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AGACIS  
AGENȚIA ROMÂNIA  
DE ASIGURARE A  
CALITĂȚII ÎN  
ÎNVĂȚĂMÎNTUL SUPERIOR

# **DYNAMICS OF CHALLENGES IN ROMANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE RESPONSE OF UNIVERSITIES**

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# Introduction

- Romanian universities underwent a spectacular evolution during the transition period from a centralized system to a market economy;
- The transformations that came about were the result of political, economic, social and cultural factors;
- Most studies have focused on studying the education systems at:
  - **a nation wide scale**, highlighting their challenges in the context of the transformation from a centralized system to a market economy and a democratic society (Gömbös E., 2003; Csizmadia T., 2006; Jalowiecki B., 2001; Koutsky J., 1996; Satchkova E., 2003; Vlăsceanu L., 2005 a.s.o.);
  - **a global scale** (Dizambourg B., 2007; Lambooy J., 2004);
  - **a European scale** (Frazer M., 1997);
  - **Central and Eastern Europe** (Kwiek M., 2008; Scott P., 2002).

# Methodology

- The present study analyzes six challenges that the Romanian higher-education system faced in the past 20 years, during the adaptation process of the specific demands to market economy and the process to synchronize with European trends, boosted by the Bologna Declaration. We used:
  - *different studies;*
  - *statistical published databases;*
  - *other data and information directly supplied by universities.*

**CHALLENGE**



**UNIVERSITY OR “H.E.S.” RESPONSES**

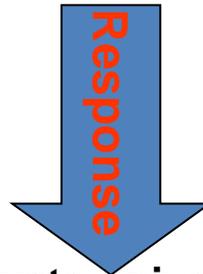
Interpretation of the most important quantitative and qualitative specific phenomena of university sector

# Results

## Challenge 1. A huge gap between demand and offer

**Before 1989**, Higher education it was an elitist one; the national and regional distribution of universities was uneven.

—————→ **after 1989: high demand versus, numerically, low offer;**

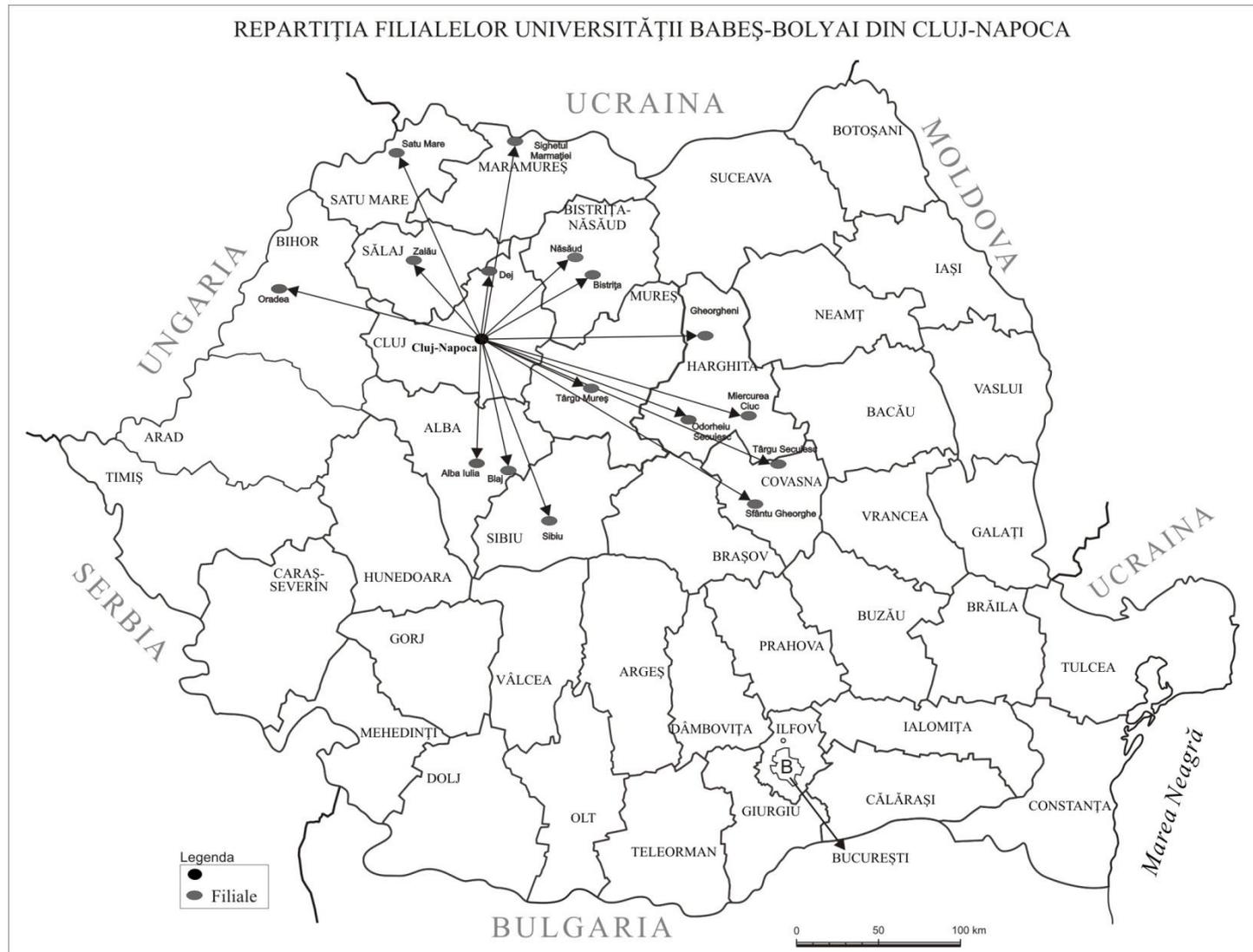


**The emergence of private universities, new state universities and expansion of traditional universities.**

### Characteristics:

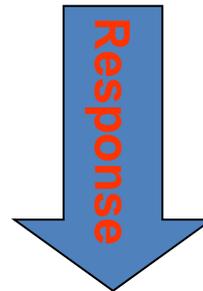
- multi-phased growth of the number of cities hosting higher-education institutions or branches of the universities;
- some of former institutions were converted by a government's decision into universities; the same procedure was used to turn into universities other institutions in cities that had developed higher-education activities immediately after the collapse of the totalitarian regime or institutions that had operated as technical colleges before 1990;
- starting the 2001/2002 university year, there was a drop in the number of higher-education institutions and even the disappearance of some centers.

# Territorial distribution of the affiliations of the Babes-Bolyai University



## Challenge 2. Adjusting the study programs to democratic society and market economy

- In Romania, especially **in the post-1970 period**, study programs were dictated by the political system and were mainly tied to the development of industry and agriculture;
- With the collapse of communism, the connection between higher education and guaranteed jobs was eliminated;



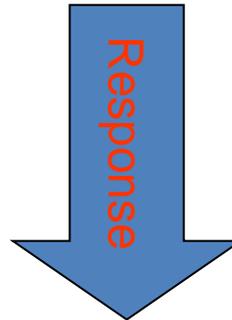
- The explosion of the law and economic study programs;
- The high increasing of the social, political, administration and public relations study programs.
- Stagnation or decreasing demand for technical study programs

## Challenge 3. A slow and steady deterioration of high-education quality

- The elitist higher education in the totalitarian period were replaced by mass education and an assessment system that would often make allowance on quality.

transformation from selective education to mass education;

boom of private education suppliers.

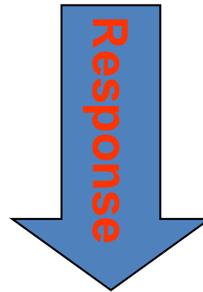


- Creating of institutions for quality assurance in higher education

- *National Council for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation (CNEAA), regulated by Law 81/1993;*
- *Romanian Agency for Higher-Education Quality Assurance (ARACIS), in 2005.*

## Challenge 4. The underfinancing as a result of diminishing state-budget-allocated resources

- ***The cumulated annual effects of underfunding higher education***, despite an increase in the absolute values of the basic funding allocated to state universities.



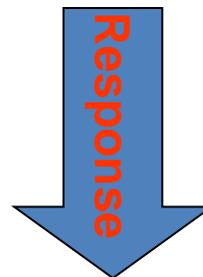
- Introducing tuition fees in the state institutions starting with the 1998/1999 university year

### ***Effects:***

- a) an exaggerated increase in the number of tuition-fee students;
- b) multiplication of the sets of courses;
- c) enhancing the interest to boost scientific research.

## Challenge 5. A hypertrophy of the large university centers, especially the capital

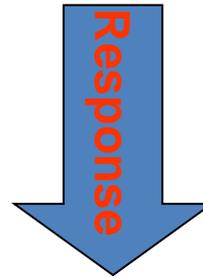
● **Post-1990:** a decreasing ratio for traditional centers explained by both the trend towards a visible hypertrophy of the capital city, but also by the emergence of new university centers with a regional destination, located in areas with high human potential.



- a) a significant de-concentration tendency in Bucharest: from 38% to 33% of the total (28.6% of all state universities and 38% of all private universities);
- b) taking into account the number of long-distance students, Bucharest concentrated in the 1998/1999 about 43.6% of all students in Romania.
- c) two other university centres with a very high potential for a strong regional impact, Cluj-Napoca and Iași (each of them host 10 higher-education institutions), accounting for 6.9% and 6.76%, respectively, of all students in Romania.

## Challenge 6. An assumed participation for creation of a unique European Higher-Education Area

- The educational system was strongly influenced by existing international pressure, and especially the reform in education triggered by the Bologna process.

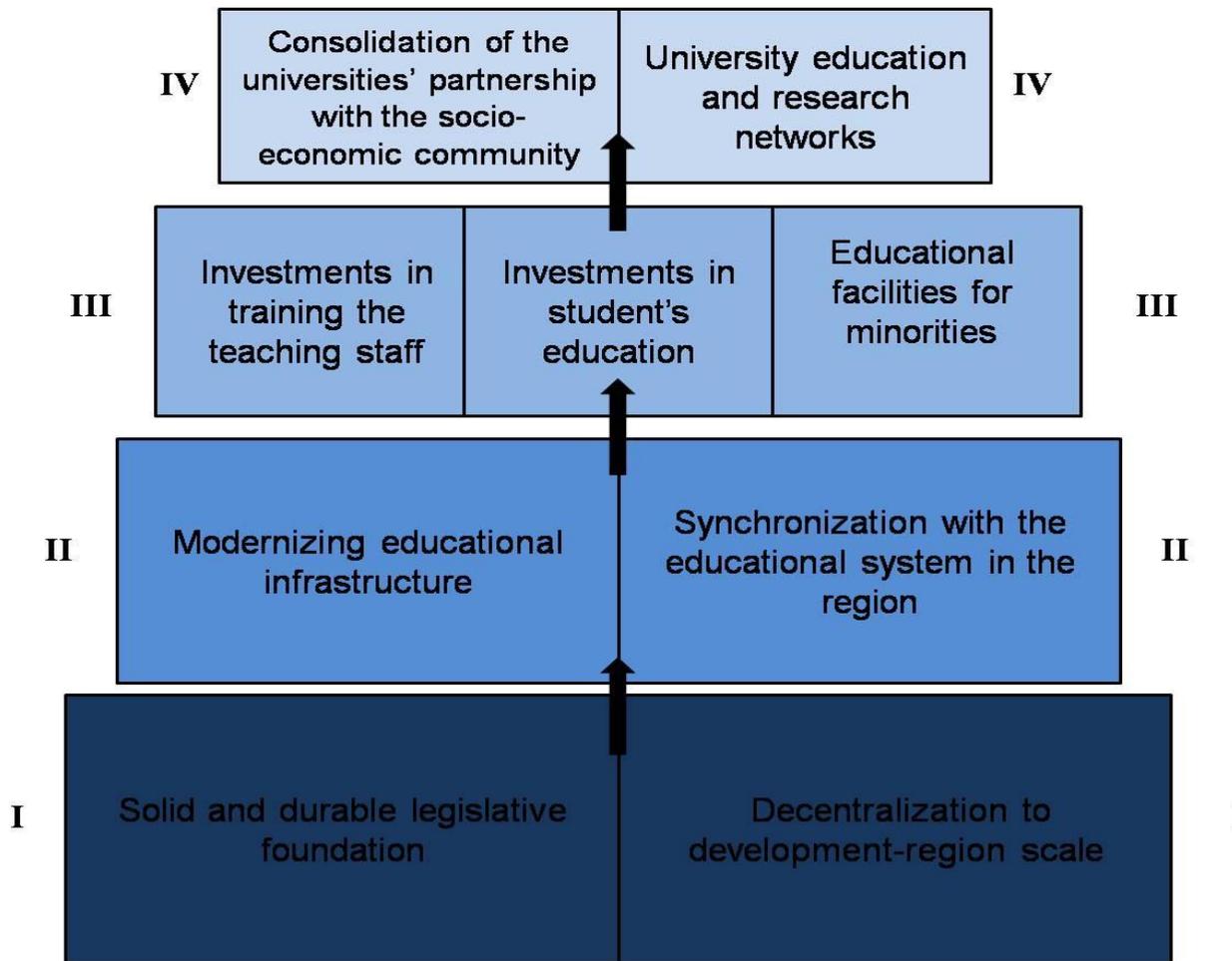


- In Romania: - **Law on university study program structure, 288/2004;**  
- **Improvement of the Education Law, 85/1995;**  
- **Urgency Ordinance for Quality Assurance in Education, 75/2005, approved and modified by Law no.87/2006**

→ ... university education into three cycles, ending in bachelor's, master's and doctor's degrees, respectively.

## Discussions

- The conversion from one political and economic model to another involves transformation in all fields, including education;
- The dynamics of the above-mentioned challenges required the response of universities and central authorities, which consisted in nationwide strategies as well as specific action by the tertiary-education providers;
- The very complex problem of the succession and interaction of these challenges and the universities' permanent reactions can be approached from various perspectives;
- In order to create a synthetic overview of this transformation, the result of Romanian experience in the field, we submit for debate a model for the transition of higher education from a centralized system to a performance and quality-oriented and decentralized one. 



## A hypothetical model for higher education changes in the transition period

## CONCLUSIONS

- In the post-1990 era, the Romanian university system underwent **a permanent adaptation to the demands of market economy**, which involved its constant reorganization;
- This process consisted in a series of functional changes of the socio-economic, political, cultural requirements typical of a society undergoing transformation;
- In the past two decades the system reacted to the challenges that arose nationwide, but, upon Romania's EU accession, this involved a much closer synchronization with the current European educational features;
- The new academic landscape, including state, corporate, private and virtual institutions, generates itself different types of challenges for continental higher education system and for Romanian HE, too;
- In this context, quality assurance management in Romanian higher education undergoes steady improvement, so that it could fully integrate in the European higher-education space, but also comply with the current and future demands of national economy and culture.



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# Thank you for your kind attention