

**Experience report on the study visit to
“Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Romania
14-21 April, 2013**

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After the working visit to the „Ştefan cel Mare” University of Suceava I produce several conclusions representing my opinions that might not permanently coincide with the actual situation.

Financial independence does not necessarily mean the progress of the educational institution. It rather means great responsibility, enormous work and work strategies (plans) necessary to face competition. During a meeting I heard the words of Mr. Adrian Gaur, the man who has done a tremendous work at „Ştefan cel Mare” University: "With little money you won't get anything". I realized that everything the university has to offer today was not obtained without work and that not everything is allocated from state funds.

When functioning in terms of financial autonomy all university elements transform from passive citizens, active when they have money, into active citizens - those who think of ways how to make money and to save it. One thing to start with is to have students, fee- or no fee, it doesn't matter. And here it is a big struggle among universities to persuade high-school graduates to choose exactly this or that university and more recently - to choose a specific faculty. That was that Mr Romeo Ionescu, the dean of Mechanical Engineering, Mechatronics and Management Faculty, told us mentioning the great work done to attract more students at the faculty he is in charge of.

In order to have high-school students coming to studies, they need to be informed about the location of the university, its infrastructure, faculty's national rating, about conditions for studies, accommodation and food, about social, cultural and sport activities. All these aspects have been taken into account by university administration to submit a proper offer presenting the only university from the region, well-placed, with highest-ranking faculties in Romania, as well as with a compact infrastructure providing everything for student's both curricular and extracurricular activities. With such an offer the university has good chances expecting many candidates and organizing an appropriate admission procedure for capable students. An indisputable moment considered by the university is employment opportunities for university graduates. This is the question most often asked by high-school students and their parents during discussions with university representatives before admission. For this reason USV comes with contracts concluded with large production and business entities from the region, thus from the start bringing evidence to high-school graduates that their diplomas will keep them out from unemployment, and more than that – it will provide them with employment within country's economy.

USV made rather important and successful efforts for its promotion. One could have noticed the promotion of university logo anywhere, including on Rector's tie. At each study building entrance, and they are many, there are directing banners displaying USV-specific colour logo, which is also imprinted on event folders, pens, etc. Thus, the university is a

brand. When speaking of USV one of the things imagined about it is its logo due to logo colour easy to remember.

USV offer was interesting to about 100 students from the Republic of Moldova who currently enjoy the quality of education at USV.

After bringing the required number of graduate and master students at the university it becomes necessary to spend the money carefully and to attract other funds. In this context, one could notice the efficient use of space both within the first half of the day and also at evening after 16.00, the human factor being responsible for financial resources saving (light turned off when not necessary, rational use of water). Given financial autonomy conditions of the university one can notice a large package of payment-based services and utilities, so as university administration representatives say they do not know of the word „free” when speaking about sports field, swimming pool, physiotherapy services, dormitories, cafeteria, debt fines, electromagnetic compatibility testing centre, journal, Vatra Dornei recreational camp.

Research and the number of articles published in impact factor journals are strongly developed in the university. These components significantly influence the rating of the university abroad. As a result of intensive support to this sector USV records a large number of patents, due to which the university stands on the first place in Romania. This also allows USV to participate in many international projects which are a source of income under financial autonomy conditions.

The university provides intensive support to students participating at international conferences, covering travel expenses and participation fees, as well as allows them facilities when using available goods and services. Students also benefit of vocational counselling and guidance centre, a useful moment for Moldovan universities.

What could be possibly implemented in the Republic of Moldova?

First, it is necessary to create at national level an agency, similar to ARACIS, regulating primarily the activity of universities.

At university level it would be necessary:

1. To give special consideration to university promotion, likewise the University of Suceava.
2. To perform a national rating of faculties with similar profile.
3. To make international projects an important source of income for university autonomy, however university employees need to be trained how to apply a project. In order to be internationally eligible, employees should have as many articles published in impact factor journals as possible, they also should be supported and promoted by various means.
4. To employ university buildings as much as possible and the ones not used to be leased to businesses.
5. To lease sport facilities, swimming pools, etc., but not at the expense of students.
6. To promote and support university units offering payment-based services (e.g. State University of Medicine and Pharmacy - university clinic, university pharmacy, Bardar herbs ground, dental clinic, departments that can provide specialized medical care).
7. To work intensively in attracting Chinese, Indian, etc. students.

8. To make Moldovan higher education equivalent with those from abroad so that local students wouldn't have to study in other countries, where the quality of education is the same but it is internationally recognized.

9. To grant financial autonomy to faculties in order to make them more accountable in terms of their programmes quality.

10. USV student organizations are not a model to follow by Moldovan universities because after formal and informal discussions with USV student representatives I understood that their work is coordinated from deans' offices and they do not have the independence necessary to take decisions. The large number of organizations does not allow them to consolidate. Frequent elections (every year) do nothing but waste the core of their work; and each year it is necessary to teach a new team to work.

At the same time, it makes sense to conclude a collaboration agreement between the most representative USV student organization and students' organizations with similar profile Moldovan universities for student exchanges, cross-border projects, winter camps (Vatra Dornei) activities.

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“Ștefan cel Mare” University is a modern institution with a 50-year higher education tradition. Currently it has 10 thousand students enrolled. Nine faculties within the University offer three- or four years degree programs, seven faculties offer master and doctoral studies. In Romania, university autonomy is guaranteed by the Constitution. Academic freedom is guaranteed by law. Higher education institutions are organized and operated without any ideological, political or religious interference.

University autonomy entitles the university community with the right to establish its own mission, institutional strategy, structure, activity, its own organization and operation, as well as its own management of material- and human resources. Fundamental aspects of university autonomy are stipulated in the University Charter, approved by the University Senate. University autonomy can be performed only on the condition of public accountability.

In higher education institutions, endangering of freedom for scientific and artistic expression is prohibited in any form. Students are provided with the right to freely choose courses and specializations based on existing regulations and study plans.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for monitoring and action when deviations from above mentioned obligations occur.

It can be concluded that autonomy issue is present both at national and European levels.

According to Government Resolution no. 983 of 22.12.2012 with regard to the functioning of state higher education institutions in terms of financial autonomy, and under Article 49 of Law on Education no. 547-XII of 21.07.1995, starting with January 1, 2013 a number of state higher education institutions from the Republic of Moldova met a new challenge: self-management operation.

Despite the fact that university autonomy provides higher education institutions with independence in terms of their organization and management, as well as in terms of establishing policies for education, research and other related activities, so that academic freedom and university autonomy could become and exist as a reality, public authorities should be involved in developing both qualifications framework and outside quality assurance. Meanwhile, with regard to other aspects, such as curricula and syllabuses development, such an involvement would not be advisable.

Although the admission of candidates to higher education is governed by existing legislation, however, universities have certain options in terms of choosing students. Thus, enrolment is based on candidate's performance, his/her education document, teaching language, study form, candidate's material condition and social support.

At some extent, this makes the university flexible on labour market, but does not create optimal conditions for the most effective study process. It is also important that universities promote in a totally transparent fashion their educational offer. In such case all universities will be on equal ground during youth career guidance and recruitment period.

The manner, by which universities can make publicly accessible their activities for specialists training, will influence the number of people wishing to pursue studies within certain bachelor, master or doctorate programs. Thus conditions for universities shall be created to decide on the total number of students; however certain programs still should be planned and financed by the state budget.

Regarding payment-based studies, universities should decide themselves on the total number of students charged. Of course, in this case a system for testing the quality of specialists training is needed with a minimal set of indicators established at national level.

Academic staff shall be most effective when entitled to make decisions on how to organize the study process; however certain limitations must be imposed upon the freedom of decision.

In the area of didactic activity a series of actions is required in order to improve the teaching process and to increase its quality, as well as to make it more effective and compatible with national and international standards.

Moldovan universities have full academic autonomy; however business is less involved in this autonomy. Universities may conclude bilateral or multilateral agreements for the provision of services. All Universities in Moldova have the right to organize joint research with national and international companies, but nowadays there are very few companies interested in this research. In this context, it is reasonable to take over the experience from Romania. One can notice that presently in Moldova there is no legislation that would facilitate business to invest in joint universities and companies research. Most often these activities are carried out spontaneously, for limited periods, and often only for solving certain problems regarding normal operation of certain companies.

Public authorities have to find ways to select universities based on performance without deeply affecting their short-term financing. Sustainable long-term funding decision is crucial for autonomy. Being dependent on public funds many state universities have therefore a limited

autonomy. Extending the financial basis by means of tuition fee funding creates new public accountability requirements.

Both management and university autonomy reform should be performed simultaneously together with the development of institutional capacity and of human resources.

Universities must meet new requirements in order to have an effective management and technical specialization in two areas of expertise. In order to succeed universities need a continuous and effective cooperation with public authorities.

In Romania education institutions are exempt from taxes. In the Republic of Moldova, currently, Art. 513 of the Tax Code is subject to interpretation, although stating that educational institutions are exempt from tax on income resulting from delivery of services and goods related to the educational process provided that means obtained from delivering these services and goods shall be allocated for general education. In this respect, a question remains open – what about the income from leased university property, university cafeteria, income from other activities? Another unsolved issue is whether income from activities other than those related to the educational process should be subject to VAT taxation.

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**Eugenia Berghe, Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova
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I have participated in the study visit to „Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Romania, within the TEMPUS Project „Enhancing university autonomy in Moldova” funded by the European Union, to be implemented in the period 2012-2015. The study visit took place on April 14 - 20, 2013. The project consortium involves about 100 staff and five countries - Romania, Lithuania, Denmark, Sweden and UK. The University of Suceava is located in the north- eastern Romania, in the southern part of Bukovina - a picturesque region. It is a modern institution with a tradition of 50 years in higher education. In 2005 the University has adopted the principles of the Bologna Declaration.

The University has developed continuously since founding in 1963, and currently the campus comprises approximately 66,000 square meters of teaching spaces, two gyms, a sports ground with synthetic turf coating system equipped with pressostatic balloon and lighting system, the Planetarium, and a Swimming and Physical Therapy Complex. A university renovated restaurant of 250 seats ensures daily catering for the academic staff, students, and master students. The price of meals is different. Students pay 40 percent, teachers - 60 percent, others - 80 percent of the total food cost. In the Republic of Moldova university canteens s are always at a loss and are subsidized by the institution in which they are acting.

University provides accommodation for over 1,000 students in the four dormitories at European standards. Accommodation fees are differentiated and cover all expenses incurred by the institution for the maintenance of university dormitories. In the Republic of Moldova the students who study with funding from the state budget and on the basis of contract in state institutions of higher education pay accommodation fees in the amount not more than 40 percent of the actual cost calculated. Master and Doctoral students pay no more than 50 percent of the actual cost calculated. Capital investments and repair expenditures for students' dormitories are currently covered by funds from the special means of the university.

The governing bodies of the University of Suceava are as follows:

1. University Senate,
2. Board of Directors
3. Faculty Board
4. Council of departments (chairs).

The University Senate is the highest decision-making body and deliberation at the university. The University Senate is up to 50 people and consists approximately 75% of teaching and research full-time staff and a maximum of 25 % of the students' representatives.

The mandate of the University Senate is for four years, and members are renewed no more than two consecutive times. The University Senate is headed by the president and can be called by the Rector or at the request of at least one third of the members. People who hold executive functions cannot be part of the University Senate (rector, vice-rectors, deans, deputy deans, department directors, chief of services.) They attend meetings as guests without having the right to vote.

The Board of Directors provide the operational management of the institution and put into application the decisions of the University Senate. The Board of Directors consists of the rector, vice-rectors, deans, Administrative Director General and a student representative.

The “Stefan cel Mare” University via its nine faculties offers degree programs (3 or 4 years), Master's degree programmes (2 years), and doctoral studies within seven faculties. In the 2012-2013 academic year approximately 10,000 students were studying in the “Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava: 4500 students on the basis of the state budget, 5500 students paying tuition fees. Allocations from the state budget are based on funding per student per each study programme. At the beginning of the calendar year the University receives a global budget based on educational service contract for specialized staff training. Financial autonomy of the university is realised at the faculty level, 28 percent of the income earned by faculties is retained at central level as overheads.

Execution of budget of “Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava is done through the State Treasury until now. The University has the right to hold bank accounts in Romanian commercial banks, but payment of services provided by those banks are very expensive.

Financial autonomy in Moldova is done by Government Decision nr. 983 of 22 December 2012. In terms of financial autonomy state budget allocations are made per student in each study programme, which will include salary expenses, purchase of goods, services and works required for providing the educational process progress, development expenses and a coefficient of specialities or qualitative criteria.

Educational service contract for specialized staff training is signed by the university and the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova for the total budget allocation amount, which includes all university cycles for one financial year, and financing is done monthly by the Ministry of Education to the bank account of the receiving institution on the basis of the document confirming conveyance – reception of services. If until now the funds allocated from the state budget, unused by the end of the calendar year by the university, were withdrawn to the state budget account, then in terms of financial autonomy they are used in the following year.

Financial autonomy of universities requires freedom in decisions, by which each university will administrate alone its budget, will have the right to manage its funds otherwise than before. Tuition fees and other charges of payment upon provision of services were regulated by Government Decision no. 196 of 22 February 2007 regarding the special means of institutions subordinated to the Ministry of Education.

Modification of tuition fees by specialties and years of studies reviewed by University Senates were submitted to the Government of the Republic of Moldova for approval. All revenues, received from tuition fees and provision of payment services by 1 January 2013, were considered public money, which distribution was approved annually by the State Budget Law.

Universities were funded about 30 % of budgeted resources, remaining 70% were own revenue accumulated in the result of providing payment services.

The fulfilment of budget by universities was carried out through the Treasury (approved plan, specified plan and cashier expenses). Because the university budget was part of the state budget, this required institutions to value the total amount of planned sources in a certain month, even in case there was no need to use the funds.

If the state budget execution increased the level of budget deficit, then Ministry of Finance could block expenses, with the exception of those for personnel, student scholarships and partial municipal services without informing universities about it.

Taking into consideration all this, it was concluded that the optimum would be to manage financial means via bank accounts. Universities are entitled to choose the banks which will help to manage the budget independently.

In terms of financial autonomy, universities will be allowed to place their available funds from the bank accounts in bank deposits temporary, with payment of interest to the current account monthly.

To establish incentive payments the available special funds remaining will be used to by universities to cover other expenses related to the delivery of services, performing works or other activities for charge. In this case all categories of staff of the University may benefit of a decent salary.

Also, the teaching staff, in addition to its didactic activity is not limited to carry out scientific research for additional payment, on the basis of contracts. At the same time, they can conduct teaching in other divisions and other universities, which would increase the monthly personal income.

Financial autonomy of universities would better consider the needs of students by having the right to provide students with learning and research scholarships from the universities' own funds, bonuses and social incentives, to improve living conditions in student dormitories.

On the other hand, financial autonomy requires the university to assume a set of powers and duties:

- To respect the law, which must be reviewed urgently;
- Respect the University Charter and accountability policy of the institution;
- To apply and comply with the regulations in force;
- To ensure managerial efficiency and effectiveness of resources utilisation;
- Ensure transparency of all decisions and activities;
- To respect the academic freedom of staff and students, master and doctoral students, and residents.

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In 2012, the TEMPUS project „Enhancing university autonomy in Moldova” was approved by the European Union for funding; it will run three years, until 2015. The purpose of the Project is to develop a regulatory framework regarding the four components of university autonomy. The Technical University of Moldova is the national coordinator of the project.

Within this project four study visits to various higher education institutions are expected aiming at getting more knowledge about their practices in applying the methods of university autonomy and the obtained results.

The first study visit took place from 14 to 21 April 2013, at „Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, one of the project partners in the above mentioned project.

The purpose of the visit, i.e. to study the activity of Romanian Universities in terms of university autonomy, particularly the financial autonomy, operational mechanisms, successes and failures regarding the gained experience of the „Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, was achieved successfully. The working group joined representatives of the Economic / Accounting Departments of the Technical University, State Agricultural University, Academy of Economic Studies, State University of Medicine and Pharmacy, State University of Balti, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance.

Choosing the „Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava to conduct this study was not accidental. This University is one of the most dynamic higher education institutions in Eastern Europe, with a tradition of 50 years in higher education, providing attractive high standard undergraduate and postgraduate education. The University also contributes effectively to the social, cultural and economic development of Bukovina region. The University employs 360 academic staff, and offers 47 Bachelor study programmes, 9 ID study programmes, 33 Master degree programmes, Doctoral programmes in 14 scientific areas, 19 long-life education programmes for adults, 62 ISI papers, 38.6 Relative Influence Score, 22.1 Individualized Relative Influence Score.

The University encompasses nine faculties: Economic Sciences and Public Administration; Physical Education and Sports; Food Engineering; Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences; Mechanical Engineering, Mechatronics and Management; History and Geography; Letters and Communication Sciences; Forestry; and Educational Sciences. This diversity stimulates the development of the university, leading to increasing the number of study programmes for both Bachelor and Master programmes, and, in consequence, to

increasing the number of students paying tuition fees and the number of students who do not pay tuition fees (budget financing).

Currently, the university enrolls 10 000 students, of which 55 % are paying tuition fees (2200-2400 Romanian lei).

The educational process is provided by 720 teaching positions, therefore the ratio student / teacher is 14 students per teacher. According to ARACIS standards (Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) the ratio cannot be smaller than 10 students per teacher. The University is considered efficient in terms of public funds use.

However, according to ARACIS standards, teaching positions must be occupied by teachers with full-time position in the institution or reserved position in proportion of 70 %. At least 25% and at most 50 % of academic staff must have the teaching degree of professor or associate professor. The academic staff should meet the legal requirements regarding the positions and have the necessary qualification and perform research activity in the area of the occupied position.

Based on ARACIS standards the number of full-time academic staff in the programme of study (specialization) should be higher than 40 % of the total number of legally established teaching positions of the envisaged study programme.

Total number of hours includes the entire teaching activity:

Courses, seminars, laboratory work, semester projects and practical periods (annual practical stages and practical period for diploma thesis / project, considered only in the case of a total minimum of 8 weeks, 240 hours respectively).

Length of studies (full-time, distance or part-time education) is 8 semesters, 14 weeks per semester (teaching and learning activity does not include the practical period and the semester examination sessions). Number of hours per week is 26 to 28 hours (lectures, seminars, labs, semester projects), and the total duration of the practice period is at least 8 weeks (240 hours).

During this visit, I was impressed by the massive investments made to broaden and improve the infrastructure: purchase of land, construction of swimming pool and sports grounds, as well as use of own revenues by the University for purchasing buildings in the neighbourhood of the Student Campus which were later refurbished for research, teaching and administrative activities, maintenance of buildings in good physical conditions, all renovated in a modern style, equipped with solar panels for energy saving and heating of buildings, pool water, etc.

For its 10,000 students and 360 teachers, the University has a modern library endowed with mobile shelves (to save space) and computers with only 20 positions (librarians) to

compare with some higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova with 5500 students and 40 librarians.

Successful implementation of the method of funding per student by the Ministry of National Education of Romania is the fact that all higher education institutions are subordinated to a single ministry, which is not similar to the higher education system in Moldova.

One of the peculiarities of financial autonomy of Romanian universities is the right to register the property purchased from own financial means as property of the university and not as property of the state, but without the right to sell it.

Other elements of financial autonomy of universities in Romania are, as follows: the right to enter into a contract with the Ministry regarding provision of services, the right to receive overall funding from the ministry and to use the money earned from research projects via bank accounts, the right to use the accumulated balance in the treasury account of means obtained from tuition fees in subsequent years and to obtain bank loans for research projects, the right to approve tuition fees by the University Senate.

Another element of financial autonomy , which should be mentioned, is that the university budget, received as global finance, is distributed globally between faculties and the faculty is planning costs as economic costs (salaries , services , procurements , etc.). Investment policy levers belong to the Ministry of Education. Financing is done via treasury / bank accounts fully to the university because the faculties are not legal persons.

The draft budget is developed at the level of institution with the involvement of the faculties and departments; afterwards it is submitted to the board of directors with further approval by the Senate. The draft budget is presented to the Ministry of National Education and then to the Ministry of Finance.

The institution concludes an annual contract with the Ministry of National Education for budget allocations. Budgetary funding should be spent for educational services, canteens, dormitories and stipends.

Distribution of budgetary allocations for basic financing of public higher education institutions is based on the unitary equivalent number of students. Funding is an overall cost which is divided between faculties and departments based on internal regulations approved by the Senate.

It's worth noting that annual evaluation of the teachers is done by 3 sides: by peers, by students via Internet, and by managers (heads or directors of departments).

Teacher remuneration is a fixed amount without bonuses and supplements according to the norms established by law according to the number of hours per week. The Senate

decides to decrease the number of hours per week for persons who hold management positions and do not apply bonus policy to them. A teacher may hold up to 2 positions.

Scientific research is conducted in two directions: a) within the faculty, individually or in teams, in scientific or interdisciplinary fields, within the departments or research centres, b) in cooperation with other institutions or businesses. Some priorities regarding research activity: motivation of research performance , strengthening existing research centres, interdisciplinary research approach by forming teams from different areas, development of research partnerships with universities in the country and abroad and private companies.

An important role in the work of universities belongs to the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. The Agency is a public institution empowered by law to carry out evaluation, accreditation and authorization of higher education institutions in Romania; it is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education and is registered in the European Register for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

Proposals for the development of the legal framework in the Republic of Moldova based on best practices of Romanian universities:

1. Establishing the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in Moldova;
2. Transferring universities in the subordination of a single ministry - the Ministry of Education;
3. Offering the right to sell the inefficient spaces and directing the revenues to the development of the institution: upgrading the study buildings, dormitories, libraries and endowment with modern equipment;
4. Assessment of the academic staff by their peers, students, administration;
5. Opportunities for developing the institutional budget at the level of subdivisions;
6. Distribution of budget allocations based on the unitary equivalent number of students;
7. Determining the equivalence and cost coefficients.

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During the study visit to “Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Romania, I learned many important things that could be successfully implemented in Moldovan universities. Further, I will list the most attractive, important and easy to implement measures for the academic environment under university autonomy conditions that result in competition, and hopefully, performance and progress.

Thus, I consider particularly important measures for university promotion.

An institution promotion may occur through various means. These can be, for example, what we saw at the University of Suceava (USV): USV logo placed on the clothing (i.e. shirts, ties) of central administration members, on staff clothing and on the doors of classrooms, on the dishes in USV cafeteria, on the presentation/information board of the faculty located at the entrance to each study building. In my view all these details show that USV values its image and USV administration is concerned about continuous promotion of the university in order to attract a larger number of students, and to attract as many financial resources, respectively.

In Romanian universities research is funded separately.

It is desirable for Moldova to have financial resources allocated specifically for research area. This will make university education more attractive both for students and teachers (teaching staff), most of whom admit being more interested in research rather than teaching.

Excellent conditions in dormitories attract a large number of students eager to stay in them.

In my opinion, it is particularly important to make investments in Moldovan university dormitories because this way universities will attract more students eager to get a place in the dormitory and, obviously, given very good living conditions in the dormitory, the tuition fee payable to the university administration will be higher.

This means that once invested in dormitories, the money will be quickly recovered and will help at supporting the financial autonomy of the university.

“To have a super-university one does not necessarily need super-teachers or millions of students. First of all legal regulations are needed”.

Moldovan universities should carefully consider which of the current legislative regulations do not allow them an efficient financial autonomy and should request a respective adjustment. Thus, universities shall have the opportunity to benefit from legal regulations that will promote and won't stop their independent and autonomous development.

Internal mobility allowing students to study the same subjects at different universities.

This mobility process would provide Moldovan students the possibility to encounter various types of learning of the same subject, to establish new contacts with new colleagues and professors from other universities, thus contributing to an increased student's adaptability to

new conditions and favouring the accumulation of experience and of a greater amount of information and best practice, so necessary when practicing the profession chosen.

I noticed that Suceava University has two mobile-shelving book storages. This allows easy motion for several books simultaneously.

I highly appreciated the mobility of library shelves as the books are better kept, I think, meaning that the university doesn't require new investments in purchasing used furniture or restoring worn books. Therefore, this is a measure to save university money. It would be useful for Moldovan universities to undertake such an inventive and promising measure for preserving books and saving money in case of book damage or desire to change their location.

In Suceava University I became convinced that three important components can be combined:

1. Higher education process,
2. Research and,
3. Community service.

I drew particular attention to the last issue - "community service", because the university where I do my studies strongly lacks it as well as other Moldovan universities.

In my opinion, Moldovan universities should learn to invest, promote and offer for use as many of the facilities they own.

The use of university property such as classrooms, conference rooms, swimming pool, sports ground, etc., will be a multiple service rendered to the community, which respectively,

1. Will increase the popularity of the university and the "non-traditional" way to promote it;
2. Will increase the amount of university revenue;
3. Will help to improve the financial situation of the university in terms of financial autonomy;
4. Will enhance the competitive capacity of the university in its competition with other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs);
5. Will create steady income alternatives managed by the University according to its needs.

Here is what USV employs, for example:

Student campus offering students comfort: possibility to arrive timely at class (because dormitories are located within the campus), to have a walk, to have a rest in a landscaped park within the campus.

Own hotel operated for university income.

Rental of university halls and of other facilities such as swimming pool, soccer field, etc., which support significantly the financial autonomy of the university.

Own labs where European-level tests and reports are conducted, employed at the highest extent.

Operation of these laboratories for product quality testing, due to quality analysis, attracts customers, and respectively, attracts investments in the university and, at the same time, promotes it as an important scientific centre.

In conclusion, I am firmly convinced that universities providing community services are more popular, more trusted and most accepted by prospective students (as community members to whom the above services are being provided), by current players of the study process as well as by the entire community.

Academic autonomy is a crucial factor in attracting various resources required by the university; therefore university administration should focus on it. I refer to the following resources:

- Foreign investment,
- Students,
- Professional teaching staff,
- Donations and internal projects sponsors,
- National and international partners that would significantly contribute to achieve internal and external academic mobility.

In my opinion, universities should strive to be able to decide independently upon:

- Study fields array (faculties, specialties, etc.),
- Curricula and syllabi structures,
- Courses and applications conducted, additionally, upon examination method (excluding final exams that are regulated by national law)

Election of university rector.

I consider it necessary to change the actual rector election regulations. Currently the rector is elected by members of the University Senate, thus considerably endangering democratic elections, i.e. the possibility of any person that could eventually become rector, even outside the Senate or university, to accede to this function.

After sharing experience with colleagues from Suceava we understood that it is possible a system where the rector elected by the university and not by the Senate works very well.

That is why I propose that university rectors are elected not by the Senate, which is a very small group of easily influenced people, but by the entire university. Here, I refer to academic staff, as well as students and University Senate. With the operation of this amendment for rector election, there will be different and many candidates. The vote will be more transparent and the entire academic community will be involved in the electoral process.

Student Guide necessary to be developed and offered to every fresh student.

Student Guide must include all necessary information about the university where he/she studies. This guide is designed to help the student better and faster understand how education process takes place, what opportunities the student has within the University and what are his rights (and obligations) as a student.

In conclusion I wish to emphasize that Moldovan universities, and especially their administration, must create a student-centred learning environment, meaning the student as the main client, for whom the university works. Meantime, professors during studies must act for students as mentors, teachers and providers of knowledge and experience and not as robots simply reading lectures and boring students in full halls with tedious and ineffective rhetoric. We need investment in quality to benefit from students quality (not quantity) training, from highest level research process and from most efficient knowledge transfer to students.

I consider important to emphasize that during academic process students should have a learning environment characterized by freedom of subjects choice, by the right to select teachers willing to teach them and not only. As a student, I will be solidary with my kind, and will promote the idea that we need university fostering the development of researchers and personalities. We need universities that develop in their students theoretical and, especially, practical skills, abilities, competencies, creativity and ingenuity.

**Experience report on the study visit to
“Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Romania
14-21 April, 2013**

**Ala Cotelnic, Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova
“Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova” project**

The visit of Moldovan delegation at "Stefan cel Mare" University of Suceava, Romania, aimed the study of Romanian experience, in general, and of the mentioned University, in particular, regarding the development of university autonomy. All university autonomy elements have been reviewed and discussed: organizational, academic, staff, financial (both legislative and regulatory) autonomy, as well as specific examples from the experience of Suceava University.

The experience of the University under autonomy conditions shows a high responsibility in terms of the organization in general as well as in terms of every teaching personnel. The following topics were discussed:

- Evolution, content and mission of the universities. Based on their mission, that generally refers to three components: learning, research and community services, the definition of university governance in various models was presented, as well as factors that determine the acceptance of a specific model and their characteristic. Knowledge of relevant models helps to identify ourselves within some of them (the continental one), to see which are the strengths and to try avoiding certain obstacles.
- Interesting Romanian experience regarding university governance. Law on National Education of 2011 brought many changes in the governance of universities. Those changes were highlighted and analysed in terms of positive results or certain problems, also distortions, encountered during their implementation.
- The role of university autonomy for its governance was described; basic dimensions (academic autonomy, structural and functional autonomy, financial autonomy, human resources autonomy) were characterized in accordance with Romanian Law on National Education and based on its implementation.
- Particular interest was stimulated by a presentation on financial autonomy, which, although proclaimed in Romania, actually does not exist on the grounds that government funding imposes many mechanisms that block financial management of the university and make it totally underperforming. The main obstacle in this respect is a clause from public finance law, according to which the money entering the university is considered public funds, regardless of the sources they come from.
- The presentation of Professor A. Graur, rector of the State University of Suceava in 2004-2012 period, showing the development of university system in the region, the evolution of Suceava University both as a name and as a structure, number of students, staff members, gave us a clear vision of the entity we were in and helped us understand that a competent and performance-motivated management is able to create an enviable infrastructure and to ensure quality in both education and research.

- Suceava State University provides training in all three cycles: 47 graduate programs, 33 master's programmes, 14 doctoral level programmes. Distance learning training is done through 9 graduate programmes. There is no correspondence and evening studies training. Impressive scientific findings are presented in a high number of publications in ISI scientific journals. The university also provides community services. Given this reason, I consider useful the experience of the University offering community services, and part of it could be borrowed. For example, concert performance of ASEM artistic bands for children from boarding houses.
- During “Financial autonomy” issue the process of institutional budgeting was of interest and the sources of income were explained, which essentially were found the same as in Moldovan universities. The difference is about the mechanism of state money allocation for budget students. The main difficulty here is that state funding is done annually per student which means that funding is annual and it is hard to foresee activities when financial resources of the university are not known.
- USV, like any other Romanian university enjoys decentralization of power. Thus, each faculty has its own budget - money allocated from the University budget is managed by the faculty. In this situation universities are required to seek and find ways to optimize costs, but also to find new sources of revenue. The experience is interesting, however in view of immediate implementation in the Republic of Moldova an analysis should be conducted taking into account all advantages and limitations, and also predicting certain undesirable situations that might arise.
- Implementation of the provisions of the new law on education, approved in 2011 revealed certain situations that should be avoided in the Republic of Moldova. For example, the human resources clause stating that all personnel that have reached the age of 65 years should be retired without having the right to be a thesis supervisor, can lead to failure to conduct certain research given the lack of supervisors, because other supervisors were not trained overnight. Also, universities can employ only personnel having scientific degrees. The implementation of „7 out 1 in” principle brought the impossibility to employ personnel and increased the workload of employees. All these aspects should be given careful thinking in order to avoid inflammatory effects in society.
- I also noticed some deficiencies in the activity of Romanian universities in terms of academic autonomy, such as study programs-related bureaucracy, limitations introduced by ARACIS, excessive monitoring and inspections done by the Ministry of National Education regarding conformity to education and research regulations, non-financing of postdoctoral studies, the existence of certain mechanisms that block financial management, etc.
- Beginning with the fact that currently in the Republic of Moldova there is no quality assurance agency, everything related to ARACIS activity, also to the assessment of the quality of study programmes, showed interest from universities’ point of view. There are many elements similar to those that existed in the Republic of Moldova (temporary license

need, accreditation every five years, etc.), but there are many new activities for Moldova, such as groups capping for certain study programmes, accreditation not of institutions but of study programmes. Some similarities and differences in the formal criteria for programme evaluation by ARACIS were also noticed.

- Existing ARACIS standards on study process content have a contradictory character: on the one hand, these are necessary because they assure the same graduate programme training across the country almost at the same level, with a large number of similar subjects. This facilitates student mobility and easier recognition of studies done in other universities across the country. All along this limits academic autonomy of the university. In fact, we have the same situation in Moldova; only regulations in this regard come from the Ministry of Education through the Framework Regulations on higher education and through the National Qualifications Framework. The latter does not have the required implementation level.
- One remarkable aspect noted was the comprehensive University evaluation performed by ARACIS. I refer to both academic and scientific accreditation. In Moldova, there are 2 different types of accreditations, made by different bodies at different periods of time, thus registering double efforts, often happening effort overlapping. Romanian experience in this regard is interesting and could be borrowed.
- Acquaintance with the hierarchy of study programmes and university ranking is an interesting aspect, however it indicates some haste at the time of creation, a fact which led to the dissatisfaction of many Universities. The lesson learned from this aspect is not to rush things, to think over each component and each indicator to be taken into account, over the degree of its usefulness for this process especially in situations where the results of classification and hierarchy are used for securing financial resources (Romania).
- Meetings with representatives from student organizations got us acquainted with USV Scholarship Framework Regulation as well as with Camp Placing Regulation. The criteria used for granting facilities to students are interesting. We discovered many similar aspects regarding the types of scholarships awarded to students. The autonomy of faculties in terms of awarded scholarships number and size is also interesting. What we can borrow is scholarships or other facilities awarding grid (adapted to current Moldovan conditions).
- Meetings and discussions with several deans helped us see both positive and less positive features of faculties' autonomy. I found interesting and useful to borrow the idea to involve student in the promotion of educational programmes through a Caravan organized in high schools, as well as through development of leaflets containing educational offer.
- In the context of organizational autonomy the information presented by Prof. Stefan-Gheorge Pentiu was useful. It refers to the bicameral university governance model, its peculiarity, the responsibilities that the Senate and the Board of Directors have in this context, the structure of these bodies. Of interest are the responsibilities of the Faculty Council, which is the deliberative decision-making body of the faculty. The election or

appointment procedure for administrative positions (rector, vice-rectors, deans, vice-deans, and heads of departments) was presented.

- In the context of university financial autonomy declared in the Republic of Moldova the information presented by Prof. M. Popescu was useful with respect to the structure of university income, the structure of expenditures, the evolution of the methodology for distribution of budget allocations for principal funding (for state higher education institutions), the determination of total amounts of state allocations for a university depending on the form of studies, level of education, field of study, university ranking in the hierarchy carried out in the respective year, the performance criteria set. I believe that this model, taking into account both quantity (number of students) and quality (performance level of teachers, scientific research, infrastructure, etc.) indicators is interesting and deserves to be studied in order to be partially (or totally) implemented in the Republic of Moldova.

Conclusions:

- The study visit to the “Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava was useful and interesting. The information offered confirms the need for reforms in the Republic of Moldova. All at once, some elements of the reform carried out in Romania allow us to consider own implementation method. For example, excessive responsibilities of ARACIS limit university autonomy within all its components. In this situation it is very difficult for a university to be distinguished from others with regard to training under the same study program;
- Classification of universities, as done in Romania, is considered by many professors as inefficient. In this regard, this experience should be studied more deeply to avoid registered mistakes;
- Performance evaluation of teachers conducted each year according to well-established criteria based on a form known in advance we consider as an applicable practice for our universities. Own assessment criteria existing in some Moldovan universities is not an obstacle to the takeover of good practice. The method for flexible distribution of classes based on professor’s performance in the previous year is also applicable.

**Experience report on the study visit to
“Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Romania
14-21 April, 2013**

**Tatiana Dobrovolschi, Ministry of Finance; Republic of Moldova
“Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova” project**

The study visit was organised by the Technical University of Moldova within the Tempus project, funded by the European Union, „Enhancing the University Autonomy in Moldova (EUniAM)” in the period 14-21 April 2013. ”Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Romania, is one of the project partners.

The **purpose** of this visit was to learn the experience of universities in Romania in terms of university autonomy: the steps that they have undertaken their successes, shortcomings and ways of operating that we can apply in Moldova.

Choosing the „Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava to conduct this study was not accidental. Currently the University employs 360 academic staff, and offers 47 Bachelor study programmes, 9 ID study programmes, 33 Master degree programmes, Doctoral programmes in 14 scientific areas, 19 long-life education programmes for adults, 62 ISI papers, 38.6 Relative Influence Score, 22.1 Individualized Relative Influence Score; the University is one of the most dynamic higher education institutions in Eastern Europe, with a tradition of 50 years in higher education, providing attractive high standard undergraduate and postgraduate education. As well, the University contributes effectively to the social, cultural and economic development of Bukovina region.

The University encompasses nine faculties: Economic Sciences and Public Administration; Physical Education and Sports; Food Engineering; Electrical Engineering; Mechanical Engineering, Mechatronics and Management; Computer Sciences; History and Geography; Letters and Communication Sciences; Forestry; and Educational Sciences. This diversity boosts the development of the university, leading to increasing the number of study programmes for both Bachelor and Master programmes, and, in consequence, to increasing the number of students paying tuition fees and the number of students who do not pay tuition fees (budget financing).

Meanwhile, the introduction of new prestigious specialties, such as medicine, will result in increasing the number of students and also the prestige of the university.

Currently, the university enrolls 10 000 students, of which 55 % are paying tuition fees (2200-2400 Romanian lei).

Teaching staff encompasses 720 teaching positions therefore the ratio student / teacher is 14 students per teacher. According to ARACIS standards (Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) the ratio cannot be smaller than 10 students per teacher.

However, according to ARACIS standards, teaching positions must be occupied by teachers with full-time position in the institution or reserved position in proportion of 70 %. At least 25% and at most 50 % of academic staff must have the teaching degree of professor or associate professor. The academic staff should meet the legal requirements regarding the

positions and must have the necessary qualification and perform research activity in the area of the occupied position.

Based on ARACIS standards, the number of full-time academic staff in the programme of study (specialization) should be higher than 40 % of the total number of legally established teaching positions for the envisaged study programme.

Total number of hours includes the entire teaching activity:

Courses, seminars, laboratory work, semester projects and practical periods (annual practical stages and practical period for diploma thesis / project writing, considered only in the case of a total minimum of 8 weeks, 240 hours respectively).

Length of studies (full-time, distance or part-time education) is 8 semesters, 14 weeks per semester (didactic activity does not include the course practical period and the semester examination sessions). Number of hours per week is 26 to 28 hours (lectures, seminars, labs, semester projects), and the total duration of the practice period is at least 8 weeks (240 hours).

During this visit I appreciated the attic system particularly, which is a great achievement in terms of enlarging the infrastructure of the university, as well as the acquisition of buildings for research, teaching and administration from own revenues.

I noticed also, major investments made to broaden and improve the infrastructure of higher education: land acquisition, development of university campuses, swimming pool construction, sports grounds.

The glass roof, use of solar panels to save energy and for heating spaces , pool water, modern library equipped with mobile shelving , student ensemble „Arcanum”, „Fabulinus” theatre, concerts, theatre performances, Romanian film gala , upgrading the canteen where students receive 40 % - 60 % discounts, employees enjoy a discount of 80 %, and foreigners pay 150 % are so many remarkable achievements of the University. Many of these activities can serve as a model for universities in Moldova.

It's worth mentioning that the modern library is endowed with mobile shelves and computers and employs only 20 positions (librarians), to compare with some higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova with 5500 students and 40 positions (librarians).

In Moldova, higher education institutions are subordinated to several sectorial ministries, unlike higher education institutions in Romania, which are subordinated to a single ministry, the Ministry of National Education, a practice that can be applied in Moldova, as well.

From the discussion with the chief accountant of the „Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava it was stated that the Economic Department has the following structure: Budget and Finance - 11 people (including the cashier) and Human Resource - 7 people. There was a series of questions and answers. One of the questions was whether the university, after purchasing buildings from its own money and registering them at the Cadastre Office, can sell the building; the answer was no, because the law allows acquisition of property and does not allow its sale, which is also applicable in Moldova.

In Romanian universities financing is done via the Treasury, with the exception of projects that are using commercial bank accounts; income and expenses are monitored by the state, the accumulated balance to the account can be used in the coming year, which cannot be applied in Moldova. The common problem is procurement with the lowest price, but the problem of quality is not solved.

In terms of financial autonomy, in a certain university the budget is planned at faculty and department level; there is no additional funding for new programmes, and the investment policy levers belong to the Ministry of National Education. Financing is provided for the university, on the whole.

The draft budget is developed at the level of institution with the involvement of the faculties and departments; afterwards it is submitted to the board of directors with further approval by the Senate, and then is presented to the Ministry of National Education and to the Ministry of Finance.

The institution concludes an annual contract with the Ministry of National Education for budget allocations. Budgetary funding should be spent for educational services, canteens, dormitories and stipends (69 Romanian lei per budgetary student for 2 years). The amount of the scholarship is established by order of the Ministry of National Education and a fixed amount is planned according to the number of budgetary students.

Distribution of budgetary allocations for basic financing of public higher education institutions is based on the unitary equivalent number of students, which is calculated as follows: physical student x coefficient of equivalence (by form of study) is equal to equivalent student, which is multiplied to cost coefficient (by field of study) and we obtain unitary equivalent student. Funding is an overall cost which is divided between faculties and departments based on internal regulations approved by the Senate.

Curriculum, the distribution of hours, the amount of the tuition fee, etc. are decided at faculty (faculty council) and department levels; there is no Department of Education in the university. All proposals shall be discussed at the Board of Directors meetings and are approved by the Senate (which does not include managers and 25 % representing students). The Rector may be invited to attend the Senate meeting, without the right of vote, but the Rector has the right to convene the Senate in case of emergency.

Annual evaluation of the teachers is done by their peers, by students via Internet, and by managers (heads or directors of departments), and this can be also applied in the Republic of Moldova.

Teacher remuneration is a fixed amount without bonuses and supplements according to the norms established by law according to the number of hours per week. The Senate decides to decrease the number of hours per week for persons who hold management positions and do not apply bonus policy to them. A teacher may hold up to 2 positions, and this can be applied in Moldovan universities as well.

Scientific research is conducted in two directions: a) within the faculty, individually or in teams, in scientific or interdisciplinary fields, within the departments or research centres, b) in cooperation with other institutions or businesses. Some priorities regarding research activity: motivation of research performance , strengthening existing research

centres, interdisciplinary research approach by forming teams from different areas, development of research partnerships with universities in the country and abroad and private companies.

An important role in the work of universities belongs to the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, a public institution empowered by law to carry out evaluation, accreditation and temporary authorization of higher education institutions in Romania; the Agency is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education and is registered in the European Register for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

Any associate professor, teaching in the university, can become ARACIS assessment expert after passing the test via the Internet and being accepted by ARACIS.

In Moldova, there is no such agency. Since 2013 the public budget envisages expenditures for the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, which has not been created so far. It is necessary to set up such an Agency in the Republic of Moldova.

Conclusions:

The study visit was necessary; it combined presentations, group discussions and recommendations of experts from Romania, gave the opportunity to gain knowledge and experience regarding the university autonomy.

Proposals to be implemented in the Republic of Moldova:

1. Application of the attic system for enlarging the university infrastructure;
2. Glass roof construction , application of solar panels, which reduce electricity costs;
3. Upgrading libraries with computers and mobile shelving;
4. Higher education institutions should be subordinated to a single ministry, the Ministry of Education;
5. Changing legislation related to heritage regarding the right to sell inefficient spaces, revenue being directed to the development of the institution;
6. Draft budget of the institution to be developed at faculty and department levels, and is presented to the board of directors and approved by the Senate;
7. Distribution of budget allocations based on the number of unitary equivalent students and determination of equivalence and cost coefficients;
8. Assessment of teaching by colleagues, students, managers;
9. Setting up the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in Moldova.

**Experience report on the study visit to
“Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Romania
14-21 April, 2013**

**S. Gîrlea, Technical University of Moldova
“Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova” project**

Technical University of Moldova is one of the Partners in the TEMPUS project “Enhancing university autonomy in Moldova” funded by the European Union.

The visit at USV was undertaken during April 14-21, 2013, aiming to study the activity of “Stefan cel Mare” University under both academic and financial conditions.

The University is the only higher-education institution in Suceava, offering higher education, as well as social, cultural and economic development in Bukovina region, enrolling students from Ukraine and Moldova. Nine university faculties employ 360 personnel units (720 teaching positions) and register 10 thousand full-time students and one thousand distance-learning students. 45 percent of students are budget-financed students and 55 percent of students pay tuition fees. The student/teacher ratio is 14 students per teacher.

- Higher education programmes - 47, distance education programmes - 9, master programmes - 33, 14 doctoral studies – 14 areas.
- Research ISI articles published in international journals - 62, Relative Influence Score - 38.6, Individualized Relative Influence Score - 22.1.
- Community service - continuing auditors training, dance team, theatre performance.

During this visit the former rector of USV, Prof. A. Graur, permanently assisted the working group. Prof. Graur guided us through university facilities (about 40 ha) – study buildings, housing facilities, excellent swimming pool, sports fields, large library equipped with computers and employing 20 librarians, student restaurant (cafeteria), etc. All buildings are maintained in a very good condition, adjacent land is well-maintained, study buildings and dormitories are in excellent condition, and students are well-aware to preserve excellent study and housing conditions. Laboratories are equipped with new equipment together with well-maintained old one; buildings are equipped with solar panels saving power for indoor heating and water heating in the swimming pool. Dormitories condition is rather impressive, with an excellent order maintained and differentiated accommodation fees. Property purchased from university funds is registered as university property and not state property, however its sale is forbidden.

Conclusions:

At Suceava University, university autonomy stands on a better ground compared to financial autonomy, which is mainly declared but not completely assured.

University budget is composed of state budget allocations (core and complimentary funding), of own revenues (tuition fees, research, external projects, micro-production, dormitories, cafeteria). Research is performed based on external co-financing. Core funding

is based on cost coefficients, priority coefficients (engineering coefficient 1,75). Doctorate studies are financed only through grants.

Higher education financing in Romania is a national priority, however the Government operates many mechanisms that block university management, thus making it totally counterproductive.

The money, regardless of sources nature, is public money. Accounts are opened at the Treasury (except money from grants), and transfers from extra-budget sources cannot be blocked, as for instance they were blocked repeatedly by the Treasury in Chisinau.

The University is funded from the overall state budget. In addition to studies funding, the state budget finances maintenance of study buildings, dormitories and cafeteria. State budget financing is made according to the study service contract and unused balances remain to be used in the coming year.

The methodology for calculating tuition fees is approved by faculty councils and only after that it is approved by the Senate.

University budget is approved by the Senate (the Senate is autonomous, the Rector and executive managers are not members of the Senate) and according to internal regulations it is distributed among faculties based on students number.

Executive managers are not paid supplements for their work but they benefit from lesser working hours per week.

The university operates an internal audit done by 2 economists. External control is conducted by respective bodies once in three years.

According to the above, I propose to amend Moldovan legislation with regard to financial autonomy of universities and to implement actual USV financial autonomy elements within Technical University of Moldova necessary for its further development.

Implementation at national level

- *Overall funding from the Ministry of Education;*
- *Funding from the Ministry of Education to be done only under contract concluded with the university;*
- *The university should benefit from a separate fund for university development from the state budget, allocated on the basis of competitive criteria according to international standards;*
- *The remaining end-year balance to be used in the following year;*
- *Funding based on per student real cost coefficients depending on area of study;*
- *Results obtained from university revenues to remain university property;*
- *Revenues from payment-based services should be entirely managed by the university, according to existing legislation;*
- *Universities should be exempt from all local taxes and from the real estate tax;*
- *Fees for payment-based services (tuition, accommodation in dormitories, training, etc.) should be calculated by the university and should be only Senate-approved;*

- *Together with the transition to an accounting system based on National Accounting Standards, the Ministry of Finance should conduct continuous training of accountants to increase their proficiency.*

Implementation within Technical University of Moldova

- *University budget should be developed taking into account the provisions of the Development Plan, discussed at faculty councils and approved by the Senate;*
- *Scholarships should be distributed among faculties based on internal regulations approved by the Senate and on the decision of faculty scholarship award commission;*
- *Development of several internal regulations regarding wages, organization and functioning of student dormitories, scholarships distribution, etc.*

**Experience report on the study visit to
“Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Romania
14-21 April, 2013**

**Angela Lazăr, State University of Cahul "Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu"
“Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova” project**

The education system is fundamental for sustainable development and for building a knowledge-based society. One of the main objectives of the educational system covers skills and abilities training needed for socialization and integration into the labor market as well as for career progress. This objective is provided by professional education, part of which is higher education.

The quality of human capital not corresponding to expectations and requirements of employers is the result of degradation of higher education system that responded to the growing demand for tertiary education at the expense of quality.

Therefore, one can find that higher education system hardly manages to provide high-quality workforce and to meet the needs of the economy and of employers. Thus the problem facing higher education system lies in the limited capacity of the university system to train highly qualified and competitive professionals.

Reasons making difficult assurance of education quality:

Lack of implementation mechanism for performance indicators determines modest quality of education.

Inefficient interaction mechanisms with business, labor market, research and development environments. Currently there are no mechanisms for facilitating interaction between companies and academic professional training system. Interaction between them occurs only at the request of one side: either from educational institutions needing practical placements or from businesses requiring certain professionals. Such an approach does not produce changes in the curriculum and does not contribute much to the development of education quality.

Salary limitations and lack of performant management represent another aspect of the multitude of human resources-related causes. This situation causes lack of motivational conditions (financial, social, logistic, etc.) for achievements and professional development of higher education teaching staff.

Inefficient student government is another negative aspect of university management. Although student representatives in the Senate reach a 15% share, in reality the formula of student participation in decision making is not functional. In general, the presence of students in the Senate is aimed to ensure transparency of decisions and promotion of students interests, which is actually done to a lesser extent. This depends on students' awareness of their role in university life.

The transition to university autonomy will entitle the university community to establish its own mission, institutional strategy, structure, activities, own organization and functioning, human and material resources management, in strict compliance with existing legislation. The autonomy concept is understood differently by each university according to its needs, therefore there is no cooperation between these institutions in defining this concept nationwide.

At first, it must be said that a university that becomes autonomous does not automatically become a private university. Autonomy means that the university decides on its own how to manage its budget, on student tuition fees and in general, on all its expenses.

Autonomy means, literally, the right to govern by own laws within four areas:

- Organizational autonomy;
- Financial autonomy;
- Autonomy in human resources management;
- Academic autonomy.

The fundamental principle for these four areas is that university autonomy cannot be conceived without public accountability. From this point of view, university autonomy is directly proportional to the cultivation, selection, maintenance and stimulation of academic and scientific values, to academic senate responsibility that must become a true master of the higher education institution. The academic senate is the Parliament of the university, and the chairman of the senate must pursue its decisions, monitor their implementation, detect possible risks (even calculate them), and come up with solutions before the senate to solve problems. In this context, one must have a different mentality.

University autonomy will allow universities to develop partnerships with internal and external social and economic environment, with the European academic environment, also partnerships based on curricula and on research programmes. Social and economic sector does not invest anything in university educational system and desires to obtain highly skilled graduate specialists. Labour migration nowadays is becoming a serious problem for Moldova. People acquiring a high level of professional skills are not satisfied with salary and working conditions and migrate to countries with a higher living standard.

Regarding the way how the problem affects *the university system itself*, one can notice a more desired preference for university education abroad. Therefore, connecting the education system to market requirements is crucial. Continuation of this situation represents a risk for the education system since given the opportunities of an opened access to European education prospective students will prefer other educational destinations. Decrease of domestic university education demand could produce a crisis of the university system.

The requirements for expansion and development of education imposed by market economy should be implemented by introducing new specializations meeting labor market requirements. “The quality of German universities is not the result of independent degree-awarding, independent diplomas awarding, is the result of confidence acquired by German universities during tens and hundreds years of honest work. Until our universities will gain confidence and quality any such measure will be actually a monopolization of the higher education system”.

Autonomy of human resources management implies freedom of the university to select and recruit qualified human resources, responsibility to conclude labor contracts, establishment of wages and salary supplements according to the value of human potential.

A rigorous human resource management requires effectiveness with regard to the following activities:

- flow of personnel - recruitment, selection, positions adaptation, induction and socialization, mentoring, internal promotion;

- performance - performance evaluation, consistent feed-backs on achieving or not of personnel, team or organizational goals;
- organization – establishment of positions, organizational structure, areas of responsibility, team- or working group assembling and employees training;
- communication - employee involvement in decision-making, development of upward and downward communication, maintaining of procedural accuracy and of organizational ethics.

Human resource management consists of a set of activities aimed to ensure, develop, motivate and retain human resources within the institution in order to achieve its objectives and meet employees' needs with maximum efficiency.

Human resource development involves a process of training people to perform the tasks needed within the institution. The problem lies in recognizing the type of training that employees' need. All training-related decisions must take into account the motivation of employee undergoing training. There is a number of training techniques and elements required for an effective training programme.

Quality assurance is part of quality management, representing a whole series of measures aiming universities to plan quality, to determine its parameters, to measure quality and to prove the result. The idea to validate higher education quality appeared absurd, since no one else but professors could be examples of quality, human and scientific. The accreditation system will determine whether a study programme can be started on acceptable terms or should be abolished when deteriorated. Once the programme is approved, it can take advantage of quality management to follow a spiral path of continuous improvement. Authorization or depending on terminology, accreditation of a study program is required by law.

Quality documentation does not mean reporting of quality indicators. In order to have quality (better than existing one), meetings are needed to remember common goals, to discuss ways for their implementation, to identify weaknesses and propose remedies, to apply them, and finally to meet again for discussions whether these remedies have produced the desired effect and what is still to be improved. It is necessary that the rectorate steers the university toward results, customers, continuous improvement.

In terms of organizational autonomy, Moldovan universities have the right to determine their own organizational structure and to elect their own administrative bodies. In terms of human resources autonomy, universities enjoy the right to select science-teaching and research staff, as well as administrative and ancillary staff. Regarding academic autonomy, universities have the right to approve the curricula and research plans.

Liberalisation of university system will allow fair competition among higher education institutions; some institutions that do not meet requirements and are financially inefficient will disappear or will associate with others performant. Revision of teaching standards and their connection to European ones will also be possible, as well as integration of research, development and innovation activities into the educational process due to the scientific component of the teaching load.

After the transition to university autonomy universities are supposed to have broader rights with regard to planning the use of its financial resources. The senate will decide everything.

Such freedom is necessary for the development of strong universities. Will taxes increase or not? The answer is the ratio between demand and offer, quality, preferences. Everyone wonders why strong and appreciated business schools do not exist in Moldova. These cannot appear as long as there isn't much possibility to invite and pay a good professor. There is also a question about the consequences of such a freedom for education, which is already in an acute state of crisis, if rectors have the right to enroll as many students as desired and are not motivated at all to expel unsuccessful students. In Moldova the preferable practice to pay for a sealed diploma and not for knowledge is highly effective.

University autonomy will make room for a mechanism called "natural selection" otherwise known as "the best wins". Universities efforts to offer better courses, invest in teachers, laboratories, innovation and research will result in the number of skilled specialists trained and more state "orders" (i.e. funding) received.

Conclusion: University autonomy entitles the university community to establish its own mission, institutional strategy, structure, activities, own organization and operation, human and material resources management, in strict compliance with existing legislation. Freedom is great, however, the responsibilities are also many.

**Experience report on the study visit to
“Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Romania
14-21 April, 2013**

**Svetlana Lupascu, State University of Medicine and Pharmacy “Nicolae Testemitanu”
“Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova” project**

During April 14-20, 2013 a study visit to the „Ștefan cel Mare” University (USV) of Suceava, Romania, was conducted with the support of the TEMPUS Project „Enhancing university autonomy in Moldova” funded by the European Union.

Seminar topic: University governance and autonomy. How to make it applicable for practice.

Presentations were given by:

- USV representatives (rector, vice-rectors, deans, professors and students);
- Prof. C. Brătianu, Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, and Mr. Popescu, Bucharest.

Representatives of the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Education, Moldovan universities (vice-rectors, chief-accountants, heads of economic and human resources departments, leaders and representatives of staff- and students unions) took part in the visit.

During the visit the following issues had been discussed:

- University governance and autonomy in Romanian legislative framework;
- Academic element of university governance, involvement of faculty governing bodies;
- University autonomy at faculty and department levels;
- Financial autonomy, infrastructure management, budget forming and management, revenue sources, etc.;
- The role of students in university governance and autonomy.

The visit aimed to develop university capabilities necessary for strengthening their autonomy, to study the experience of university autonomy in other European countries and to develop legislative and regulatory proposals to improve regulatory framework and internal regulations.

„Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava (USV) is a modern institution, which celebrates 50-year anniversary from its foundation this year.

USV is a dynamically developing institution: in 1990 there were 1800 students at USV, in 2012 the figure reached about 11000, of which over 4500 students are budget-funded and the rest are fee payers. The number of teachers increased from 100 in 1990 to 360 in 2012.

USV displays outstanding results in research: 62 ISI articles, first place in invention patents and other results.

There are nine faculties within USV offering over 130 study programs: graduate, distance learning, master and PhD programmes.

Students enjoy 160 well-equipped laboratories, 300-thousand volumes modern library with 6 reading rooms, situated on 1000 m² and employing only 20 people, free internet access in the campus, 4 European-level dormitories for approximately 1,000 students equipped with washing machine facilities, modern restaurant-type cafeteria, a swimming pool with

physiotherapy and spa facilities, 2 gyms, one of which in winter is covered with a pressostatic balloon, 240-seats student club with student artistic group Arcanum and student theatre Fabulinus performances and various local and national events held (concerts, plays, Romanian film festivals – Auditorium, etc.), recreational camp at Vatra Dornei, and other facilities. More information can be found from the virtual tour by accessing the website: <http://bit.ly/qHptzU>. A current project regards to construct in Moara village, Suceava district, the second university campus with dormitories, an Olympic-level swimming pool, a restoration centre and museum, a library, a nanotechnology centre and a greenhouse system.

During the visit all four components of autonomy were covered: organizational autonomy, academic autonomy, human resources autonomy, financial autonomy.

I found out (new to me) the concept of governance, which consists of the processes and practices through which an entity can organize itself to achieve its mission, as well as existing models of governance.

I'd like to be more specific here. Governance models vary depending on how legislative, executive and juridical powers within the university are distributed and performed, and how they are reflected when communicating with the Government. Existing models are: French-German continental model, characterised by government control, tight legislation and partial university autonomy; English collegial academic model, characterised by total autonomy and power of tradition; American market model, characterised by total autonomy and competitive power; Japanese corporate model with total autonomy and big company managing status.

The unicameral model that existed in Romanian universities, before the new Law on Education (2011), allowed only one decision-making structure, both for academic and research issues, as well as for administrative problems. Thus, the rector had full power and at the same time was the chairman of the university senate.

The bicameral model can be found most often in Canadian universities. It contains two decision components:

- university Board that appoints the university president and is responsible for administrative and financial matters;
- academic Senate, responsible for core issues concerning the education and research within the university.

Hybrid models were developed by multi-campus universities or by university systems with locations in different cities (University of California).

Until January 2011 (until the new Law on Education) Romanian universities employed a French-German continental governing model, determined by government control, tight legislation and partial academic autonomy, including financial one. In the last 4 years in the area of human resources the „1 employed to 7 dismissed” principle ruled.

Beginning with January 2011 the bicameral model with a university Board (President, a person from outside the university and not paid for work in this position) and an academic Senate – the legislative body of the university, with nobody from university administration and 25% being students representatives, was introduced. The Rector acts as the President of the Board of Directors - the executive body of the university.

However, in the opinion of USV administration the new law is restrictive and incoherent, was adopted by assuming governmental responsibility, was not discussed, the transition to it was sudden and universities were not prepared.

The new law does not allow universities to decide upon the study programmes and on the syllabus - almost everything is regulated by ARACIS. The Ministry of National Education (MNE) monitors and verifies compliance to regulations in education, research, financial management, ethics, etc. The university may establish its structure, but then it must follow MNE approval procedure. There are constraints regarding PhD studies and postdoctoral studies are not funded. There are many rules and regulations, including the promotion criteria set by the MNE.

Further, as a representative of financial autonomy working group, I will analyze the respective USV aspect.

In Romania, university autonomy, including the financial one, is guaranteed by 2011 Law on Education. However, as most USV management representatives noted, it is performed partially due to state supervision. There are trends to make Romanian universities dependent on the ministerial team. There are critics regarding the fact that funding is just per student type and there is no multiannual funding. Limitation of autonomy leads to the impossibility to invite valuable professors.

USV funding sources, as in Moldovan universities, consist of 2 main sources: budgetary allocations and accumulated funds, resulting from payment-based education and services, property leasing and grants, sponsorships and donations. Within USV budgetary sources cover over 51% of the total budget.

Romanian universities, same as USV, are public non-profit institutions and do not pay any taxes from the income obtained from payment-based services. This moment is very important for Moldova since at the development stage of laws and regulations our university called many times for all-taxes exemption, but the amendments made to the Fiscal Code (Art.51³) view tax exemption only for income from delivery of services and goods related to the instructive production and education process.

USV does not pay real estate tax, but in Moldova there is no clear vision on this issue yet. Transfer of buildings from state to USV ownership is free of charge. The property, purchased by the institution from own sources, becomes its property, however without the right to be sold.

Tuition and all other fees are approved by the Senate, but in our case ministry approval is required.

All extracurricular services provided by USV are payment-based. For some services students pay lower prices or benefit from certain facilities (e.g. students attending swimming pool have several hours free of charge, additional visits are against payment).

Students living in dormitories pay 40% of overhead costs included in food prices presenting dormitory identification cards, non-dormitory students pay 60% after presenting student cards, USV employees pay 80% after presenting identity cards issued by USV, and other beneficiaries pay 150% of overhead costs from food prices. This information is useful for our University which recently also proposed lower food prices for its students.

Accommodation prices also vary: smaller prices for budget-financed students (e.g. in dormitory No. 4 a 2-person hotel-type room for budgetary students costs 220 RON; orphan students or students with parents employed as teachers pay 170 RON; a 3-person room costs 210/160 RON; tuition fee students pay for a 2-person room 360 RON and 310 RON are paid by orphan students or students with parents employed as teachers, a 3-person room costs 350/300 RON respectively.

Student performance, together with other indicators, forms the basis for students' accommodation in dormitories. At early accommodation a guarantee amount is collected for the use of dormitory goods. The four USV dormitories provide approximately 1,000 beds from 4000 requested, thus covering only 25% of necessities. However, it is necessary to emphasize that only 20% of the total number of students are from rural areas, so the coverage ratio is about 45-50%.

Budget resources for Romanian universities are allocated per student applying a funding formula and include core funding for the study process (salaries and utilities coverage) and complementary funding (scholarships, accommodation, food, transportation and other subsidies for students). The volume of annual budgetary allocations is calculated by the Ministry of Education and USV does not know all the details regarding their calculation. Given the established volume of budget allocations Romanian universities conclude with MNE an institutional financing contract, imposed by the Ministry. Another aspect is that new programmes are not allocated additional budgetary resources until their formal approval. Thus, new university entities cannot be created (such as a hotel, a medical clinic, etc.). The "per student cost" does not include development costs.

According to the Romanian Law on Public Finance all funding sources (budget, off-budget, grants, etc.) are public funds and therefore must be approved through the Budget Law, same as Moldovan universities until present. Budgetary and off-budgetary resources are managed by the Treasury, Ministry of Finance (a negative aspect, because in Rector's opinion the financial resources cannot be managed by its own decision within real time, therefore MNE agreement is necessary). Exceptions are allocations from external grants, for which Romanian universities can open bank accounts (positive aspect). Universities have access to their cash balances after MNE approval and changes made in the financing plans.

Part of budget chapters need to be closed during the financial year, otherwise the balance is lost.

Revenue and expenditure budget is approved at University level after being distributed among faculties/departments proportional to the number of students and depending on education type/study programme. It is a new and important aspect, which must be implemented in our University. Having discussions with several deans of faculties, even with those having a budget deficit (in this case funds shortage to cover salaries and utilities is covered from university budget), I support the idea for separate faculties budgeting. This moment disciplines them, requires them to search new sources of funding for faculty development, to organize certain activities of their own (e.g. school undergraduates attraction campaigns promoted in local schools) etc. Deans can decide on the level of salaries, but there are also internal regulations approved by the Senate that cannot be exceeded.

The Romanian Ministry of Education decides on distributing budgetary funds for investment purposes.

Teaching staff salaries payment, as well as the teaching load, is performed according to laws and regulations in force. Their level doubled in 2004, but at the moment wages are already un-motivating both for fresh-graduated employees and for senior didactic staff.

The existing public procurement procedure, the same as in Moldova, according to USV administration is barring financial management – insignificant companies are eligible for participation, procedure length of up to several months, the lowest price wins, etc.

The following directions were outlined by USV for future work, actual for our universities:

- creation of strategic development department;
- development of spin-off and technology transfer companies;
- development of entrepreneurial vision;
- development of English language programmes (already taking place in our University);
- further development of ERASMUS mobility, etc.

Conclusions:

The experience gained during the visit will serve as a basis for professional work regarding the following aspects:

- a higher level of knowledge and understanding of implementation challenges, as well as factors that are needed so that academic autonomy to be applied in practice accurately and with better results.
- implementation within our University of certain business aspects encountered at USV, for example, cafeteria operation.
- faculties/departments budgeting, etc.

A well-developed and managed framework for the university autonomy will improve resource allocation efficiency and service provision based on cost effectiveness, having clear policy objectives, more budget allocation predictability, more comprehensive and authentic information regarding autonomy and an enhanced level of accountability and transparency in the use of available resources.

Documents needed for implementing USV experience and practice:

From MNE or other entities:

1. The methodology for calculation of per student cost/tuition fees.
2. The information for equivalent students' calculation, for studies coefficients, per student calculation formula etc.

From USV:

1. Internal regulations on faculties budget distribution.
2. Distance education Regulation.
3. Regulation on tuition fees exemption.

4. Regulation regarding the reserve/fellowship funds.
5. Regulation on calculation of faculty teaching and non-teaching staff.
6. Regulation of dormitories activity especially regarding payment of guarantee fee and what for or how it is used.

**Experience report on the study visit to
“Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Romania
14-21 April, 2013
Marusic Galina, Technical University of Moldova
“Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova” project**

During the visit to the department of doctoral studies at the “Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, I paid attention to some issues that would have great importance for doctoral studies in Moldova:

Doctoral students are enrolled only for full-time studies lasting three years. Registration is done by scientific fields. It is compulsory that each student is guided by a scientific supervisor and, in addition, is supported by a guidance committee, which consists of 3 members. Membership of this committee is established by the supervisor in consultation with the student.

Doctoral studies include:

- a training programme based on advanced university studies;
- an individual programme of scientific research.

The duration of the training programme based on advanced university studies is one semester. The doctoral student attends this programme in the first semester of the first year, the result of which is 30 credits. Participation of doctoral students in the program and selection of courses in this programme are determined by the doctoral supervisor. Assessment of related courses is not compulsory for doctoral students and cannot influence their financing. Assessment is carried out only based on Doctoral thesis and its public defence in order to grant the title of doctor.

Individual research programme supposes the participation of doctoral students in research projects established by the scientific supervisor. The doctoral student is required to present 2-4 research reports. List of publications of the doctoral candidate is attached to the presented reports. Reports are evaluated by the scientific supervisor and guidance committee. For each student minutes are developed about the presented report. Failure reports can be sustained only once maximum of one month from the date of the first submission. Otherwise, the doctoral student is expelled.

All activities of doctoral students are registered in the individual plan of the candidate, which is filled in four copies: for the supervisor, doctoral student, doctoral school and the Council for university doctoral studies.

Evaluation of doctoral students is based on the results of scientific research, publications, participation in conferences. Evaluation follows all competences which the doctoral student must develop according to qualification level 8 of the European Qualifications Framework (EFQ).

Each doctoral student submits **monthly** the report on the fulfilment of doctoral studies contract, signed by the student and scientific supervisor. Depending on the results, the student's monthly scholarship is determined.

Evidence of doctoral student activity is tracked via doctoral student matriculation records, in which the information about each student is passed on areas, since his/her enrolment till finalizing with thesis defence and conferring the title of doctor.

Studies can be interrupted for 1-2 years. During this period the student has no status of doctoral student.

Studies may be extended by 1-2 years at the proposal of the doctoral supervisor and approved by the university senate, with tuition fee or in the limits of available funds. If doctoral student is not able to finalise the doctoral thesis in this period, then the PhD student has a grace period of up to two years, for a tuition fee (~ 3000 Romanian lei). In case of exceeding this time the doctoral student is expelled. During the grace period the doctoral student status shall be retained.

On submission of the doctoral thesis, the candidate must have at least four scientific papers published on the topic of the thesis, including the papers with co-authors.

The title of doctoral thesis can be changed to free choice of doctoral students up to its completion.

At least two months before completing doctoral studies, the doctoral student defends his/her PhD thesis in front of the guidance committee, which is composed of specialists in this field and can observe all gaps in the elaboration of the thesis.

Public defence of the thesis can only occur after the supervisor and the guidance committee gave their written consent and all criteria Doctoral School are met.

The doctoral supervisor proposes the Doctoral Committee for public defence of the thesis which is approved by the Rector of the university. The Rector issues a decision on the establishment of the Committee.

To get the right of doctoral supervisor, the claimant shall present an entitlement thesis in front of a committee formed by the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports. Evaluation of the doctoral supervisor is done once every 5 years. A doctoral supervisor may direct up to 8 doctoral students.

What I have learned is important for doctoral studies because:

Organization of doctoral studies by fields of research offers several facilities, i.e. the organization of courses by fields, guidance on behalf of doctoral supervisors in several specialties within a field of study, etc.

Full-time studies are more efficient as the doctoral student has more time for research, and is provided with a scholarship. However, for the PhD student to succeed to go through both programs of study, I think three years is not enough, more optimal would be a doctoral study program lasting four years.

Members of the guidance committee are specialists in the envisaged area and, together with the doctoral supervisor, guide doctoral student activity.

Training program based on advanced university studies enriches the student's knowledge and helps to conduct individual scientific research program.

Individual plan of the candidate in Romania is more complete, contains even the date of public defence of the thesis and all activities and observations regarding the conduct of doctoral studies.

Studies can be interrupted for 2 years. A longer period of interruption leads to reducing the level of scientific research.

After completing doctoral studies (3 years), doctoral student has the maximum of four years to complete and defend the thesis. I believe that seven years is sufficient time for the preparation and defence of a doctoral thesis. In the Republic of Moldova this issue is not regulated and doctoral student is not restricted in terms regarding the defence of thesis; as result we have competitors registered 17-20 years ago that did not defend their thesis.

Payment of tuition fee for the grace period mobilises the doctoral thesis to complete the thesis as soon as possible.

On submitting the thesis, in Moldova, the claimant must have at least 5 scientific papers published on the topic of the thesis, including 3 publications with co-authors. In Romania, the candidate must have 4 mandatory publications including also publications with co-authors, especially in the technical field, placed at the intersection of several domains.

During doctoral studies and carrying out research, the investigated subfield is highlighted, so it is appropriate that the title of thesis to **be changed** at any stage. In Moldova, the title of thesis can be **changed**, for good reasons, by decision of the University Senate, only once, but not later than one year prior to thesis defence.

In Romania there is only one stage to defend the thesis. In Moldova, there are 3 stages – the department where often there are not enough specialists in the field of the defended thesis, the scientific seminar and the Scientific Council. The process of thesis defence is very bureaucratic.

In Romania the approval of the Doctoral Committee for public support of the thesis by the Rector only simplifies the procedure before the public defence of the thesis.

Taking all competences under the Qualification Level 8 of the European Qualifications Framework (EFQ), collaboration with international research centres is more simple and convenient, as well as participation in international projects.

Presentation of the report monthly by each student enables student monitoring and mobilises him for the development and completion of the doctoral thesis.

Using Student Matriculation Records allows optimization of search time regarding information about each student.

In Moldova, the doctoral supervisor gets this right for six years. After that, the supervisor must prepare again an entitlement folder, which is examined by the University Senate before submitting it to the National Council. It is a lengthy and bureaucratic procedure.

In Moldova, all reforms concerning Cycle III, Doctoral Studies, can be implemented by amending the Regulation on the organization and development of doctoral studies, particularly via the organization of doctoral studies by fields and simplifying the procedure for public defence of the thesis, modification of the procedure for doctoral supervisor entitlement right, etc.

**Experience report on the study visit to
“Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Romania
April 14-21, 2013
Radu Minzat, Technical University of Moldova
“Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova” project**

Following the implementation of activities within the project "Enhancing university autonomy in Moldova" a study visit to “Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava took place focused on university autonomy. In this context I would like to notice that the students of this University enjoy a picturesque atmosphere and attend courses in one of the universities, which is located in Southeast Bukovina, with strong emphasis on traditions, culture and values.

History of Higher Education in Suceava began with the creation of the Pedagogical Institute, offering three year programmes, in 1963. Significant changes in the Romanian educational system related to 1963 have been favoured by stopping the process of Sovietization of the Romanian society and return to the national school traditions. Establishment of university education in Suceava meant, for Bucovina region, a natural consequence of the efforts to perpetuate and enrich the cultural and educational traditions formed over time by the royal schools of Northern Moldova, the Academy of Putna, the Theological Institute and the University of Chernovtsy. Depending on the form of organization, content, structure, goals, purpose, its mission, one can distinguish four steps taken by the institution of higher education from Suceava in the nearly five decades of existence.

As a Romanian higher education institution, located at the confluence of major European cultures and civilizations, “Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava is called to preserve and promote cultural diversity, to strengthen links with Romanians across the border through an international opening aimed at concluding bilateral agreements and partnerships with universities in the European Union and at the development of strong collaborations with universities in Central and Eastern Europe.

Governance is the processes and practices through which an entity shall organize itself to achieve its mission. It refers to the structures and procedures for decision making, accountability, control and code of conduct.

It is expressed through legislation, policies, regulations and informal rules. The purpose of effective governance is to have a robust organization that obtain peak performance and is responsible for the people it serves.

Governance is defined as the constitutional forms and processes by which the university governs its affairs. University of Suceava is oriented to applied sciences. Concerning the number of patents the University of Suceava is on the first place among the generalist universities and on the 3rd or 4th place in the ranking of those 90 universities classified.

The Board, which consists of the rector, vice-rectors, deans, general administrative director and one student representative, ensures operational management of the university and applies the decisions of the University Senate. The Board is headed by the rector.

The main tasks of the Board are as follows:

- to propose strategies and policies on the areas of interest of the university to the University Senate;
- to propose the establishment, operation, reorganization and dissolution of university education and research structures to the University Senate;
- to develop and submit for approval by Senate rules and methodologies according to the University Charter.

University Senate represents the academic community and is the highest decision-making and deliberative body at the university, operating under the terms of the University Charter, National Education Law, Government decisions and orders of ministry. University Senate is composed in proportion of 75 % of the teaching and research staff representatives and 25% of the student representatives.

The University Senate is headed by a chairman, elected by secret vote of members. Chairman of the Senate conducts the meetings and represents the Senate regarding the relationship with the rector.

University Senate may be convened by the Chairman or at the request of at least one third of the members. University Senate sessions shall be conducted only in the presence of at least two thirds of its members. Senate decisions are taken by a majority vote of members present at the meeting.

The fundamental objectives of the „Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava are education of highly skilled and competent specialists able to face global competition, fostering creativity and innovation for continuous development of scientific research, which is demonstrated by the large number of ISI papers and patents, as well as by the leading places of Arcanul student ensemble, Fabulinus theater under the leadership of Ion Sapdaru.

An important thing that is implemented by student self-governance structures discounts by:

- At least 50 % for local public transport, surface and underground , and internal transportation by road, rail and water ;
- 75 % for access to museums, concerts, theater, opera, film and other cultural and sports events ;

Under Romanian Law of Education LEN 1/2011, students benefit of 100 % compensation annually for roundtrip journey to the place of residence, which is supported by the university.

The university has a library equipped with six reading rooms with access to the shelves, with an area of 819 m², 429 seats and a book collection of over 275,000 volumes, according to study programs in the curriculum. The library has periodicals (219 domestic and 68 international standing subscriptions), doctoral theses, patents descriptions, STAS collections, microforms, cartographic documents, audiovisual, electronic and other documents.

The University has a printing unit that provides multiplication of laboratory guides, courses and other educational materials necessary for the higher education process and also a known publishing house CNCSIS. Technical equipment of the publishing house meets the requirements of publishing qualitative printing works in sufficient number.

The „Student Days and Nights” festival demonstrates competitiveness between students and gives the opportunity to those students with average results in the studies, to show they are good at: chess, backgammon, table tennis, football, organization of campfires etc., which are supported by the university management by printing the tickets at the university publishing house and offering financial contribution.

The University operates a radio station that is dedicated as a communication platform for students, teachers and administration, including broadcasting with debating issues within the university. Radio programmes develop educational news or offers news about the most important events within the university.

Once we entered the territory of the university (it is surrounded by a protective fence with permanent guard both day and night), I noticed banners promoting university image, inscriptions on cars and flags, USV ensign being observed all classrooms doors and crowded spaces within the faculty. Students contribute to spread the image through the projects carried out both within the campus and in the neighbourhood high schools and in residence places.

Student representatives are elected through a democratic method, following the Anglo - Saxon model including election campaign and posters that are printed by the faculty administration as well as flyers or other promotional methods possible within the faculty, and also by the ballot box where each of the students will be able to expose his right; so the delegated person will reflect the will of the majority.

Student representatives are entitled to recover free exams and labs if they coincide with extracurricular activities or projects that are designed to develop and strengthen the university image. The integralist students (with an average higher than 5) are added a point as motivation, the bonus point, and they have a two weeks holidays; those students who have not passed all exams are given a one week holiday, the second week being considered for the liquidation of unpassed exams. The first re-examination is free of charge, the next being charged. The amount of the following attempts is increasing, and if re-examination is taken in another semester the amount will increase proportionally. The student has the right to appeal a maximum of 2 marks during a session.

Financing of each student from the budget varies from case to case, with coefficients such as 1.65 for a student in engineering and 6 for a student in medicine, and more emphasis is placed on students who learn foreign languages such as English, French or German, for which the above coefficient is multiplied by 2.5.

Teacher assessment can be done through the following methods:

- ✓ Self-assessment;
- ✓ Peer assessment;
- ✓ Evaluation by students.

Opinions about each teacher are thrown into the mailbox of each of them and checked by the head of department, without making public the results, and in the event of irregularities, they are solved by a discussion between the latter.

One of the practices of appraisal is tutorship throughout the entire cycle I of the academic group by the same teacher, creating a more lasting bond and a better familiarisation with each student's situation, knowing the problems and achievements.

Mission of the university is divided into three major areas:

- higher education ;
- research process ;
- services to the community or nation .

The last point is one of the sources of income for the university. An example would be the only laboratory in Romania endowed with licensed anechoic chamber, which has the right to test the products and put the CE mark (European Certificate). As result, extra budget funding gives the opportunity to invest in real estate or other equipment that would allow increasing the university level nationally.

Currently the University of Suceava campus has approximately 66 000 square meters of teaching facilities, two gyms equipped with bodybuilding equipment, tennis basketball, volleyball, athletics grounds, a sports field with synthetic turf system with presso-static balloon and lighting system, Planetarium, and a Swimming and Physical Therapy Complex, which are accessible even to people, who have no relations to the university, for charge. As well, departments and laboratories can provide services to the population.

Regarding provision of services, special courses for people already employed could be included, such as the use of certain software and modern equipment.

Self-government is, in my view, a good experience that stimulates the administration to attract international projects that would enhance the university's budget and create opportunities to stimulate both teachers and students through various awards and competitions.

All material investments aim at creating an environment to facilitate and encourage education and research. The University aims to become a growing factor active in the local community and a reference centre for European higher education.

**Experience report on the study visit to
“Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Romania
14-21 April, 2013**

**Emilia Plamadeala, State Agrarian University of Moldova
“Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova” project**

„Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava is part of Romanian higher education with a history of about 50 years. The University specializes in applied sciences and occupies top positions in overall universities’ ranking.

„Ștefan cel Mare” University consists of nine faculties offering educational programs in five separate areas:

- Natural Sciences;
- Engineering sciences;
- Humanities;
- Social sciences;
- Economic and Administrative Sciences

The University also offers bachelor, master, doctoral, postdoctoral and continuous training study programmes.

The number of students enrolled at the University of Suceava shows an impressive figure - 10 000 students, of which 4500 students are financed from the public budget and 5500 students are charged tuition fees.

Speaking about the administration it’s worthy mentioning that the University has the following management structure:

- University Senate;
- Council of Administration (Board of Directors);
- Faculties’ Councils;
- Departments’ Councils.

The University Senate represents the academic community and is the highest decision-making and deliberation body of the University.

The Board of Directors performs the management of the University and executes the decisions of the Senate.

A particularly important role in ensuring the quality and the process of university studies plays the technical endowment of study rooms and technical laboratories where students acquire practical skills useful to young professionals when seeking jobs.

During the meetings the issue of university governance has been discussed in detail, therefore, governance is defined as constitutional forms and processes through which the university governs its affairs. The structure and role of governance with regard to university daily work was also discussed.

Recent models of university governance were presented and explained:

The continental model: characterised by government control through tight legislation and partial academic autonomy;

English collegial model: characterised by full autonomy and the power of tradition;

USA market model: characterised by full autonomy and the power of competition.

Special consideration was given to the concept of European university autonomy compared to the situation of Romanian universities, with discussions focusing on:

- Institutional autonomy;
- Financial autonomy;
- Autonomy of human resources;
- Academic autonomy.

Financial autonomy is a distinct field with multiple solutions and implementation methods, with a number of highlighted trends:

- Public funds should be allocated as block grants (multiannual grants) depending on performance;
- Diversified types of asset ownership and management;
- Financial operation is strictly regulated by the law;
- Multiple charges paid by students as various taxes are set by both the universities and the state or jointly.

It was concluded in this respect that management- and university autonomy reform should be performed in parallel with the development of institutional capacity and of human resources, so that universities are forced to meet new management requirements and have a permanent and effective cooperation with public authorities.

The main provisions on university autonomy in Romania are given in many laws and regulations of Romanian Government and Parliament, e.g. the Law on National Education.

In Romania university autonomy is guaranteed by the Constitution, academic freedom is guaranteed by law, and higher education institutions are organized and operated independently of any ideology, religion or politics.

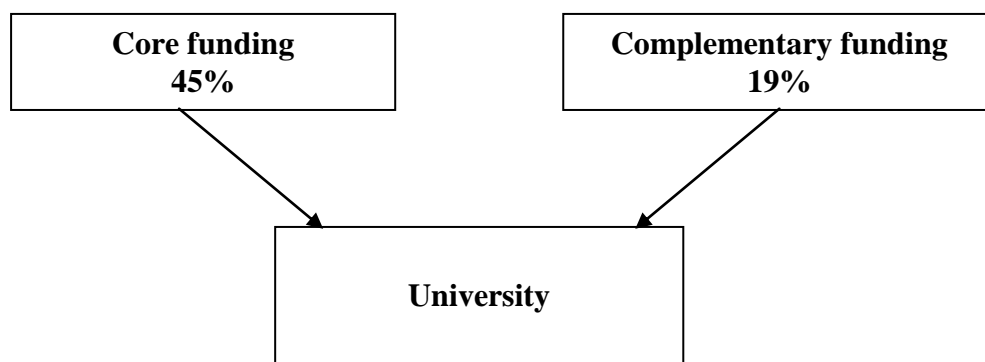
University autonomy entitles the university community to establish its own concept, institutional strategy, structure, activities, own organization and operation, material and human resource management in strict compliance with the legislation.

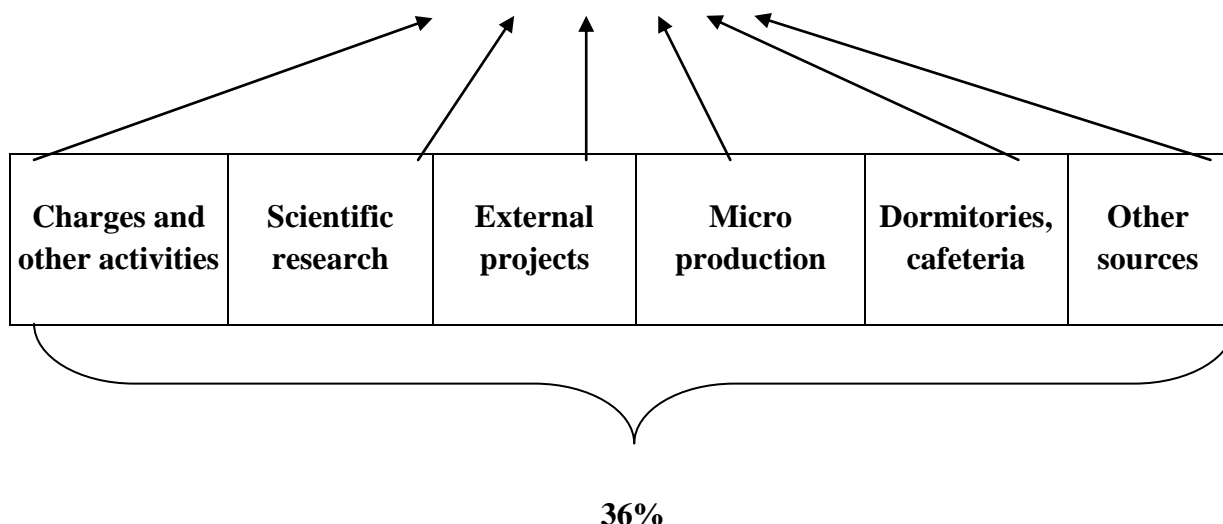
The funding system for Romanian universities was explained on the basis of 1999 - 2010 trends.

Thus, in terms of university revenues two main sources were exposed:

- a) Core funding allocations (budget allocations for staff costs) and complementary funding, i.e. special purpose budgetary allocations (served by the treasury);
- b) Other financing sources.

The following figure explains the funding of Romanian universities:





Conclusions:

In terms of organization and management, one can mention that Romanian university system is a European type system, because it is governed by models and principles that guide the European university community.

Due to total EU membership the implementation of numerous European-funded projects takes place thus allowing the modernization of laboratories and classrooms as well as improving the quality of university education.

In terms of financial resources provision it can be mentioned that USV enjoys financial autonomy. It also receives funds from the national budget according to the number of students subject to state order agreement. Supply of university budget is done via local treasury office.

Compared to Romanian university system, in terms of financial autonomy, one can notice that Moldovan universities enjoy a larger autonomy because they freely manage their finances depending on their needs, budget supply being conducted via commercial banks, thus displaying a positive impact on the promptness of decision making and most efficient management of financial means.

Proposals:

It is very important that Moldovan universities have to be competitive on the international university market, and this can only be achieved through continuous upgrading and quality improvement of the studies, therefore it is necessary to attract external funds for classroom and laboratory equipment.

An important aspect, necessary for universities to achieve wealth and prosperity, is investment in continuous improvement of the staff engaged in teaching and administrative work.

After analysing modern practices it can be considered that the main source of income for Moldovan universities could be the marketing of intellectual product resulting from university research in the form of know-how patents.

**Experience report on the study visit to
“Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Romania
14-21 April, 2013**

**Pocaznoi Ion, Technical University of Moldova
“Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova” project**

After the meetings held at USV I would like to present the following main conclusion: "Before changing institution's management principles it is necessary to change the mentality based on core missions of the public higher education institution - research, knowledge transfer and collaboration/integration with stakeholders given hard actual conditions within the labour market as well as research and training/education services provided by the university".

I. National-level suggestions

1. At „Ștefan cel Mare” University from Suceava there is a Didactic Staff Union, part of the Romanian Education Union "Alma Mater" and of Ancillary Staff Union. The Union concluded with the University administration collective labour agreements based on National Convention of the "Alma Mater" Union and Ministry of Education which additionally provide certain facilities for services provided by the university to the didactic staff. There are also aspects mentioned regarding the working time, holidays, vacation periods, etc. Union representatives participated in the approval of a number of regulations, including the University Charter, which became the basic document within the institution.

2. USV gives full consideration to granting certain facilities to its employees such as health recovery services within the Department of Health, Physical Education and Sport Faculty and university's swimming pool. Such social services raise the authority of the institution as well as respect for the institution.

I consider that participation of union representatives in documents drafting, consultations and negotiations provides an effective governance tool in terms of university autonomy, allowing avoiding conflicts regarding wages, labour protection and other social issues as well as creating comfortable working conditions for lecturers and achieving core university missions. Thus a transparent decision making process and involvement of each employee into the responsibilities undertaken by the staff of the institution is ensured. Each employee takes personal responsibility for the quality of job profile performance.

In order to have an efficient activity of Moldova Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance regarding the management of higher education institutions (including pre-university institutions), a rewarding option would be the promotion into certain positions (through resume contests) of people with at least 4-5-year working experience in administrative positions at national universities. Only knowledge of quite multilateral university mechanisms would enable these decision-making officials to implement in institutions all necessary mechanisms through competent decisions and other legal regulations.

The accreditation body for Romanian universities (ARACIS), beside the Act of the Ministry of National Education (MNE) regarding university autonomy, was entitled with regulation tools superior to the initial autonomy act, through that autonomy becomes even more limited and as a result institution's existence may be under question.

Given the reality in the Republic of Moldova, the 2-year period established to adjust autonomy regulations is a useful decision only if the new accreditation agency will not supplement its own regulations breaking the development of institutions.

In my opinion, a Government decision regarding the cancellation of real estate tax payment, etc., by public academic institutions for a period of several years or, in general, their cancellation would provide a more reliable ground for universities development.

During the transition period toward autonomy conditions and in early operating years it would be effective to suspend excessive payments for specialty accreditation, which the newly empowered Agency would perform. The existing rates in Romania significantly affect faculties' budgets at the expense of education activities.

It is important to convince state bodies to eliminate from the Law on Public Procurement the requirement for public universities to participate in materials acquisition procedures in order to concentrate on the organization and proper conduct of the education process.

II. Institutional-level suggestions

1. University governance model chosen by Romanian MNE can be characterized as an austere one, given the economic situation of the state and of EU countries. Limiting the possibility of didactic staff after 65 years to further work can deprive younger staff and students of the knowledge they can obtain from staff with broad lecturing and scientific experience. An evidence of recognizing the fault committed by MNE was the adoption in 2013 of a decision providing certain rules for the employment of former lecturers - currently retired over 65 years of age.

Given current higher education conditions in the Republic of Moldova with a lack of young staff, sufficiently trained, employment of qualified retirees (over 62 years of age) with an acceptable health state is an actual and important necessity. Obviously, this employment must be contract-based and required by university departments- and faculties administrative boards. Methodical work of these employees becomes their main activity. In many countries (Japan, USA) this category of lecturers is involved in consulting, tutoring, etc. activities, ensuring a transfer of values from one generation to another.

The University Charter should contain special provisions regarding employment of didactic staff after reaching retirement age.

2. The type of financial, academic and human resources autonomy chosen by USV with regard to assigning independence and autonomy functions to faculties (including departments) created hard development conditions ultimately depending on the labour market and on the development of certain economic entities within the region and the country. Several faculties (Economic Sciences and Public Administration, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science) found themselves in a good market demand situation, which has led to a significant stream of candidate students to these faculties. As a result, development conditions for these faculties (salary, quality of education) achieved a higher degree

compared to other faculties. This is not the case of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Mechatronics and Management. Lack of economic entities manufacturing or providing services in these areas determine a poor labour market.

Considering the above regrettable example, the academic institutions of the Republic of Moldova will feel the need for a marketing activity undertaken to select specializations, based on current demand and on prospects for the near future.

3. Within USV departments the lecturing load of scientific degree-staff (they are the only entitled to teach) is 7-8 classroom hours per week. The remaining time is used to perform other department responsible tasks on which the efficiency of the department and the quality of education depend. However, the teacher may have up to two lecturing loads, which actually is permissible in terms of quality, taking as reference the initial load of 7-8 hours per week.

I believe that assigning part of autonomy (organizational, human resources, academic and financial) and independence to faculties and departments with regard to administrative decision making would be an efficient governing mechanism for these academic divisions, would promote self responsibility of the final act of quality education mission as well as remuneration of didactic staff and efficient planning and saving of resources. Also, the assignment of responsibilities to departments would therefore bring the liquidation of some university units, thus, optimizing inefficient expenses. At the same time, a new form of department, as well as faculty management would be promoted.

4. USV Senate approved regulations on institution's activities which basically refer to all work aspects, allowing a clear operation of all university management mechanisms.

The transitional 2-year period given to Moldovan public universities should be spent to develop regulations that would give institutions the possibility to effectively carry out future work: scholarship awarding regulations (must contain a special score including all possible activities of students not having arrears at the end of the semester, may be faculty different), regulations on electing student representatives for faculty councils, regulation on granting bonuses for completing the evaluation exam sessions within established dates, regulations on the use of public money, regulations on associate professors incentives, regulations on granting bonuses and other allowances, regulations on promoting lecturers, student's complete guide (containing all regulations regarding student's education and attendance of university during studies), and many more.

In order to formulate a lasting development strategy as well as a strategy on financial resources attraction and use, the Senate has to include into the Commission responsible for institution's development strategy persons from outside the university: scientists, professional managers, professionals (including university graduates) with an intellectual potential to perceive the importance of the University for Society Development.

**Experience report on the study visit to
“Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Romania
14-21 April, 2013**

**Romanciuc Vera, Ministry of Education, Republic of Moldova
“Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova” project**

On April 14 – 21, 2013, I participated in the study visit in Romania under TEMPUS Project „Enhancing university autonomy in Moldova” funded by the European Union (Project „Enhancing University autonomy in Moldova” / EUNIAM, 530 740 - TEMPUS -1-2012-1 -DK- TEMPUS - SMGR), which took place at „Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, by attending lectures, presentations and many discussions.

The approach to the issue was structured in 4 subjects namely:

- Organizational autonomy;
- Financial autonomy;
- Autonomy of human resources;
- Academic autonomy.

This study began with the elucidation of university governance and autonomy in the legislative context of Romania, followed by the academic component of University Governance, involvement of governing bodies in designing curricula and syllabi approval at faculty level. Further, a general overview of teaching autonomy, and study programmes by faculties have been presented. However, the study visit included sessions on financial policy, financial framework, accounting and financial analysis, and other elements related to the management of public finances.

I would mention that in the multitude of topics addressed during this training, for me a higher interest presented the session regarding the duties and rights of the university in terms of financial autonomy , property management , allocations from the State budget , other financial sources, development of income and expense budgeting , financial controlled, delivered by Mrs. G.Prelipcean.

Analysing the experience of colleagues in Romania I can make the following conclusions.

Like in Moldova, sources of funding under State control are limited, which also requires most universities to take steps to reduce their expenses and this has an impact on the quality of higher education.

As in the Republic of Moldova, the number of universities per capita is big in Romania; it is the factor of influence of reduced funding. I think that the optimisation of the number of universities, students and the actual number of specialists would allow a more adequate funding on behalf of the State (core funding).

By implementing the financial autonomy of higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova, management of financial resources, including those allocated from the state budget, is carried out via bank accounts compared to Romania where finance are managed via the treasury (this mechanism blocks university financial management and makes it totally underperforming).

In my opinion the model of Moldova is more advantageous as it allows a greater degree of freedom and flexibility of universities in achieving operational and strategic performance management.

An advantage of the Romanian model, that would be good to follow, is the internal management control system created in the institutions of higher education, which would decrease the risk not only of the financial system but of the entire activity of universities.

The positive side, worthy of being taken over from the Romanian model, is the method of distribution of scholarships for students, higher education institutions are free in making decisions for offering scholarships, while in Moldova allocation of scholarships is regulated by Government Decision No. 1009 of 01.09.2006.

With the implementation of financial autonomy in Moldova, we hope to improve the system of higher education financing on the basis of principles of autonomy, sustainability, diversity and results, funding according to performance quality. Monitoring of compliance with quality assurance standards goes back to the Ministry of Education through the Quality Assurance Agency which will be set up by the end of 2013.

Analysing the experience of our Romanian colleagues, concerning ARACIS, I would like future legislation regarding the Quality Assurance Agency to be eased to allow universities *to exercise their strategic thinking and decision-making accountability, and university autonomy to be achieved not only declared.*

Among the weaknesses of the Romanian model I would mention:

Competitive hiring of teachers and their promotion is defined in detail by law, infringing university autonomy. Academic staff work for the University so engaging and promoting them should be the task of the university.

Shaping the rules and the mode how contracts between the university and the teachers are concluded demonstrates industrial-type thinking, surpassed long ago. Also, the definition of teaching and research duties must be the task of the university.

Introduction of the concept of empowerment and promotion criteria by the Ministry and approval of contests restricted strongly university autonomy.

The attended training offered the opportunity to acquire knowledge and new experiences on strengthening university autonomy, contributing to a better understanding of it by the example of Romania aiming at minimizing the risks and negative impacts.

**Experience report on the study visit to
“Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Romania
14-21 April, 2013**

**Doina Usaci, Department of Higher Education and Development of Science
“Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova” project**

According to the order of the Minister of Education, no. 174 of 04.10.2013, I was delegated to the University of Suceava, Romania, to participate in a study visit within the TEMPUS Project „*Enhancing University Autonomy in Moldova (EUniAM)*” on April 14 – 20, 2013.

The **basic objective** of this study visit is to strengthen university autonomy in Moldova through changes and amendments to the legal framework of higher education.

The *specific objectives* are:

- Improve the efficiency of government agencies concerned with the reform of university governance;
- Developing the capacity to modernize higher education institutions in the country;
- Identify relevant solutions and procedures of university governing system in Romania;
- Initiate draft laws on university autonomy;
- Disseminate the results of the study visit in order to develop a quality educational system in Moldova.

The study visit included the following topics:

1. Governance and university governing. Governing structures. Membership and responsibilities. Effective participation. Senior management.
2. Governance and university autonomy in the legal context of Romania before and after 2011.
3. The academic component of university governing. The involvement of governing bodies in developing curricula and approving syllabi at faculty level.
4. University autonomy at faculty and department levels.
5. The role of students in university governance, studying process and research.
6. Autonomy of study programs at University of Suceava and FIMM; innovative structures.
7. Didactic process autonomy, course development, accreditation of programmes, teacher evaluation of academic staff.
8. Financial autonomy, powers and rights of the university in terms of financial autonomy, property management, allocations from the state budget and other financial resources, forming of revenue and expenses budget, forming of costs per student, financial control.
9. Programmes of study, academic and research pursuits, cooperation programmes at the Faculty of Economic Sciences and Public Administration.
10. Governance and university autonomy: the experience of “Politehnica” University of Bucharest.

1. Current situation in the national higher education system

Currently, in the context of the Republic of Moldova, the activities regarding university autonomy are carried out partially and sporadically, in particular, by private higher education institutions. Unfortunately, for the present, the universities maintain centralized governing, on the one hand, and the absolute and irrevocable authority of rectors, on the other hand. Involvement of the academic staff and students in **university governance** activities is more formal; further, excessive reliance persists in documents and reports, to the detriment of transparent and justified collective discussions and decisions.

However, there persists the perception of *assuring and improving the quality of management, educational process, research and funding* as an exclusive „debt” of the administrative staff. Insufficiency of *material resources* allocated to quality assurance in higher education, lack of financial resources available for investment in laboratory equipment, information technology and multimedia equipment as well as maintenance of this equipment and their associated consumables is felt.

The most serious problem of the national higher education system is absence of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, which must provide assessment and accreditation of institutions and study programmes for training / professional development of specialists for the labour market. Current mechanisms for evaluation and certification of institutions, programmes and qualifications are inefficient, does not ensure transparency and credibility. Lack of quality assurance structures determines the low quality of studies.

2. Governance and university governing. Governing structures. Membership and responsibilities. Effective participation. Senior management.

Governance (or governing) is defined as constitutional forms and processes by which universities govern their affairs. The **mission** of university can have three major components: higher education, research and community services. Forces that determine the governance model **Continental model**: Government control through tight legislation and partial university autonomy; **English collegial model**: full autonomy and the power of tradition; **American market model**: full autonomy and power of competition.

Opinions and suggestions

➤ In my opinion, currently for **Moldovan higher education system**, the most effective and efficient is the **Continental model**, where the governance is the result of a very detailed legislation regarding the university structure, distribution of decision-making powers and funding mechanisms; the Government, as the founder and author of public policy, proposes state order of specialist training, and implicitly maintains the principal levers of financing and control.

➤ After establishing and ensuring effective functioning of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, our country could accept the **new model of university governance**, which is based on the experience of **corporate governance** (full autonomy and big company managerial status); this is a model with top-down decision-making powers, the President, Board of Directors, which includes representatives of businesses, and the University Senate, which deals with the study and research activity.

3. Governance and university autonomy in the legal context of Romania

The main dimensions of university autonomy are:

- **Academic** Autonomy: fields of study, academic programmes, degrees, quality assurance, students;
- **Structural and functional** autonomy: structuring by faculties and departments, research centres and administrative structures;
- **Financial** autonomy: sources of finance, management capacity to decide the use of money, multi-annual budgets, payrolls, etc.
- Autonomy of **human resource management**: selection and hiring of administrative staff, research and academic staff. Promotion of teaching staff.

In Romania, according to the **National Education Law**, the University may decide independently on: the spectrum of fields of study, curricula, syllabi structure, the conduct of courses and applications, and on the modality of examination, less on the graduation exams which are regulated by law.

To note that university autonomy in Romania operates within a set of limitations placed by ARACIS (Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education).

Opinions and suggestions

- **Higher education system in Moldova** has partial governance autonomy. Recently, the Government, by Decree no. 983 of 22.12.2012, approved the mode of *operation of public higher education institutions in terms of financial autonomy*. Meanwhile, the money transferred to the university are considered **public** funds, regardless of the sources from which they come. Otherwise, our public universities would become some LTDs and their activity would be „business of the governing bodies”.
- In my view, the financial autonomy should be distributed according to the income and expenditure at the level of rectorate, faculty, and department **within higher education of the Republic of Moldova**.
- However, there are several laws that restrict, in particular the functional and human resources autonomy. Competitive hiring of teachers and their promotion is determined in detail by law, infringing university autonomy.

- In my opinion, being responsible for the quality of trained professionals, universities could work in a more relaxed legislation.
- Also, definition of teaching and research duties of the academics should be the responsibility of the higher education institution (charges, hourly rates, limits and restrictions).
- An **efficient experience** of Romanian universities consists in the internal evaluation of all academic divisions: by the students, teachers, heads of departments, vice-rectors, and the rector.
- In Romania, the **National Education Law** envisaged the banning of scientific and didactic staff work after retirement (65 years), baring the system drastically. I think that we should also avoid such exaggerations in the Education Code.

4. Accreditation of universities and study programs

National Education Law provides that the evaluation of universities is done for the purpose of:

- (a) temporary authorization and accreditation;
- (b) ranking of study programs and classification universities.

After accreditation, universities are classified based on the assessment in three categories:

- (a) Universities focused on education;
- (b) Universities focused on education and research or artistic creation;
- (c) University Advanced Research and Education.

The first assessment is made by an international organization with competence in ranking and classification of higher education institutions or by a quality assurance agency registered in EQAR, from abroad.

Issues:

- the Order of the Ministry of Education no. 4072 initiated the classification / ranking of universities without approving the assessment methodology for classification purposes (it will be approved three months later);
- Very short term, given the multitude of data required, the ambiguity of some indicators and delayed responses to the clarifications requested by the universities;
- The reports were required only in Romanian raising a first sign of suspicion whether being valued by a committee of international experts;
- Ranking of study programs was not made known together with university classification and the places for budget masters and doctors should have been distributed (by law) depending on the place occupied in the ranking of the programme, etc.

Opinions and suggestions:

- I believe that the **Republic of Moldova** should avoid such problems in the work of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education; methodology and ranking mechanisms should be transparent and coherent.
- **Moldovan** public authorities must find ways to select / rank universities according to their performances, without affecting profoundly their short-term financing.
- Being dependent on the state budget, public universities, however, have a limited autonomy. However, the **Moldovan** authorities should find ways to select universities according to their performances without affecting profound short-term financing. A **challenge** would be **long-term steady funding** that would allow universities to develop action plans for 5-8 years.
- Note that in Moldova, the reform regarding university funding and autonomy should be performed concurrently with the **development of institutional capacity** and human resources.

5. Student self-governance in quality assurance

In Romanian universities quality assessment procedures are contained in the Quality Assurance Code adopted by the Senate.

The results of education and research activity of the university, faculties and departments are made public through **annual self-evaluation reports** on the quality (assurance) of the academic work completed.

The **students** are full members of the quality assurance process and provide annually through their representatives in the University Senate, an evaluation report on academic quality assurance, which is made public.

To be mentioned that students make up **25 %** in the University Senate, Faculty Council and the Department Council.

Students actively participate, with equal rights, in profile commissions at distributing scholarships, places for living in dormitories, tickets for student rest camps; at validating admission results and budget places etc. About **20 student organizations** are working for 10 000 students enrolled at the University of Suceava.

Opinions and suggestions:

- **To be mentioned** that students **are not involved** in assisting during exams, and in developing the subjects data sheet; this activity is the competence of the scientific-teaching staff! Except graduates who can express their opinion about the content of curricula and about the importance and effectiveness of some special disciplines.

Final conclusion:

Higher education institutions are **responsible** for ensuring **a balance** between the level of **autonomy** and the requirement to achieve quality in higher education, in complying and fulfilling institutional development plans, making public and transparent the processes regarding the organization and functioning of institutions and the arrangements for their administration.