

EVALUATION REPORT – FOREIGN EVALUATOR

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Dr. Wolf D. Gruner

wolf.gruner@uni-rostock.de

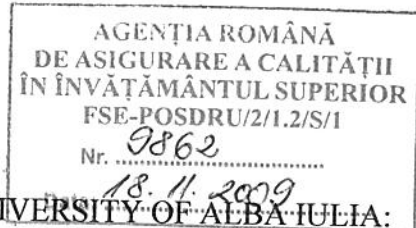
Chair of European History, combined with the Jean Monnet Chair in European Integration
History and European Studies

Department of History

University of Rostock

August-Bebelstr. 28

D-18055 Rostock Germany



MISSION AND OBJECTIVES OF “1 DECEMBER 1918” UNIVERSITY OF ALBA IULIA:

UAI was set up in 1991 as a regional institution of higher education and research at a historical site. Its educational ideal and its mission “stand on valuable traditions and [...] seek to contribute, by specific educational, research and values ... to national identity and affirming to the university and diversity of Romanian culture, to its integration into the European and the world circuit of values”.¹

The mission of the university is defined at 3 levels:

1. the *academic* level as an institution of education and research
2. the *social and economic level*, i.e. providing an equal quality of chances for higher education for students from economically and socially underprivileged areas of the “Apuseni mountains”, provide a “proactive” environment for a high academic performance for the students from the area and educate highly qualified “human resources” which are necessary to meet the standards which are required in the process of European integration and
3. to fulfil its mission at a *regional and national level*, especially promoting regional traditions and identities and developing the creative capacity of the people of the area.

The University of “1 Decembrie 1918” Alba Iulia’s mission is clearly defined as that of a regional university within the Romanian university system. This at the same time means strength and opportunities for specialising and focusing on special areas like history, archaeology, philology (Romanian, English, and French) as well as on law and social sciences, economics (accounting) and informatics/engineering. The absolvents of UAI will find jobs as teachers in the area and are employed by institutions and companies in the area. The sessions between the prospective employers and the commission as well as with the alumni of UAI made this quite clear.

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMES – Partner (Sister) Universities:

UAI at this point has 26 partner (sister-) universities and universities of applied sciences in Europe and world wide. Additionally there are many international partners and institutions for internships which are important for practical student education. There are partner universities in Europe, the US, Mexico, Malaysia and China. Among the partner universities in Europe and overseas there are a few well established and excellent universities like the Humboldt University and the Free University at Berlin, the Eötvös Loránd University at Budapest, University ‘La Sapienza’ in Rome, the University of Science and Technology at Trondheim, the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico and the University of Idaho in the USA. UAI does not have any partner universities in Great Britain and Ireland. Among the partner institu-

¹ Internal Evaluation Report on the Quality of education. Objective: Periodical certification. Alba Iulia 2009, p. 2f.

tions there are some “Universities of Applied Sciences” which are not supposed to be research oriented and focus on training and education.

Since UAI is not inclined to compete with the big 4 in Romania and favours to develop her special research interests and focus at an international level this may be compared to fine and effective regional universities in the USA which keep their regional status and traditions and at the same time reaching out for international cooperation and partnerships in research and education at an international level.

There are several PhD programmes operating including international partners, especially between UAI and French universities. At this point (Oct. 1, 2009) there are 3 cotutelles under way between UAI and “L’Université Michel de Montaigne Bordeaux III” and UAI and “L’Université de Provence (Aix-Marseille I)”, all in philology. The supervisor in all three cases is Professor Braga.

EUROPEAN PROGRAMMES (Erasmus et al.):

The evaluator had a chance to meet 15 inbound and former UAI outbound students for about two hours. They were talking about their expectations, the reality on the spot and their experiences. The inbound students originated from Poland, Germany, Greece and Turkey studying especially archaeology. The outbound students had been to Poland, France and the Netherlands. Their fields were archaeology, languages and computer science. For all students there was a “culture shock” at the beginning of their stay. Especially one student was quite unhappy about the liberal culture and the morals (Netherlands). The others learnt a lot abroad. This was especially true for the students from archaeology which went to Poland and had a chance to experience different media and approaches to their own field of studies. The inbound students, mainly from archaeology, were very happy about the possibilities offered at UAI and seemed to be integrated into the student community. To a large extent this is the result of dedicated Erasmus- and International programmes coordinators at UAI. During one of the nights the evaluation group was visiting UAI there was a special party for the international students which was of course also attended by the responsible international programme people and also teaching staff. Despite the fact that the dedicated staff at the Erasmus and International Office is doing a lot to make foreign students feel at home and overcome the “culture shock” UAI should try to enlarge its Erasmus- and International programmes to attract more foreign students to Alba Iulia in the heartland of Transylvania. This would also have a major impact on UAI’s student body being exposed to students from other European universities and from overseas. This would also improve a better understanding for cultural differences, for “dos” and “do nots”. The knowledge of different traditions, cultures and behaviour could contribute to overcome racism and intolerance.

INTERNATIONALISATION:

Many international conferences are being held at UAI, among others in early September 2009 an International Conference on Theory and Applications in Mathematics and Informatics. UAI is working for a more intensive and successful internationalisation, trying to raise funds for conferences and competitive equipment. They seem to be on the right track. Internationalisation is not just a catchword but a necessity to survive in a European and International competitive educational system. It therefore would make sense to set up a system of cooperation in different fields (i.e. UAI, Roma La Sapienza and Humboldt University at Berlin agreeing on a common research topic – or UAI, and US-American University and a Canadian University setting up a trans-Atlantic research programme sponsored by the Humboldt Foundation) in order to apply for funds from the European Union or other international bodies and organisations. UAI should also consider “double-degree” programmes at the Bachelor-, Master-and

PhD level with other European universities. This would improve the national and international profile of UAI.

TEACHING AND RESEARCH:

As far as teaching and research are concerned UAI is in an upswing. The student numbers have gone up to 6000, to some extent also being the result of a small school where students are taught in small courses, where they have close relations and access to teaching staff and where it is easier to get around, communicate and socialize. Since 2002 46 students received their PhDs, especially in History and Philology. A report on the situation and state of doctoral students, dated October 1, 2009 for the academic year 2009-2010 (Raport Privind Situația Doctoranzilor) listed 129 candidates, the majority being female (79). About half of them are doing a PhD programme either in philology or history. From the teaching staff of UAI only 11 (12) are entitled to supervise PhDs. This is a big problem and will increase heavily, especially as far as the necessary time for supervision and discussions with candidates is concerned..

It is a disadvantage for UAI that there are no PhD programmes in science, computer science and law being offered – in accountancy a 3 years PhD programme was set up recently – , i.e. the university is losing fine students who have to move to another university to do a doctorate. Thus students of science, economics, law and political science have to do their PhD programmes at UBB at Cluj, at the Institute of Technology at Cluj or other places.

At UAI there are teaching some nationally and internationally known researchers, especially in the field of museology, archaeology, history, engineering and science.

UAI since its beginning in the early 1990s is trying to diversify its research structure. From the Internal Evaluation Report UAI seems to be quite successful in applying for research grants.²

There is a well balanced ratio between the number of students and the teaching personnel. Growing student numbers are being taken into account by the “evolution programme regarding the teaching staff”. It would be quite advantageous if there would be more PhDs among the teaching personnel. Almost 66% is good, but a higher ratio is necessary and could also improve the quality of research based teaching.

The evaluator had a chance to visit the University Library and its branches. From the evaluator’s point of view there is a major deficit. Most of the literature – excluding journals – is in Romanian. There are only a few titles in English, French, German or Italian. Since research is international there need to be allocated more funds to the libraries for buying international research material in English, German, French and other languages (Archaeology, Literature and Languages, History, Economics, Science, Math and Computer science). UAI Students should learn to use findings from research in other countries for their papers, theses and reports, also in preparation for studies abroad.

Despite the new and well equipped Computer Lab which allows for easy access to online research materials, including books and journals, and which from its set up provides a good working atmosphere the library would need more money for buying research monographs,

² Ibid., p. 18 (table 4).

general studies and study material for teaching and learning in order to become more competitive nationally and internationally. The opening hours of the library could also be improved.

GENERAL REMARKS:

The site of UAI because of its historical and economic environment and its regional traditions is a good place for learning, studying, teaching and also research. The geographical situation needs to be mentioned as a positive feature. UAI offers all the advantages of a small regional university which is very important for many students who do not originate from Alba Iulia or commute to their courses in the university to accommodate and feel at home at the place of their university education. The evaluation has proved that UAI's international relations, networks and cooperation programmes are steadily growing. The annual schedule and numbers of regional, national and international conferences are underlining this. In this respect UAI is on the right track.

At present only 11 professors (7 in History, 4 in Philology and 1 other) are allowed to supervise doctoral theses. Compared to the number of candidates and those who would like to do a PhD at UAI (if their field would have the right for a PhD programme) there is not the number of supervisors available which would be needed to cope with the number of candidates (s. p.4 sub Teaching and Research, 129 candidates listed). UAI's PhD programmes therefore should be upgraded and be broadened up to meet the necessities and challenges. This would also attract more excellent international and national students and at the same time improve the quality and reputation of UAI.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

In any university system there are always means for improvement and progress. To some extent this is also the task of an independent group and agency (in our case ARACIS) evaluating a university. The need for improvement and progress is also especially true for a small and dynamic regional university with a dedicated staff like UAI.

In the paragraphs above the reporting evaluator suggested that UAI should make great efforts to enlarge its Erasmus programmes since such a measure would have a direct and mostly positive impact on UAI's student body. Being exposed to foreign students with different cultural backgrounds, mentalities and traditions from Europe and overseas seems to me to be of major importance for a better understanding of "the Other" and to live, work and communicate in a European and global environment. International programmes not only serve for a better understanding among students but also invite professors from the Erasmus/International partners lecturing at UAI and UAI professors teaching at the partner institution to share their research and teaching approaches. From these mobility programmes (university partnerships, Erasmus programmes) students and staff pretty often get new ideas and learn different methods and approaches from the incoming professors. This will also be true from professorial mobility from UAI to other partner institutions. International exchange at all levels offers a chance to experience the community of investigators and contributes to international exchange and the improvement of competency in languages beyond the mother tongue.

UAI needs more library resources. More funds should be allocated for buying more books in languages other than Romanian. This is true for research in history and other fields being written in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish, but also in other major languages, for example Chinese and Japanese. Research has stopped for a long time to be just national. Without internationalisation of research and education there will be no progress. Nevertheless

the mother tongue is necessary and very important to communicate findings of research from international research to an interested national community of researchers and an interested public. This means to write and publish besides scientific works also general books and provide access through other media.

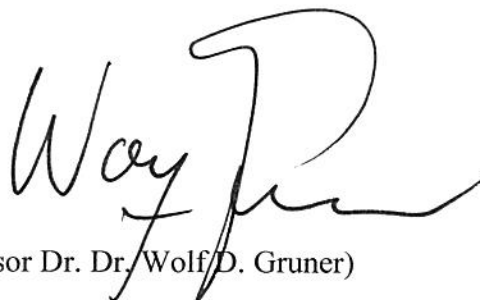
Compared to other European universities and institutions of Higher Education overseas it would be useful and improve the competitiveness of UAI if all instructors with a professorial status (Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, full Professors) – they are those who are qualified in their field of research and have a national and international reputation in research and are “habilitated” (in North America this stands for the publication of the ‘second’ book in order to be nominated Associate Professor or in Germany and France “Habilitation” or “Thèse d’État”) and thus entitled to be supervisors for PhD students and teach in PhD programmes. In Germany any university teacher who qualifies by having passed his/her “Habilitation” and having reached professorial status by publications and research can have and supervise PhD students which work under their guidance. *This is European standard.* Therefore it would make sense if all professors at UAI and in all accredited Universities in the country (Romania) would have the right to supervise PhDs and be doctor mothers or doctor fathers for students under their guidance or in graduate schools or special PhD programmes. There is no time to loose. This is also important as far as degrees (from BA, MA to PhD) are concerned. At the PhD level it is often not quite clear – if somebody who received a PhD at a Romanian university is applying for a position in Europe or overseas – from which university the candidate received a PhD if the respective documents are issued by the Ministry of Education and Research.

Thus the universities themselves should also have the right to confer a PhD directly to a successful candidate from their own autonomy. This is also European standard! This needs to be adopted soon in order to meet European standards of Higher Education.

Overall UAI, from my point of view and from my reviewing of the international, studying and research programmes and facilities during my visit as an international evaluator, is a fine regional university with great potential for a positive development in the years to come.

To wind up my report I would like to repeat my opinion that “1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia should be rated between: “grad de încidere limitat” (very good) and “grad de încidere redicat” (excellent and highest degree of confidence), i.e.:

UAI is better than “grad de încidere limitat”, but does not totally qualify for “grad de încidere redicat”.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wolf D. Gruner', written in a cursive style.

(Professor Dr. Dr. Wolf D. Gruner)