Council for Higher Education Financing, the National Council for University Qualifications, the National Council for the Attestation of University Titles, Diplomas and Certificates, the National Council for Statistics and Prognosis in Education. The Rectors of

Romanian Universities form the National Council of Rectors, which also serves as a consultative body.

In 1989, Romania had 46 universities, enrolling about 160,000 students. Presently, in Romania there are 56 public universities, 32 private universities, and 23 higher education institutions, which are temporarily accredited. This confirms the trend that Mureşan (2008) observed, that the number of Romanian universities increased greatly soon after 1990, to decrease afterwards. We used missing values analysis for the 2005-2008 period, and the Brown model for time series analysis:



Source: Eurostat (2010).

Figure 1. **The evolution of the number of Romanian universities**

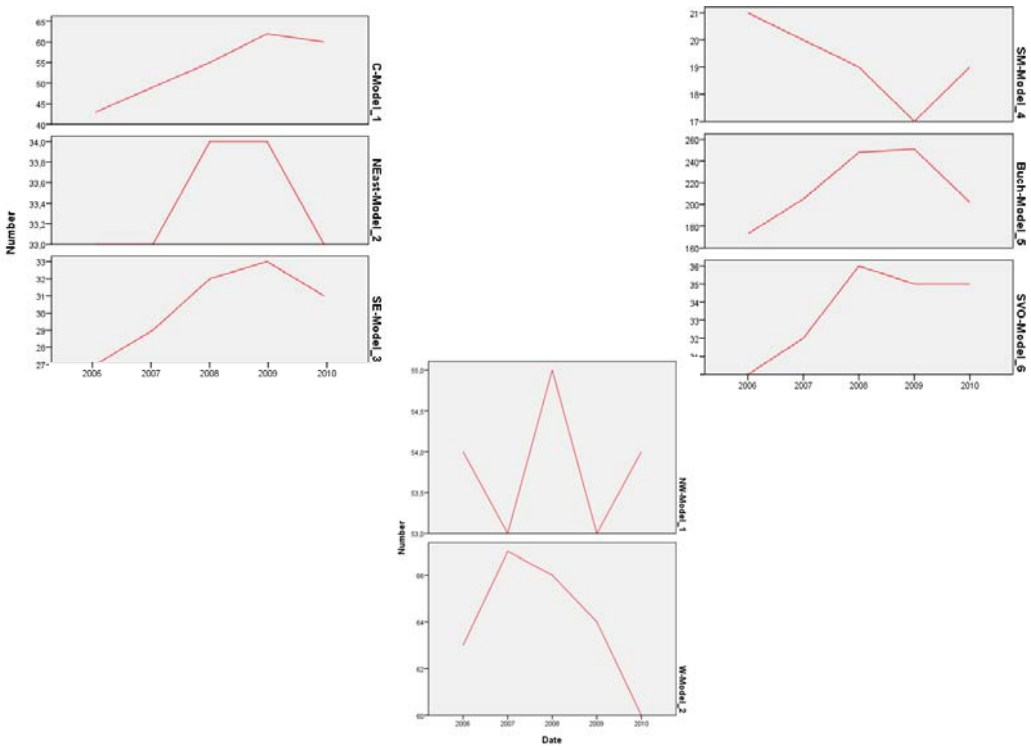
The increase is abrupt, in the mid-90s while the decrease is slow, due, on the one hand, to decreasing demand, following the demographic trend, and better regulatory mechanisms, as far as university accreditation is concerned. It is worth mentioning that the increase in total university number is due, mainly, to private universities. The trend, as forecasted by the model, is still decreasing, which is realistic, in the context of the new evaluation criteria imposed to universities by the new Law of Education, 1/2011.

According to OECD's (2011) *Education at a glance*, the share of the students opting for social sciences, at the level of 2009, has increased, in Hungary, to 42%, as compared with only 12%, in the early 90s. It may be seen that while engineering and science fields have experienced a decrease, medicine and agriculture are roughly stationary, while enrolment in social sciences and humanities has increased significantly. The trend is somewhat common to all post-communist countries, where engineers start to be less employable, on the market (large state-owned industries fail), in the favour of economists and social sciences specialists.

In Romania, in 2008/2009, 31.6% of the students were enrolled in economics, in public universities, and 43.6% in private universities, as compared with only 26.4% in teacher training. The trend exhibited by the choices of the students is, thus, similar to the one illustrated for Hungary.

Although the number of universities is rapidly increasing, we cannot say the same thing about their quality. As proved by a study from 2005 using the Shanghai methodology which is based on the number of Nobel rewards granted for students and teachers, the number of highly cited teachers in total and in the last year and an average indicator of the university, Romania needs to at least double the quality offered to its students in order to be among the 500 universities from the entire world. Hungary, on the other side has 2 universities that are among the first 300 top universities from the globe.

The evolution of the number of students in Romanian universities (% of the total population aged 20-24), based on Eurostat data, for the eight development regions (Centre, North-East, South-East, South-Muntenia, Bucharest, South-West Oltenia), is presented in Figure 2 below:



Source: Eurostat (2010).

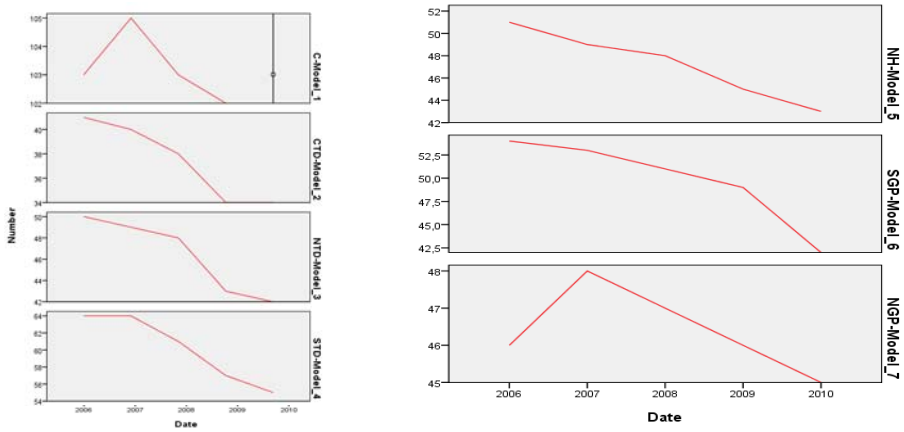
Figure 2. **The evolution of higher education enrolment in Romania (by regions)**

It may be seen that the trend is generally declining, with the exception of the South-Muntenia region, probably due to the recent preference (after the 2008 crisis) of some of the students in this region, normally coming to Bucharest, to follow university

studies at home, if there is this possibility, for cutting costs. Still, until 2008 the trend is increasing for all regions. If we compare this increase with the post-1990 decrease in birth rates, it results that the proportion of Romanian young people enrolled in higher education was dramatically modified, in the last decade. After 2007, when the decrease in birth cohorts began to be visible, at the age of university enrolment, the increase in the number of students is given, according to Pavlenko (2009), by the double-degree-ing, students which are counted twice because they pursue two specialties simultaneously. There is a pressure of the labour market, asking for higher and higher degrees. As Pavlenko continues, nowadays you need a master diploma for the same job your parents qualified for with a baccalaureate. This leads, also, to an increase in the number of older students enrolling in universities (for the sake of "polishing degrees", for getting better chances, in the transformed labour market). From about 3 percent of the 25-29 age group, in 1998, their number increased to 9 percent in 2006 (Pricopie, 2008). Also, the increase is mostly given by a significant increase in the number of people enrolling for masters and PhDs, which means that students take advantage of the fact that the cycles are separated, according to the Bologna provisions. However, Romania still lags behind other European countries in terms of higher education enrolment, and a target of educational reforms, as claimed in the National Reform Program (2011-2013), is the alignment with Europe 2020 objectives: reduce early drop-out rate to less than 10% and improve participation in higher education in the 30-34 years group. Additional challenges, as high unemployment among recent university graduates (one out of four young graduates, according to national statistics) and increased costs of higher education (including, as well, the costs of living as a student) put pressure on the accomplishment of these objectives, in a period of economic crisis. Issues as weak correlation between university fields of study and labour market demands, as well as reduced transferability of university research onto technological or business practice further complicate the picture, as today more than ever, future oriented businesses are dependent on innovations and development of ideas that lead to new products and technologies. Organizations require employees, whose competences trigger the modernization processes, making the firm more competitive (Mândruleanu, 2010).

A similar analysis for Hungary's development regions (Centre – including the capital, Central Transdanubia, Northern Transdanubia, Southern Trasndanubia, Northern Hungary, Northern Great Plain, Southern Great Plain) is presented in Figure 3.

It may be seen that the trend is also descending, but somewhat smoother, as compared with Romanian regions. The 2008 crisis probably lead to a redistribution of students, with more students staying in their home regions, and thus contributing to a more pronounced decline in the capital region.



Source: Eurostat (2010).

Figure 3. **The evolution of the number of Hungarian students, by development regions**

The possibility for Romanian students to pay fees, in the public universities, from 2001 on, which lead to a democratization of access, at the antipodes with the previous elite university model, also contributed to the increase in the number of students, attracted by the opportunity to graduate from a public university, although their admission scores are lower.

Prior to the Bologna transformation, the Romanian higher education system included:

- Short time university education (university colleges of three years);
- Full time university education (universities, institutes, academies).

This structure was a reminiscence of communist regime, with shorter study duration for institutors and sub-engineers, and full time education for other professions (Brătianu, 2008). After the adoption of the Bologna standards, in 2005, the colleges disappeared, and the structure *three-two-three* was mainly adopted.

The ECTS system was introduced in Hungary in the late 90s, in some universities, and became mandatory from 2002 on. From 2006, all HEIs issue the diploma supplement, in Hungarian and English. In Romania, some universities introduce the ECTS in the academic year 1996/1997, and it becomes generally adopted in 2005. In 2009, the number of HEIs in Hungary was of 70, out of which 19 state universities and 10 state colleges, 7 private universities and 34 private colleges. The distribution of the higher education institutions, as of 2010, is presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3

The distribution of higher education institutions in Hungary

Status / Founder		Size (in student number)					Total
		< 1000	1-5000	5-10.000	10-20.000	>20.000	
University	State	4	2	0	8	5	19
	Private	2	0	0	0	0	2
	Church	3	1	1	0	0	5
Total		9	3	1	8	5	26
College	State	1	5	2	2	0	10
	Private	5	7	1	0	0	13
	Church	19	1	0	0	0	20
Total		25	13	3	2	0	43
	State	5	7	2	10	5	29
	Private	7	7	1	0	0	15
	Church	22	2	1	0	0	25
Sum total		34	16	4	10	5	69

Source: (Hrubos, 2011).

In the academic year 2007/2008, the system has almost entirely passed to the bachelor and master stages, with the exception of 17 faculties – mainly medical and law studies. Nevertheless, longer bachelor programs should be compensated by shorter master cycles, as the total duration of studies not to exceed 5.5 years.

In 2006, the new law of higher education was issued, unifying the previous two systems, the short-term and the long-term, into the bachelor + master structure two-cycle system of the Bologna process.

Following a communist model, spread in Eastern Europe, in Hungary education was separated from research. Research was under the supervision of the Academy of Sciences and its institutes. A challenge of the Bologna process in Hungary is, thus, also to reintegrate teaching and research in universities.

The situation is similar in Romania, with research being pursued in institutes affiliated to the Academy, and difficulties to integrate research orientation with teaching orientation, in universities.

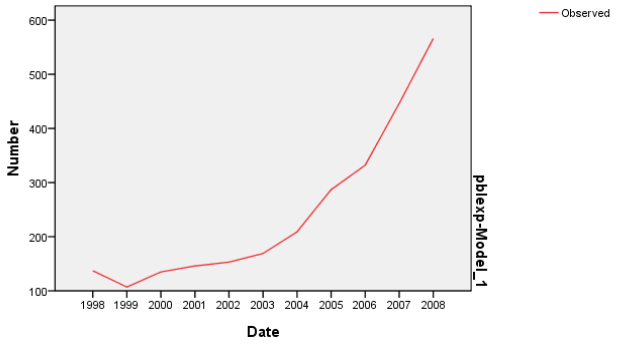
5.2. Funding

One of the contemporary challenges in European higher education is that its costs are not totally covered by the state anymore, which urges universities to find supplementary funding sources. A CHEPS Paper by Jongbloed, de Boer, Enders and File (2010) states that both Hungarian and Romanian universities have declared a medium level of financial autonomy. This autonomy was assessed based on internal

allocation of funds, borrowing funds on the capital market, building up reserves and spending of the operational grant. As far as the last item is concerned, both countries have reported high levels of flexibility, meaning that they can cover various categories of expenditures, which are not pre-established, at the moment of grant allocation. As far as the composition of revenues, at the level of 2008, is concerned, for the two countries, while Hungary receives 70% of its revenues from the state, 15% from tuition fees and 15% from third-party funding, Romania receives 25% from tuition fees and only 5% from third-party funding. For both countries, in absolute value, the funding received from the state had reduced, from 1995 to 2008. In Hungary, the amount of public allocation is mainly formula-based, unlike 1995, when it used to be negotiated. In Romania, the same formula method is applied, while in 1995 the method used to be incremental allocations.

As far as research funding is concerned, 90% of research funds in Hungary come from operational research grants, and only 10% from competitive research grants. In Romania, on the contrary, 100% of the research funding is obtained through competitive research grants. The situation, is both countries, is the same for 1995 and 2008.

Although the student number in the Hungarian higher education has constantly increased, from 1990 onwards, reaching over 400.000 students at present, the funding did not follow the same trend. On the contrary, in 1998 it was 40% lower (as funding per student) than in 1990 (Singh and Marcucci, 2008). A normative funding system was set in 1996, taking into account differentiated expenses by type of institution, as well as fields which should be encouraged, in the context of the knowledge-based society, to which extra-funding is allocated.



Source: Eurostat (2010).

Figure 4. **Public expenditure for higher education in Romania**

In Romania, there is a slight increase in state funding, over the last decade, but is still not satisfactory, as the needs are also higher (Ilie et al., 2011). According to the Education Law, article 94, Romanian universities uses both public and private financing. The funds are composed of basic funds, complementary funds, inclusion

funds and students' scholarships, and the personal funds of each university. The basic funds cover the average cost per student, with a priority to those fields that assure the development of the society. The complementary funds are granted for public universities for institutional development projects. The inclusion and scholarships are granted by the Education Ministry in order to give proper changes of learning for everybody. Last, but not least, the funds gathered from foreign students or taxes can be used as established by the university board.

The reforms after 1999, as well as recent legislative changes in the field of education have lead to a passage from the input-based higher education funding, to a funding system in which quality indicators are also taken into account (Pricopie, 2008), in order to increase the financial autonomy of universities. The mixed model includes *input funding* – funding per capita (per student equivalent, computed according to the field of the university – technical, economic, medical, arts, etc.), and *output funding* – funding per indicators (17 indicators in five classes). The first type of financing is prevailing, accounting for 70% of the funds, while the second type accounts for the remaining 30% (Cosma and Schneider, 2011). The consultative organism in elaborating funding policies is the National Council for Funding Higher Education (CNFIS), created in 1994.

Higher education funding in Romania is a mix of core funding and complementary funding. Core funding covers personnel expenditures and material expenditures while complementary funding covers student accommodation, capital expenditures, research funding, student social expenditures (travel, scholarships).

The distribution of university income (Pricopie, 2008) is shown in Table 4 below:

Table 4

Distribution of university income

%	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Core funding	46	45	42	39	43	46	46	34
Complementary funding	25	26	33	30	24	20	22	42
Own sources	29	28	26	31	33	34	32	24
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: (Pricopie, 2008).

It may be seen that the trend of predominant state funding was somewhat reversed only recently, universities being, still, largely dependent on state financing, which limits, in practice, their autonomy.

Despite the resistance of the system, due to the decline in resources, tuition fees were introduced in Hungary in 1995. The tuition fee was proposed as a part of the Bokros package, after the name of the Minister of Finance of the time. The idea behind was to convince students and public opinion that "there is no free lunch", but

his pedagogy failed. From 1998 there are full state-supported students, and self-financed students, paying fees set by universities and differentiated depending on faculty. According to the HE Act 2005, the fee for self-financed students cannot be lower than half of the state support (CHEPS, 2010). This system functions in Romania, from 2001 on, without the preliminary phase. Ten years later, in 2008, the Hungarian government tried to introduce a package setting a contribution to their education of those persons who will, later benefit from it (as wage premiums and externalities). This package provided that all students should pay the equivalent of 550$ per year, as *improvement contributions*. The people voted, in a referendum, against tuition fees for all students, and no government is allowed to change this for the following three years after the 2008 referendum.

For master cycle, the state funds 35% of the students, while for doctoral studies 10% of the places are state supported. In practice, as few students applied for a master program between 2005 and 2009, almost all of them were state supported.

In Romania, Law 376/2004 allows students to apply for private scholarships, to complement the funding they receive from the state. This provision was also thought as a partnership with the business environment, by allowing students to receive scholarships from employers and work in exchange.

The Hungarian Student Loan Centre was set in 2001, as a state owned company designed to help students in covering their fees and everyday costs. For two years, these loans were supported from the state budget. Next, the financing was assured by bonds. Still, due to the short term of their maturity (three years), other solutions have been sought for. In 2005, the European Investment Bank started to provide the Centre with convenient long-term loans. Presently, the centre is privately funded, by national commercial banks and investment banks.

From 2006, the rules of functioning of the Loan Centre were changed, to make it available to Hungarian students studying in the EU, and also to older students, as the age limit for applicants was increased to 40 years. In the academic year 2006/2007, almost half of the student population had borrowed money from the centre, 41% of the borrowers being non-state financed students, and the rest being state-funded students.

The repayment depends on the income of the future employee, being set to 6-8% of the minimum earning of the previous year. In exceptional cases, the loan is taken over by the state.

In Romania, a study of the World Bank (Sondergaard, 2008) investigated the possibility of introducing a student loan scheme. The project, however, was not completed, although Romanian commercial banks offer credits for study.

6. Internationalization

According to the last Trends report (Sursock and Smidt, 2010), internationalization is seen as the third most important driver of change in the 2007-2010 period, and will move to the first place by 2015.

In Romania, starting from the 70s, the communist regime has pursued a policy of 'internationalization', seeking to attract students from the communist block, but from Asia and Africa as well (Nicolescu et al., 2009). The main mechanisms were lower tuition fees, as compared to neighbouring countries, special facilities (preparatory years to learn Romanian, better dorms, etc.). In the 70s-80s decade, Romania ranked in the first 15 providers of higher education for foreigners (Nicolescu et al., 2009), trend which slowed down in the 80s, due to economic decline. An International Preparatory Institute functioned in Hungary, as well, in the 80s, for students coming from abroad to study in Hungary. There were two categories of students, at the time: either students from less developed socialist countries, or students from Germany, studying in their own language, for lower fees (Lajos, 2004).

After 1989, Romania tried to regain the interest of international students. In the early 1990s, a program dedicated to Central and Eastern Europe, TEMPUS, has allowed students and staff to learn and teach in Western Europe. The total budget, and the number of Joint European Projects approved, for Hungary and Romania (EC, 2002) are shown in Table 5 and Table 6 below:

Table 5

TEMPUS budget (mil. Euros)

	1990-1993	1994-1999	Total
Hungary	59.9	58.0	117.9
Romania	41.7	64.0	105.7

Source: EC (2002).

It may be seen that the two allocations are comparable, with a significant increase for Romania, in the mid-1990s.

Table 6

Total number of JEP approved

	1990-1993	1994-1999	Total
Hungary	186	169	355
Romania	94	167	261

Source: EC (2002).

Initially lagging behind, Romania recovers, after the first post-revolutionary years. In 1996, Romania became a member of the ERASMUS agreement, while Hungary participated as a full member from 1997.

The attraction of students from Middle East Central Asia and North Africa represents a high opportunity for Romanian universities. These students wish to study in a European country and have access to cheaper studies. However, Romanian universities to not use enough this chance as they do not gather their promotion efforts to attract many students, but they wait for students to come to them. For instance, "Babeş-Bolyai" University from Romania has around 1000 students for complete

university studies and around 500 students with Erasmus and Socrates exchanges. Yearly, there are around 7,700 foreign students in Romania and the phenomenon registers low increases.

According to the report *The Bologna Process in Hungary* (Derényi, 2010) in more than half of the 26 responding Hungarian HEIs in a 2008 survey, the number of mobility students, both in-coming and out-going, increased significantly over the past 3 years. In one third of the responding HEIs the increase was less obvious and only one fachhoschule-type institution reported a decrease in the number of out-going students, while another one experienced a decrease in in-coming students. This situation is similar to the other EHEA countries (Crosier et al., 2007, in Derényi, 2010). Quoting from the same report, there are fairly the same percentages in in-coming and out-going students in 38% of the responding HEIs, while 58% of the universities report by far more out-going students. In only one private HEI the number of in-coming students exceeds significantly the number of out-going ones, but this university offers specific programs for international students.

The evolution of the number of out-going students (Eurostat data and forecast for 2010) for Hungary and Romania is shown in Table 7 below:

Table 7

The evolution of the out-going students' percentage

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010(f)
HU	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.7	1.8	1.8	2.1	1.8
RO	1.5	2.0	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.0	2.3	2.3

Source: Eurostat (2010).

It may be seen that the figures are roughly comparable, and exhibit a stationary-slightly ascending pattern. Some of the reasons why Hungarian students don't go so much abroad (Derényi, 2010) include, mainly, the difference in living standards between Hungary and host countries. The same reasons can be quoted for Romania, as well.

The distribution of the inward students to Hungary (as percentage of the Hungarian total student population) at the level of 2009, on study fields, is presented in Table 8 (Eurostat data):

Table 8

The distribution of in-coming students on study fields (Hungary, 2009)

	Total	Edu Sciences	Human & arts	Soc sciences	Sciences	Engineering	Agric, vet	Health & welfare	Services
HU	3.65	0.12	0.34	0.78	0.20	0.35	0.34	1,42	0.10

Source: Eurostat (2010).

It may be seen that the health and welfare filed is the most attractive, probably due to lower costs. It is followed by social sciences, which are generally attractive, also for Hungarian students, as outlined previously. The percentage of incoming students to Romania is of only 0.94 of the entire population, at the level of 2009. Also, at the level of 2009, the in-coming/ out-going ratio for Hungary is of 2.34, while the same ratio for Romania is of only 0.54, making it a net exporter of students, while Hungary is a net importer.

Most of the students coming to Hungary are from countries in the region, especially from Hungarian minorities in these states. There is a similar context in Romania, due to facilities for the access of students from the Republic of Moldavia. As of 2009, about 8,000 foreign students were studying in Romania, slightly above 1% of the total student population. About 70% of these students come from European countries.

In allocating mobility grants, Hungarian universities are quite selective, using a complex of factors. For less expensive countries, students receive 300 euro, while for countries considered to be more expensive, they receive 350 euro (as of 2009).

According to the 2009 Eurobarometer, 35% of the Hungarian students made plans to study abroad, compared with only 3% saying they had studied abroad. Another 13% of the students gave up their study abroad plan due to difficulties encountered. Almost half of the Hungarian students are not interested in study abroad opportunities.

Recognition problems of the period studied abroad in the home university is on the top of the barriers. This situation is most commonly spread in Hungary of all European countries. Students have to take the mandatory exams upon returning home, which makes it troublesome to participate in exchanges, because the exams taken home, from slightly different curricula, may lower their grades and affect their future academic plans. Also, Hungarian faculties teach a lot more lectures than Western universities – 8 to 10 courses per semester, as compared to 4 or 5. The credits earned are, thus, not equivalent. Not to mention that taking a course from a different, although related, field of study will cause problems of recognition.

Other problems are funding-related. Usually, stipends received from the Erasmus program hardly cover the most basic living costs, which forces students to give up the international experience. There is not such a powerful institution as the German DAAD, to support mobility and to allocate needed resources.

7. Quality assurance

A viewpoint by Huisman and Westerheijden (2010) states that across Europe, achievements in quality assurance are mainly supranational and less obvious in the direct interaction of universities with their students. However, it is for sure that increased accountability of European universities leads to increased competition and, consequently, to improved learning.

The law of 1993, which postulated that "by 30 June 1998, at latest, all higher education institutions in Hungary should be accredited using a uniform procedure", has set the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC), who has been externally evaluated in 2000 and 2008, in terms of its compliance with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA*.

In the same year, Romania adopted law no. 88, which created the National Council for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation (CNEAA). In 2005/2006, a government ordinance for Quality Assurance in Education was adopted, which created the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS). The Romanian quality assurance system is based on:

- The European dimension;
- Institutional responsibility;
- Institutional diversity;
- Cooperation in the education system;
- Performance;
- Institutional identity;
- Internal evaluation;
- External evaluation;
- Quality improvement (Eurydice, 2008).

It may be seen that it is more to it than mere quality improvement. Universities are taken as partners, responsible for most of the components of quality assurance. Thus, autonomy is granted with the price of accountability.

The functioning of ARACIS is based on the idea of collaboration with the other institutions involved in the higher education system (the Ministry, the National Council for Scientific Research, the National Council for Higher Education Financing, and the National Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education). The mission of ARACIS involves aligning external evaluation standards with European practice, as well as involving students and employers, as stakeholders of higher education. As stakeholders' views are often divergent, considering their diversity, their undiscriminating representation in the quality assurance process is essential (Nicolescu and Dima, 2010).

The domains envisaged by the quality assurance process are, according to the government ordinance setting ARACIS, *institutional capacity*, *education efficacy* and *quality management*. These three domains reformulate the dimensions previously listed, encompassing, as well, the European perspective.

The HAC, as an independent board of 29 experts, evaluates the quality assurance mechanisms in place in universities, and conducts accreditation. Thus, quality assurance is provided both by the universities themselves and by this organism representing the Ministry of Education. The Higher Education and Scientific Council (HESC) and the Hungarian Rectors' Conference (HRC) also have a consultative role in quality assurance.

When, following the governmental act of 2005, older study programs were transformed into bachelor and master programs, according to the Bologna provisions,

the HAC had evaluated all these programs. The accreditation passed, from 2005 on, to a vertical scheme, in which the bachelor, the master and the doctoral cycle belonging to the same discipline are accredited at once, by a single commission of experts. Also, from 2005 on, the HAC has a Board of Appeals, judging appeals by universities made against HAC's conclusions. For newly launched HEIs, the HAC is the only one to decide, while for newly launched study programs the ministry may interfere and contradict HAC's decision.

According to the 2005 act, the HAC should:

a) Perform accreditation.
b) Propose the standards for becoming a university professor.
c) Monitor convergence with other European HE systems.
d) Provide opinions when requested, on activities HEIs perform.
e) Provide expert opinions on establishment of new courses, doctoral schools, and doctoral requirements.
f) Elaborate and publish the National List of Higher Education Experts.

Also, the HAC should have opinions on any decrees regarding higher education and collaborate in plans targeting higher education development.

The HAC is placed under the supervision of the Hungarian Advisory Board, representing external stakeholders, and expressing the opinion of the employers, and of the International Advisory Board, providing advice in issues regarding higher education and quality assurance.

The HAC performs both *ex ante* and *ex post* evaluations, evaluating newly started HEIs and study programs, as well as programs and institutions after a 8-year cycle. The evaluations ex post performed by HAC are based on a self-evaluation report submitted by the universities themselves, followed by a visit of a team of experts and the elaboration of the accreditation report. The institution is then given an accreditation certificate.

The HAC has 19 expert committees, grouped on specialties, and another 11 special committees. The 29 members of the HAC are delegated as follows: 15 by the Hungarian Rectors' Conference, 3 by the Academy, 5 by research institutes, 1 by the National Public Education Council, 1 by the National Committee for Minorities, and 4 by professional organizations and chambers. Also, two students are delegated by the National Students Union and the Union of Doctoral Students, but they do not have the right to vote. The structure is hierarchical, namely the visit teams or the evaluators reading the documents submitted for the creation of a new faculty/ study program, transmit their proposal to the corresponding expert committee. Each committee is chaired by a HAC member. The plenary is, then, the organism to decide.

During 2005-2007, more than 1500 new programs were accredited. A number of 37 HEIs were reaccredited in this interval, and 36 programs were re-accredited, ex post.

Hungarian parliament accepted a new law on higher education in late 2011, which becomes valid from 2012. The new law and the new measures contain radical changes affecting the financing of higher education and the admission policy.

In Romania, starting with 2011, a new law of education was also adopted. Its declared focus is on quality assurance in higher education, on evaluating the curricula of university programs and on ranking these programs according to their quality. Changes in funding and teaching-research equilibrium emerge from here, affecting the entire 'value chain' of universities. However, evaluation criteria tend to express the radical paradigm of the compressed evolution, trying to quickly bridge a gap, rather than develop organically a better system. This leads to the risk of the integration in the void, with the gap only increasing, while the system tries to fill it in. Otherwise said, finding a mission for the system in itself, and not lusting for the quality of *other* systems, would be a more important premise of educational reforms.

8. Conclusions

All in all, as the above descriptive analysis presents, there are many similarities between Romanian and Hungarian higher education systems, particularly in terms of history, structure and financing, internalization and quality assurance. Being recent members of the EU, Romania and Hungary encountered the same challenges in managing the Bologna process. Both countries follow the same standards, but they use different means as it follows.

As far as their history is concerned, having the same general grounds of the communist transition, the Romanian and Hungarian higher education systems will continue their fragmentation, postponing in the same time integration; therefore it appeared an obvious need to strengthen them as they are still fragile. Both countries try to adapt to the current market needs, redesigning their curriculums, deliver the proper classes for skilled workforce. In this way the teaching process was based on the market needs and research interests, not on the political planning.

It is true also that the number of Romanian and Hungarian universities increased significantly after the 1989 Revolution, reaching its boom in 1990, mainly due to a high number of private universities. They followed both a slow decrease afterwards due to the demographic changes and better regulatory mechanism regarding accreditation.

This brings us to the second criterion for this analysis, regarding structure and financing. Their current structure emphasizes the effects of the communist period, while the financing process shows the lack of autonomy regarding the political independence.

Regarding structure, we can easily notice an increase in the number of students, also elderly due to the high demands of master diploma for ordinary jobs. Moreover, there is an obvious need to reintegrate research within teaching orientation in each university.

Still state funded, although the percentage is decreasing, universities are lacking independence and autonomy. The funds are a mix between core funding for personnel and materials expenditures and complementary funding for student accommodation, capital expenditures, research funding, and student social

expenditures. The state funds 35% of the master students and 10% for doctoral studies. Besides this funding, students may apply for private scholarship, encouraging in this way partnership in the business environment. However, the possibility for students to pay fees led to an increased number of students, although their admission scores are lower.

Further on, regarding the internalization of the higher education system, Romania and Hungary are highly known for providing higher education for foreigners. This trend decreased in time. The main reason for this trend is lower fees. Most of the students coming to Hungary are part of Hungarian minorities in these states, while for Romania there are mostly students of Moldavian Republic. Romanian and Hungarian students are not that eager to study abroad due to the differences in living standards between Hungary and host countries. However, there are also problems regarding diplomas recognition and funding. Last but not least, the quality assurance is the responsibility of specialized institution in both countries. As a consequence of their quality improvement, universities are now seen as partners of the business environment.

As a conclusion, these similarities of Romania and Hungary strong and weak points can provide insights for future reforms of the mechanism of the educational systems.

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