



A R A C I S

Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

E x t e r n a l I n s t i t u t i o n a l E v a l u a t i o n

Universitatea de Arte din Târgu-Mureș, România

Marosvásárhelyi Művészeti Egyetem, Románia

University of Arts in Târgu-Mureș, Romania

F o r e i g n E x p e r t R e p o r t

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1. Introduction

This report summarizes my impressions as Foreign Expert from the visit to the University of Arts in Târgu-Mureş (UAT) for an external institutional evaluation by ARACIS from October 19 to 21, 2016. Beside the institutional evaluation the study programmes “Theatre Studies (Theatre Journalism)” and “Performing Arts (Acting)” in Romanian language, and the study programmes “Performing Arts (Puppeteering)” and “Performing Arts (Acting)” in Hungarian language were selected for assessment too. This was the second institutional evaluation of UAT after the ARACIS-visit in 2009, where the University received as a result the “high degree of confidence rating”.

During the last 16 years, I have participated already in nearly 50 evaluations of Higher Education Institutions in nine European countries, in Colombia and in Nigeria. Hence, the following observations and comments will not only reflect my experiences with UAT but also give international perspectives. My focus is on the institution as a whole and not so much on individual study programmes. The self-evaluation process, governance and quality assurance as well as international perspectives are important core elements of my considerations.

I am very grateful to the Mission Director Conf.univ.dr. Mădălin Bunoiu and the Mission Scientific Coordinator Prof.univ.dr. Nicolae Seghedin for conducting this evaluation process in a very efficient way and to all members of the ARACIS team for their constructive and fruitful discussions during the visit. My special thanks go to the Technical Secretary Mrs. Carmen Mirian from ARACIS for giving me the opportunity to participate in this interesting evaluation and for her friendly way of providing all necessary information.

I also give my cordial thanks to the Rector Prof.univ.dr. Sorin-Ion Crişan, to the Prorector Conf.univ.dr. András Balási, to the President of the Senate Conf.univ.dr. Magdalena Florea as well as to the liaison person Dean Prof.univ.dr. Oana-Veronica Leahu from the University of Arts for the great hospitality and for the perfect organisation of my visit. Special thanks go also to Lect.univ.dr. Eugen Păsăreanu from UAT, who answered many of my questions and assisted me during the visit.

Furthermore, I want to express my appreciation to the various persons including students, who have actively participated in the meetings during the visit.

2. Organisational Details of the University of Arts in Târgu-Mureş

The University of Arts in Târgu-Mureş (UAT) is a public institution of higher education which dates back to the Hungarian Conservatory of Music and Dramatic Art established in Cluj in 1946. In 1954 the acting speciality of the Hungarian section of the institution was moved to Târgu-Mureş. The current name University of Arts in Târgu-Mureş was assigned in 2009.

The University has a focus in theatre-performing arts and plays an important role for the culture and the social life of Transylvania and the North-East of Romania. UAT provides a high level art education and there exists a positive atmosphere for artistic activities around the institution. This positive feeling is transmitted by the leadership, the academic and administrative staff and the students as well as by facilities such as the University owned Studio Theatre and the Animation (Puppet) Theatre.

The University is organised in two similar faculties, a Romanian Faculty of Arts and a Hungarian Faculty of Arts, offering BA level study programmes in the fields of theatre-performing arts, visual arts, music and communication studies, MA studies in the fields of theatre and music, and doctoral studies in the field of theatre and performing arts. Besides the faculties there is a Department for Teacher Training, which is linked with both faculties. UAT has fully implemented the Bologna three cycle study structure.

In the academic year 2015/16 there were 423 students enrolled, namely 183 studying in Romanian (94 BA, 58 MA, 31 PhD) and 240 in Hungarian (129 BA, 88 MA, 23 PhD).

Out of 130 academic positions at UAT a number of 70 are occupied by full-time employed academics (10 professors, 27 associate professors, 30 lecturers, 2 junior lecturer, 1 Tutor).

UAT owns and manages eight buildings including a Studio Theatre and a Puppet Theatre. According to the provided information and observations during the visit, the buildings of UAT are well kept but certainly need some renewal within the next years. Classrooms and studios are equipped properly.

The financial resources of the University do mainly come from the government, from tuition-fees of students as well as from services to the society. According to the provided information the revenue in 2016 will be 8.492.186 Lei and 1.218.617 Lei carryover from 2015. The total expenses will be 8.712.128 Lei, what means, UAT will have to use 219.942 Lei of its savings in order to deliver a balanced budget in 2016.

The University is governed by the Senate and the Administrative Board. The Senate consist of 16 members (6 academics and 2 students from the Hungarian Faculty, 6 academics and 2 students from the Romanian Faculty), and - according to the Law of National Education 2011 – has the task to provide the legal framework for the executive management and to monitor the institution. The Administrative Board is formed by 8 members, namely the Rector, the Prorector, the 2 Deans, the General Administrative Director, the Treasurer and 2 students, and is responsible for the operational management of the institution.

3. Outline of the Visit

For a small institution such as UAT an institutional evaluation is a big challenge consuming considerable resources. For this the institution should try to make as much profit as possible out of the procedure.

3.1 The Self-Evaluation Process

UAT has taken the evaluation process very seriously and has also set some important steps of improvement during the last years, considering the recommendations of the ARACIS evaluation 2009 and the 2012/13 institutional evaluation of the European University Association (e.g. excellent Homepage in Romanian, Hungarian and English). The University has elaborated an informative Self-Evaluation Report (SER) describing in a compact form (32 pages) the institution. But as usual in Romania the SER is not very self-critical and problems are not really mentioned or discussed. By my view, UAT could have made a better use of this evaluation by revealing problems and looking for possible solutions together with the external experts.

3.2 The Evaluation Visit

The institutional evaluation visit to the University of Arts in Târgu-Mureş began in the evening of October 18, 2016, with the arrival of the ARACIS team at the Hotel Continental in Târgu-Mureş and an informal meeting with the Rector in the Restaurant Atlantic.

During the evaluation visit, I participated in the meetings of the main ARACIS team, but did also arrange my own interviews and examinations.

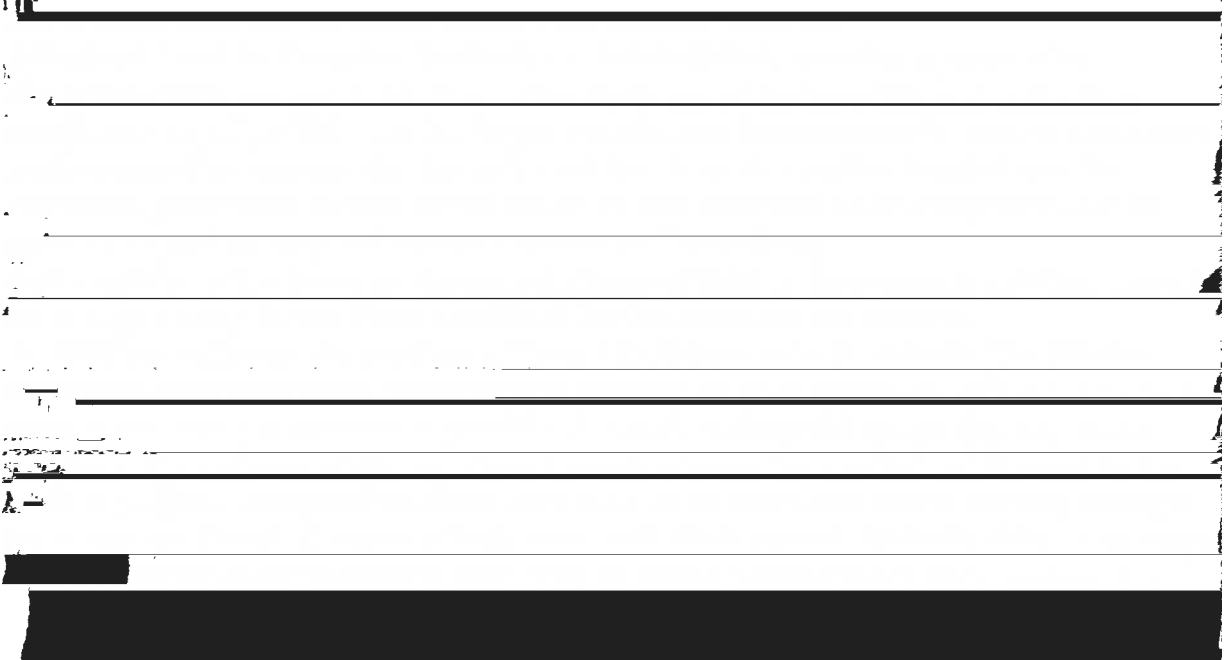
Wednesday, October 19

The official evaluation procedure started on October 19 at 8:50 am, in the Senate meeting room of UTA in Kőteles Sámuel street nr. 6, the building where also the Rectorate is located. Rector Prof.univ.dr. Sorin-Ion Crişan welcomed the ARACIS-delegation. Mission Director Conf.univ.dr. Mădălin Bunoiu saluted the present representatives of UAT. Mission Scientific Coordinator Prof.univ.dr. Nicolae Seghedin presented the members of the ARACIS team and explained the evaluation procedure to the University. Rector Prof.univ.dr. Sorin-Ion Crişan stated that the University was open for improvements and offered full co-operation with the ARACIS team.

In the course of the first day, the ARACIS team performed the usual activities. After a short internal ARACIS meeting in order to discuss the organisational details of the evaluation we visited for more than 2 hours the research and teaching facilities of UAT. The visit started in the main building in Kőteles Sámuel street with the Library and the Studio Theatre including related offices, studios and training areas. After that we went to the Casa Pálffy in Bolyai street, a historical building from the year 1792 and adapted in 1999 for music education. Then we were transferred to the Animation (Puppet) Theatre in Frunzei street. We visited the theatre and the ateliers and offices belonging to it. On the second floor of this building we met a psychologist in the University's Career Centre. This centre gives special attention the students with psychological problems. Finally we went to the student dormitories in Joliot Curic street. Students are accommodated in rooms for three and for four persons. In the basement there exist a kitchen and a washing room.

In all buildings we met on-going classes and observed staff and students during work. Many of the classrooms and studios are equipped with computers and multimedia facilities. However, some buildings and rooms need to be renovated or to be refurbished within the coming years. Caused by the historical character of the majority of the buildings, access for handicapped persons to the installations is very limited.

After lunch I had a personal meeting with Rector Prof.univ.dr. Sorin-Ion Crişan. We spoke on the relation between the Administrative Board and the Senate, the distribution of tasks between Rector and Prorector, the financial situation of UAT and other topics. The Rector mentioned as one of the main problems and burdens of the small institution the amount of



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University cafeteria was mentioned not to be price-competitive. The absence of a student organisation at UAT was not considered as a disadvantage.

At 17:00 pm we met 10 employers, coming mainly from the theatre world. Finally, at 18:00 pm we met 18 graduates, also coming mainly from the theatre area. Also these meetings did not really disclose any severe problems. Employers and graduates were commonly positive. I had the impression that contacts between UAT and the outside world (stakeholders) are mainly realized on a personal base and not very institutionalised.

From 19:00 to 21:00 pm we watched a show organised by students of the University in the Studio Theatre. It was a very amusing performance showing the excellent dramatic abilities of some students.

Thursday, October 20

In the morning I had a meeting with President of the Senate Conf.univ.dr. Magdalena Florea. We discussed the distribution of tasks between the Administrative Board and the Senate according to the Law 2011. Conflicts are solved in an amicable way. Nevertheless, as the institution is very small the administrative duties for the individual staff members are enormous. Beside the frequent meetings of the full Senate there are 8 committees of the Senate to handle. I have the impression that the administrative burdens of the members of UAT do not have their origin only in the complicated legal framework of Romanian universities but do also come from some "homemade" bureaucracy.

In the course of the day I studied diverse documents and interchanged opinions with other ARACIS members in order to complete my impression of the institution.

Friday, October 21

In the morning all Team members finalised their documents. The evaluation visit ended with a meeting of the ARACIS team with the representatives of UAT (Rector, Prorector, Deans, heads of administration) at 9:40 am. Mission Director Conf.univ.dr. Mădălin Bunoiu opened the meeting with a greeting. The Mission Scientific Coordinator Prof.univ.dr. Nicolae Seghedin summarised the impressions and results of the evaluation visit. Among other things necessary adaptations of the organisational chart of UAT and the work of the Ethic Commission were mentioned. The Rector and the Deans gave short statements and the different ARACIS-members presented their reports on the findings. Rector Prof.univ.dr. Sorin-Ion Crișan thanked the ARACIS team for its careful work.

4. Governance and Institution

The leaders of the UAT are highly committed to the institution. The University is well managed and open for improvement and changes. The management of UAT functions like a family enterprise. The governing bodies have developed a culture of consensus and co-operation without being caught by conflicts. There seems to be no further space for structural simplifications (Rector, Prorector, Romanian Faculty, Hungarian Faculty, Senate of 16 members). But similar to many other Romanian universities also UAT has a favor for collective decisions and there exists a large amount of "homemade" bureaucracy. The Senate meets too frequently. There exist overlaps between governing bodies and the distribution of duties and tasks is not always clear. According to the Law 2011 the Rector and the Prorector are fully responsible for the operational management of the institution and the Senate provides the legal framework and rules for the operational management. In this sense the

Organisational Chart of UAT putting the Rector under the Senate does not correspond to the intentions of Law 2011. According to the Law 2011 Rector and Senate are on the same level. The Organisational Chart of UAT does not show all University bodies (e.g. the Teacher Training Department DPPD). For its special importance the Ethic Commission of UAT should be emphasized in the organigram too. Moreover, I have problems with the functioning of an ethic commission in a small institution like UAT, where everybody is related to everybody.

The University has to be commended for its Strategic Plan and its Operational Plan. But the critical financial situation of UAT is evident and at the moment the institution is surviving because of its savings in the past. The hope for more money from the government in the future alone is not enough for a reliable strategic planning. The University has to look for alternative financial resources and to look carefully what to do beside the theatre focus. I agree that the multimedia /new media area is a very interesting and attractive discipline which fits perfectly to the existing disciplines of UAT. But the necessary technical equipment und the recruitment of qualified staff for this area are very expensive. Hence the introduction needs careful planning and a solid financial base. A co-operation with Babeş Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca or another Romanian university for the implementation of this discipline could be very helpful.

Recommendations:

- Define clear responsibilities between the Administrative Board and the Senate giving the Rector and the Prorector full responsibility for the operational management of the institution and the Senate the power for all strategic decisions and the definition of regulations for actions of the Administrative Board.
- Adapt and correct the Organisational Chart according to the Law 2011 and show all existing University units in the organigram.
- Introduce benchmarks and performance indicators drawn from comparable institutions into the Strategic Plan and the Operational Plan. Establish monitoring instruments for the different tasks of the Operational Plan.
- The existence of the Ethic Commission has to be commended. But as I have already mentioned on other occasions, especially at small institutions an ethic commission composed only by members from the institution will not be able to handle sensitive cases like corruption and academic misconduct. I strongly recommend to install – if necessary informally - an inter-university commission with half members coming from UAT and the other half from other universities.
- Search for partners implementing the multimedia /new media area and fully include the expansion of this discipline at UAT into the strategic and operational planning (costs of facilities, problem of recruitment of qualified staff, etc.).
- Try to sign mutual contracts of co-operation with public and private institutions in the region in order to increase income.

5. Quality Culture

There is a strong demand for quality at UAT. The University has set up important activities and procedures for quality assurance during recent years. At central level there is a Commission for Internal Evaluation and Quality Assurance of the Senate. The Senate has adopted procedures for the initiation, monitoring and periodical revision of study programmes and activities. Academic teachers report periodically on their teaching and research activities

and are evaluated by students and colleagues. The students take an active part in the quality assurance procedures. But many university members still consider quality assurance procedures as an obligation and have little understanding of the purpose and benefits.

Recommendations:

- Promote the purpose and benefits of quality assurance procedures and shift from inspection and control to an improve-oriented approach providing support to staff and students.

6. Teaching and Learning

The quality of the education at UAT was recognized in the meetings with employers, graduates and students. Especially the Doctoral School in Hungarian and Romanian has to be commended. Collaborations between the two Faculties have been intensified during the last years. But there is still room for more collaborations and a better use of synergies in order to strengthen the multicultural profile of UAT.

Neither the meeting with students nor the meetings with graduates and employers disclosed any severe problems. But students want more possibilities for practical work and the preparation of projects. The cafeteria was not considered to be very attractive. The student dormitories with rooms for three and four students do not meet European standards. In the dormitories there is no space to study or to do practical work. There does not exist any student union at UAT. The involvement of stakeholders into curricula discussions seems to be very informal and only based on personal contacts.

Recommendations:

- Formalise the involvement of stakeholders in order to monitor and improve the quality of education.
- Students of arts frequently have close connections to their teachers and do not feel the need for a student union. Nevertheless, such an organisation would benefit the student community with respect to many aspects (promotion of common issues, contacts with the outside, etc.). Hence, motivate students to establish a student union at UAT.
- Strengthen collaboration between the two faculties by increasing common activities.
- Open parts of UAT for students also during evening and night hours.
- Provide a common e-mail address to all students and staff members in order to facilitate communication and strengthen the corporate identity of UAT
- Increase the number of mobility agreements for students and staff beyond Romanian and Hungarian institutions.

7. Research and Service to Society

As already mentioned, the contribution of UAT for the cultural and social life of the region and for Romania is evident.

The doctoral school in theatre and the artistic creations of UAT set trends in Romania and are important for whole Europe. Following a European development, academics at universities of arts need a formal academic recognition. UAT offers this possibility by its PhD studies. But

UAT has not set priorities for its research and artistic creation areas. By the definition of focus areas and the increased use of other languages beside Romanian and Hungarian the achievements of UAT would become internationally more visible.

Recommendations:

- Develop a strategy for research and artistic creation based on clear priorities and already existing fields of excellence.
- Expand the co-operation with institutions of arts beside Romania and Hungary, promoting the excellent facilities for research and artistic creation at UAT.
- Continue intentions to be internationally more visible and better known (e.g. participation in international events, publication in international recognised journals).

8. Internationalisation

Art and artistic activities exist in all cultures and countries. Hence, the starting position for a university of arts like UAT for international activities is very good. The co-operation of UAT with Romanian and Hungarian institutions and organisations with respect to certain aspects is already well developed. But internationalisation is a multi-dimensional task taking into account mobility programmes, language policy, curricula, joint study and double degree programmes, collaborative research, conference attendance, etc. With respect to several of these topics UAT has to strengthen its efforts in order to become a recognized international player.

Recommendations:

- Define clear goals for internationalisation (strategic partnerships, language policy, mobility, research and artistic creation collaborations).
- Try to increase funding from international and EU projects for artistic activities.
- Promote the unique profile of UAT in Transylvania as a multicultural institution.
- Try to attract more international students (e.g. expand the doctoral school by an English line, strengthen the foreign language policy inside UAT and offer joint courses given in English or French for students of both Faculties, etc.)

9. Final Remarks

UAT is a well-established institution, having a strong leadership, highly motivated and qualified academic and administrative staff, and committed students. UAT's regional role in the area of arts is very strong and the University plays an important role in education and artistic creation for the North-East of Romania. UAT is an innovative leader demonstrating excellent collaboration between the Romanian and the Hungarian ethnic groups. This example of fruitful co-operation is very important for the further cultural, social and economic development of Transylvania. By opening more to the international world, UAT has the potential to becoming a nationally and internationally recognised multicultural higher institution of arts. However, in order to master the actual and future challenges UAT has to proceed its way of high quality and permanent improvement.

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