University Change through Student Engagement and Exchange
Project co-funded by a Swiss grant through the Swiss Contribution for an extended European Union
The Clean Universities Coalition (CUC) represents a monitoring action of university integrity and good governance, that has reached the IIIrd edition, a concept developed for the first time in Romania by the Romanian Academic Society (SAR), which has become an inspiration source for experts and organizations worldwide.

The first edition of the project was held during October 2007 – May 2008 and consisted of the evaluation of 42 state universities from all over the country, the evaluation being performed by external evaluators, according to the methodology tested in the first phase of the project. The study performed by CUC on the integrity of the Romanian academic system, was cited in the European Commission’s Report regarding the Verification and Cooperation mechanism from 2009. The academic article entitled “Civil Society and Control of Corruption: Assessing the Governance of Romanian Public Universities”, resulted from this project, was published in the ISI Education and Development Oxford Journal. This civil initiative, along with the article, were later cited and promoted by different European and International organizations like: the World Bank, International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO), Social Science Research Network, Times Higher Education, Global Corruption Report. The universities’ evaluation methodology issued by Alina Mungiu-Pippidi later became a topic of study at the World Bank and the UNDP Governance Institute, but also for PhD applicants at Amsterdam University.

The second edition of the project\(^7\) represented a continuation of the activities started by the Clean Universities Coalition in 2009. The Integrity Top was launched in March/April 2010 based mainly on evaluating the universities’ evolution and the way they have implemented the recommendations from the previous edition.

In 2011 a new national education law was adopted by the government. It brought progress in the integrity domain, so the CUC purpose seemed reached.

After five years and over one hundred modifications of this law through ordinances, academic integrity seemed, once again, an unreachable goal, the scandal of the papers written by inmates and the plagiarism of Victor Ponta generating several titles in the international press. Since 1990 until present day, Romania has produced approximately 67,000 PhDs in exact sciences, three times more than the number of ISI papers published, compared to a one to one proportion in Bulgaria. The trend is not positive\(^8\), even though after the scandals, the number of titles granted had decreased.

The third edition of the Clean Universities Coalition\(^9\) is integrated in the “University Change through Student Engagement and Exchange” project, part of these activities being co-funded by a Swiss grant, through the Swiss Contribution for an extended European Union. The project consists of the exchange of good practices between the students’ associations in Switzerland and Romania – The National Alliance of Romanian Students Organization (ANOSR) and the Switzerland National Students’ Union (VSS-UNES-USU).


Any well-defined concept in the social sciences domain is measurable. Corruption in education is defined by UNESCO as an abuse of power for personal gain that leads to a breach of equity, integrity and access to education. 10

Controlling corruption in public education is defined in this report as the capacity to prevent and control the transgressions regarding universal access to education and academic integrity, by using academic or administrative authority provided by the law, regulations and good academic practice, in an insufficient, inadequate and unethical manner.

In order to monitor the integrity of universities and their classification, they used a methodology that was previously tested in the first two editions of the CUC project. The methodology update was done by focus-groups that included professors, students, educational policy experts and journalists. They analyzed the main issues of the Romanian academic system and also the impact of the new Education Law no. 1/2011 on good governance policies and performance in academia. So, the CUC 3 methodology (available in Annex 1 of the present document) maintains the integrity issues classifications set by the experts in this domain used for the first editions of the evaluation exercise. Along with the aspects concerning academic integrity, this year, a very important part of the final score was represented by the performance component, following the clarification and result expected from university professors in research domains. A chapter that targets universities’ anti-discrimination policies was added, this final aspect being taken into consideration when calculating the final score:

Chapter 1. Transparency and administrative fairness
Chapter 2: Academic fairness
Chapter 3: Governance quality
Chapter 4: Financial management
Chapter 5: Meritocracy
Chapter 6: Anti-discrimination

The universities’ evaluation was performed in three phases.

1. The first phase included the collection of a series of documents related to the universities’ activity, according to Law 544/2001 on free access to public interest information, the universities’ web pages were analyzed and also the communications of the National Anticorruption Direction, Court of Accounts and National Integrity Agency.

2. In the second phase, mixt teams of senior-evaluators (university professors or experts) and students – visited every university and organized meetings with the main actors within: management representatives, unions, professors, students’ organizations and students.

3. In the third phase the academic citations present on Google Academic were calculated, using the „Publish or Perish” soft. Different averages were created for each academic branch and per university, from the number of academic citations of the PhD professors.

The academic integrity was evaluated for the last four years (2012-2016) in forty eight public universities from a total of fifty six, the arts universities being excluded, because it was impossible to apply the same criteria. The final ranking included the PhD professors’ scores. So, the universities that do not have doctoral studies are not included: “Constantin Brâncuși” University of Târgu Jiu, “Henri Coandă” Air Force Academy of Brașov, “Nicolae Bălcescu” Land Forces Academy of Sibiu and “Mircea cel Bătrân” Naval Academy of Constanța.

Chapter 1. Transparency and administrative fairness

Respecting the transparency principle, by providing public interest information both to the academic community and the public represents an essential condition for a well governed public institution. In this chapter we tested the democratic mechanisms according to which universities must offer access to information regarding their activities to any interested citizen. Law 544/2001 on free access to public interest information was the main instrument used for this exercise. In the first phase, via the SAR application “Question the state” (“la statul la întrebări”), the evaluated universities were requested to provide twenty eight documents by e-mail, documents that were the core for the other phases of the research. The universities
that did not reply to e-mail requests received the notifications in material form, via post. The following documents and information were requested:

1. Person empowered with resolving the public information requests, according to Law 544/2001;

2. Public information list of each university;

3. Collective work agreement;

4. Internal regulation;

5. University Cart;

6. Ethics and academic deontology Code;

7. Election regulations for management structures and positions (professors and students);

8. Students’ academic rights and obligations Code;

9. Regulation on students’ professional activity;

10. Documents regulating the settlement of complaints related to university irregularities;

11. Regulation for admission, license, dissertation and PhD exams;

12. Activity reports for the years 2012-2014;

13. Strategic/operational plans for the years 2012-2014;

14. University income and expenses budgets for the years 2012-2015 together with the meetings protocol of the body that approved the respective budgets);

15. Organogram (academic and administrative);

16. Organizational chart for academic year 2014/2015; -

17. Results of the last evaluation for the academic year 2014-2015, of classes/professors, performed by the students;

19. Annual activity report of the Ethics Committee for 2012-2014 and also the componece of the respective committee;

20. Number of PhD and postgraduate student applicants and number of PhD and postgraduate studies, for the last four years;

21. Acquisition list higher than 10,000 euro for 2012-2015 (without VAT), with the mention of the financing source and contracting company;

22. Income statements and conflict of interests statements for management personnel during 2012-2014 (Rector, Pro-rectors, President of the Senate, Deans, Department Managers, General Executive Manager and chiefs of all academic structures);

23. List of sanctions for the last two years on ethics issues (plagiarism, discrimination, sexual harassment, etc.), mentioning the body that applied the sanction and the incrimination action and also the cases for which law 571/2004 was applied;

24. List of litigations with employees, students and third parties that the university has lost and also cases in which criminal pursuit was begun or that were sent to trial by the District Attorney, indicating the cases for which the indictment was registered by DNA (National Anti-corruption Division), in the last 3 years;

25. Complete list of grants/projects won by the University in the last 3 years, indicating the grand title, the reference code, the financier’s or program’s name and the value assigned to the university;

26. List of patents/international inventions and ISI rated published works from the previous year (2014);

27. Number of available positions, list of applicants and list of admitted applicants in the last 3 years;

28. List of university employees who registered statements on their own responsibility, according to the law, with the afferent registration numbers, regarding collaboration with Security as political police.
The documents received from the universities as a result of the SAR request can be accessed on the Clean Romania platform by logging into the SAR application “Question the State” (“ia statul la întrebări”11).

Chapter 2: Academic fairness

In the second analysis chapter, the evaluator teams offered responses to the general question: “To what extent the guarantee of fair academic process is offered, so that we can reasonably suppose (putting the exceptions aside) that the grades and diplomas of these universities reflect the knowledge accumulated by the students?”

Aspects like the existence of plagiarism, reproduction and academic fraud prevention, control, intimation and sanction rules and procedures, and also if these rules and procedures work and offer practical result. They analyzed if:

1. The universities offer online courses and tutorials for academic writing to students and PhD applicants;

2. There are writing guides for bachelor degrees or PhDs published in a visible manner;

3. The Ethics Code is clear, with explicit articles related to plagiarism, transcription, , academic fraud and intimation mechanisms and the afferent sanctions and also if the document was prepared with the students who are up to date with what is allowed and what is forbidden;

4. There is a clear plagiarism reporting mechanism that was used successfully at least once;

5. Press publications, for example the ones related to inmates scientific works’ coordination or political figures plagiarisms endorsed by the university, were followed by clear measures and sanctions;

6. Bachelor degree, master or PhD papers are verified against plagiarism and the access to these papers is public.

11 SAR application “Question the state” (“ia statul la întrebări”), available at - http://www.romaniacurata.ro/ia-statul-la-intrebari/#viewRequests.
Chapter 3: Governance quality

The indicators that constituted the base of the government quality evaluation in the third chapter were: contests rigging, nepotism, corruption, abuse or violation of the law, universities’ relations with students and respecting their rights, academic democracy, politicization in the education and decision process.

In order to collect this data they verified if:

1. the selection and promotion system of the professors is based on merit, is competitive and opened to anyone;

2. there are breaches of meritocracy based on family relations;

3. there are litigations lost by the university or pending criminal complaints with negative impact over the university’s image or budget;

4. there is an administrative mechanism to seize corruption and sanction it, that was used successfully at least once in the last two years;

5. the universities’ professors are important members of political parties (current members of Parliament, party branch chiefs);

6. there is a Collective Work Agreement of the university that is respected, the union’s chief being involved in the Board of Directors and considered a partner in decision making;

7. the main course professors arrive at their classes and the professors’ evaluations made by students are communicated to the professors and have an impact on their performance and evaluation;

8. sexual harassment is expressly defined in the ethics code and there is a protection mechanism for the person who notifies it;

9. there is an Academic Student Statute – Student’s Rights and Obligation Code, in accordance with the national one, the students are represented in the support committees and the students’ organizations are officially recognized and there is no pressure on the latter from the university management;

10. elections for management positions and structures were fair, disputed between several candidates, transparent, offering to all candidates and to the
academic community the possibility to debate the candidates’ expertise and skills.

Chapter 4: Financial correctness

This chapter followed the financial management practice for each university, analyzing the public acquisitions process and the income statements of the universities’ management bodies.

The evaluators verified if:

1. The acquisition announcements and the award announcements are published on the Public Acquisition Electronic System (SEAP) website or the university’s website;

2. The university is “captured”, meaning that there are favorite companies who, in the absence of frame-work contracts for several years, win over 50% of the acquisitions per expenses category;

3. The acquisitions are performed according to the legislation and good practices (the relevant documents were randomly verified, for example bid requests, tenders);

4. The income statements show a large difference between the university’s management and the rest of the academic personnel;

5. The income statements corroborated with the interest statements, show a justifiable situation at a medium level, per university, or raises governing suspicions for personal interest;

6. The university’s rector or pro-rector have project cumulated norms;

Chapter 5: Meritocracy

1. The last chapter included in the final score was based on the universities’ performance evaluation, the qualification and output expected from the research university professors being verified. The score of Google Academic citations was verified by using the “Publish or Perish” soft. Different averages
were created for each branch of science and per university, from the number of academic citations of the PhD professors.

The universities that do not have PhD studies were not evaluated in this process: “Constantin Brâncuși” University of Târgu Jiu, “Henri Coandă” Air Force Academy of Brașov, “Nicolae Bălcescu” Land Forces Academy of Sibiu and “Mircea cel Bătrân” Naval Academy in Constanța. The citations for three thousand seven hundred and eighty (3.780) PhD coordinators from forty four public universities were taken into consideration.

The list of PhD coordinators used to collect the data was the one published in January 2016 by the Ministry of National Education and Research\textsuperscript{12}.

Chapter 6: Antidiscrimination

Regarding the antidiscrimination component, the evaluators verified if:

1. There are proper facilities and infrastructures for students with disabilities (access to proper spaces, proper academic/evaluation materials);

2. There are methodologies and instruments to notify discrimination related matters;

3. There are policies/strategies/prevention and control measures for discrimination within the university;

4. There were complaints against the university, for discrimination cases (on any criteria), in the last 4 years.

Scores

The scores per category were validated in two sessions in which took part both evaluators and coalition members, in order to avoid biased results. After validation, the scores of each university, per category, were grouped according to hierarchy in every category and combined in a final score as follows.

The maximum score of each questionnaire category (for example, academic fairness), being obtained by adding the protection rules and positive practices (so that the maximum represents a good *de iure* and *de facto* regulation, for example there is a comprehensive ethics code, an active committee, cases are resolved promptly and transparently, etc.) was considered the benchmark for the individual performance of each university, from which the final individual score was obtained as a percentage. The final score in academic fairness represents the benchmark percentage achieved by the university.

We proceeded in the same manner for all four categories in the questionnaire and four scores from 0 to 100 were obtained.

A fifth category was added to the four existing ones — meritocracy — defined as the number of academic citations per each PhD thesis professor per university. The choice was not random. The CUC1 study, published by *Education and Development*, has shown the existence of a connection between integrity and performance. Based on the meritocracy level, a university must not only have the best average per capita, but also the lowest dispersion (difference between the professors’ academic citations).

The maximum number of academic citations obtained, a little below 400, by the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Iaşi, became the benchmark for the other universities and was used to calculate their percentage from this possible maximum, creating the fifth score from 0 to 100.

Our pre-final 0-100 score is the simple average of these five categories — two administrative ones, a financial one and two related to academic practices — divided, to simplify the lecture, by ten, as follows:

\[
\text{FINAL SCORE} = \text{AVERAGE} \left( \% \text{ Transparency} + \% \text{ Academic Fairness} + \% \text{ Governance Quality} + \% \text{ Financial Correctness} + \% \text{ Meritocracy} \right) / 10
\]
Methodological limits

The main challenge of the present methodology is represented by the hidden nature of the corruption phenomenon. Due to this reason, following the general methodology developed by Mungiu-Pippidi\textsuperscript{13}, this investigation does not measure the corruption within the universities, but the capacity to ensure the integrity of the education process, meaning, corruption control. A score of five does not only reflect a five score university, but the capacity to ensure only fifty percent of the integrity necessary for a quality education. It actually means that one in two PhD theses risks plagiarism, one in two bachelor degrees risks being reproduced, and so on.

The evaluators’ subjectivity remains a valid limit. In order to reduce this effect, two training sessions were performed during the project, for both senior evaluators and students. The first session set the exact scoring criteria for each category. The second session focused on calibrating the scores. This was performed in a collective session for presenting the individual results that allowed the comparison of individual experiences, which led to consistent images regarding the evaluations. Also, these were revised by the coalition’s members and experts in the field, so that valid and reliable scores were obtained.

It is important to mention that the evaluation was performed for the previous four years 2012-2016) and not for the actual management (where new people were elected for these positions).

The meritocracy score brings a permanent element, because it adds up the performance of PhD schools for the entire life cycle of the university. This is the reason why the average of this score balances recent incidents like DNA visits, etc.

Another limit of the present research is represented by the lists of PhD coordinators used to collect academic citations. The lists published by MENCS in January 2016 were used, so there might be differences between these lists and the current active coordinators in each university. The estimated error is 5%, for cases of retirement, death or appointment after the list was drafted.

1. Transparency – 8

A short chapter presentation (see Images 1 and 2), of the evaluation results shows that universities meet the transparency criterion in an eighty percent proportion, with 36 universities above average and twelve below average. This is the most satisfying criterion, both in relation to the requests communicated according to Law 544/2001, and the separate analysis of the websites performed by ANOSR. The conformity with legal requirements and the answers to the questionnaire provide an incomplete image, some universities having complex details of interest for the students, but avoiding to post income statements (a sore spot), the acquisitions or the contests for vacant positions.

Beyond the score of the elements mentioned above, the website of the Medicine and Pharmacy University of Cluj stands out not for conformity, but it is the most substantial, effectively publishing sensible information, from contests to acquisition. At the opposite pole we have the Petroleum and Gas University of Ploiesti, the National Physical Education and Sport University, the National School of Political and Administrative Sciences, Polytechnic University of Timisoara, who hide information and are unresponsive to requests according to Law 544/2001.

Image 1: Average score per category
1. Academic fairness – 5

Academic fairness proved to be a challenge for the evaluators, especially beyond the formal level of the existence of an ethics code and its’ conformity with the legislation in force. The number of academic complaints on exam fairness is very low and usually the complaints go straight to DNA, showing the complete inefficiency of the administrative mechanisms. Most universities’ management bodies did not take any measures regarding the professors’ academic activity which supported works of felons convicted for corruption and fifteen universities have reported plagiarisms – not trialed yet by the National Certification Council of Academic Titles, Diplomas and Certificates (CNATDCU) – even at management level.

As a result, the average was five, with a much more balanced repartition, but still unfavorable: 23 universities above average and 25 below. It is remarkable that only one university received over 7 points – Petru Maior University of Târgu Mureș. At the opposite pole, as bad practices, we have two medical universities, the one in Bucharest and the one in Craiova, two veterinary universities, Bucharest and Banat, SNSPA, Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad and Alexandru Ioan Cuza Police Academy of Bucharest.

2. Governance quality – 6

The governance quality, meaning the way management bodies organize the day to day activity, from vacancies contests to academic decisions, shows, once more, a
balanced situation, with the same number of universities above and below average, one point higher than the average score for academic fairness.

A compact group of four universities, two in Târgu Mureș, plus Babeș-Bolyai University and Bucharest University, are at the top of the ranking. At the opposite pole, as bad practices, we have the **National School of Political and Administrative Sciences, Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary University of Cluj-Napoca, Victor Babes Medicine and Pharmacy University of Timișoara, Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad and Agricultural King Mihai I of Romania Sciences and Veterinary University of Timișoara.**

3. **Financial correctness – 7**

The average for financial correctness is seven, with 25 universities below average, out of which Valahia University of Târgoviște, Technical Construction University of Bucharest, Bucharest Polytechnic University, Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary University Cluj, and also Transilvania Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary University below four, with several universities that score below five.

**Image 3** illustrates the universities’ ranking based on the scores obtained for chapters 1-4.
Evaluating meritocracy based on the number of academic citations per capita has many reasons. First of all, for integrity reasons, the academic citation is the main form of merits recognition in the academic world. Plagiarists do not quote. A Ph.D. coordinator is not at the beginning of his career and, if he is not an impostor, he will have an appropriate number of academic citations for his discipline. This is why we created the citation number benchmark per branch of science, so that anyone could report a coordinator to a national or international performance in his domain.
Secondly, the academic citation is the most democratic form of performance evaluation. Any relevant paper will be quoted and Google Academic includes works in several languages and even self-citations if they appear in some publications. The Harzing (most inclusive) and ISI (most severe) impact indicators also consider the impact of the quoting publications, but taking into consideration the low quality of our universities, it would have produced hundreds of coordinators with indicator below 1. We preferred to lower the bar – the situation still being problematic even in these conditions – and not to use an indicator hard to follow, but a simple and transparent criterion that is equally generous with every domain, given that the mandatory citations apply to all disciplines. The list of PhD coordinators used to collect this data was the one published in January 2016 by the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research.

The number of academic citations per university was, on average, 128, which is below one third of the highest performance score - „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University in Iași, which is close to 400. Even though it is the oldest in Romania, „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University in Iași is a provincial university with no special political connections – no professor from „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University in Iași was ever a minister, unlike the universities that scored below five, where almost everyone was a minister or a secretary of state, so its' performance is a pertinent national benchmark. We rounded up to a total of 400 and calculated the percentage from this ideal number that the other PhD schools in Romania meet. **Two thirds are below five, even with this national benchmark** (we did not compare any university to Harvard or Oxford), and the average is 3.2 - rounded to 3.

The partial integrity score obtained by uniting the first four categories was connected to the meritocracy score (Image 4) obtained by calculating the number of academic citations per capita. Only two universities obtained above 9: „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University in Iași, with the best performance and therefore the best PhD quality schools and the one in Cluj. This is how the final score was created, with the universities in Arad, the two veterinary universities in Banat and Cluj, but also the Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti, the National Information Academy and “Carol I” Defense University, at the bottom of the ranking.

The correspondence between the integrity and performance scores is pretty good, taking into consideration the high importance given to the existence of official rules in the integrity questionnaire. If a corrupt university is protected by regulations and
papers, the difference between corrupt and less corrupt universities could be reduced. This is the reason why the **meritocracy score (academic citations average)** was added, as a corrective element – an impostor university cannot have many academic citations, these cannot be controlled, even with several self-citations.

**Image 4: Academic citation average per university**
This score is entirely objective and completes the academic integrity score. **Image 5** illustrates the universities that comply with the rules, and the ones who seem to disregard the rules, National School of Political and Administrative Sciences, with a better academic citation score than the one suggested by the integrity score, and Petru Maior University of Târgu Mureş with a very low academic performance, considering its’ good integrity. The explanations for these divergent cases vary from university to university.

**Image 5. Meritocracy-integrity correspondence**

![Graph showing the relationship between academic performance and integrity scores.](image)

**Final score: no university above 8 (Image 6 and Image 7)**

After applying the formula we finally obtain a final score. We can immediately observe that there is no university above eight. So, we create the **four star** category from the six universities that scored seven and eight. The **zero star** category is created from universities that scored below 4. Between these categories, we use the balanced score distribution to award one, two or three starts.

The universities that have no star are problematic from an academic and administrative integrity point of view. The Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research (MENCS) and the Romanian Agency for Quality Insurance in
Higher Education (ARACIS) should consider dissolving or reforming these universities.

The Universities with **only one star** should not have PhD schools. They should be granted a grace period to resolve their issues under the guidance of another institution.

The **two stars** universities should build programs to increase integrity and quality on their own, as they have the capacity to do so.

The **three stars** universities have potential, even though DNA has surprised us in the last days with a visit to one of these universities under the accusation of selling diplomas. They had to eliminate their weak points and emulate the strategies of better placed universities.

The four star universities are the best ones in the Romanian context, but not a five star, so they are under the most favorable benchmark.

Among these, the University in Târgu Mureș, which is not really a research university, is disadvantaged because it is in direct competition with research universities. Thus, it would be wise to make this aspect explicit.

All the other universities have integrity issues, but also the capacity to progress. The diplomas from these universities should receive more confidence regarding integrity and competence on the job market.
Image 6: Final scores

Image 7: Universities ranking
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<tr>
<th>Eftimie Murgu University in Reșița</th>
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<td>Victor Babes Medicine and Pharmacy University in Timișoara</td>
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<td>Alexandru Ioan Cuza Police Academy in Bucharest</td>
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<td>Vasile Alecsandri University in Bacău</td>
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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report showed that the academic integrity average in the academic community is 6 (5.9, on a scale of 1 to 10), with few universities above average. Reasonable academic performance exists only in a third of these universities. A high number of PhD schools: theology, intelligence and security sciences, law, social and humanitarian sciences, management and communication schools should be dissolved, given the fact that the respective PhD coordinators have not shown any research quality other than their diploma. Selling diplomas and facilitating their acquirement is a general problem of the system, literally and figuratively (lax criteria). Even universities rated with four stars have rectors that were accused of plagiarism or other forms of academic imposture whose clarification is not entirely clear to us.

In Romania there are no impeccable universities. There are very few PhD schools that can provide a talented young man decent conditions to take PhD studies. The constant evolution from the previous CUC evaluation (2010) is mostly formal. It was mainly based on legal requirements that partially limited nepotism, imposed ethics codes and published contests for professors on their websites, but in substance, the situation is not much better compared to 2010. In 2010 universities did not stooped so low as to pretend there is no legal ground to sanction a professor who guarantees the scientific quality of an academic paper that was obtained in a fraudulent manner, plagiarized or compelled by a common law inmate. In reality, if a professor validates a student’s academic fraud, he can be fired. The same rule should apply for fraud committed by an inmate or a political person.

The fact that the Romanian rectors united to protect professors who validated inmates shows what the obstacle on the path to development is. The Ministry does not have enough power to play the principal role that controls the agent (universities are independent). The humble attempt to impose some standards was stopped by the Parliament, the case being trialed at the Constitutional Court, and it would be surprising for a tribunal to decide that imposture is non-constitutional. A majority of impostors present in Parliament and in the universities’ management bodies can easily defend the current status quo, meaning a situation where imposture is systematic. So, the problem cannot be fixed by “principal-agent” type approaches, like other rules, controls, etc. There is already an excess. Plagiarism has become systematic because a majority of PhD coordinators are not doing their jobs, either because they are impostors, or corrupt, or both.
The presence of video cameras in the Baccalaureate exam or the anti-plagiarism verification of all works – which is the actual trend – must be viewed exactly for what it is: a temporary measure that cannot resolve the heart of the problem. The purpose of this reform is not sanctioning the disciplinary deviation, which is massive, but building a community capable to have decent standards that will be respected. But for this to happen, imposters must be eliminated. There is no other way. In a similar logic, a corrupt university cannot and must not have the right to independency. We were not able to identify corruption cases resolved in an administrative manner in this report, proof that the internal mechanisms do not work. Usually, the complaints go directly to DNA, because district attorneys have credibility, where rectors do not.

Who is the plausible agent of change? Who reads the minimal standards proposed by CNATDCU\textsuperscript{14} can see that we have a minority of specialties in various fields– mathematics, physics, chemistry, etc. – that manage to align with international standards. Otherwise, hilarious efforts are made to create local standards that vary according to the balance of power between and inside the disciplines. Some standards will create more corruption. For example, the CNATDCU social sciences committee is planning to give 1,5 points to publications in international languages published in Romanian papers, and only 2 for external papers, even though Romania cannot have international papers, as the text implies, only by the internationals selected by the authors. Romania has failed in building the blind essay system that constitutes the ground for academic performance and has stopped trying, judging from the quoted document. Instead, it aims for an extended clientele by acquiring external credibility through advisory boards, honoris causa PhD theses and the presence of foreign professors in committees where theses are not translated, not even the summaries. The introduction of these lax criteria will lead to even more fraud and will not resolve anything.

Our proposals are humble, but well anchored in reality. They are meant to resolve collective action issues created by reducing the free riding (parasitism), increasing the monetarization performed by persons who are directly involved, and by increasing the reputation cost of imposture:

1. **Introducing a differential treatment between universities, PhD schools and disciplines, according to which only universities that reach the standards have the right to independence**, the others being able to function under an external trustee for a transition period until reorganization or dissolution. The trustees

\textsuperscript{14} MENCS, Minimal and mandatory standard proposals in order to obtain the title of doctorate coordinator and abilitation certificate, respectively obtaining academic titles, available here: https://www.edu.ro/dezbatere-public%C4%83-propunerile-de-standarde-minimale-necesare-%C8%99i-obligatorii-pentru-ob%C8%9Binerea
can only be representatives of the state and civil society, unions, professional or students’ organizations, like CUC. In order to insure that a variety of interests are represented, the state must be represented by a ministry, academy, different control bodies (like the Court of Accounts) that could work with the university until the reexamination term, following either the progress and inclusion in a higher category, or the dissolution;

2. **The dissolution of ARACIS**, which was not capable to control standards’ degradation and did not seriously sanction any problematic public university. Its’ replacement with an external evaluation agency hired under contract is recommended. It has become a fairly common practice to hire an external and/or private, independent and prestigious agency, and it is easier to find one if its’ role is not only for PhD studies, but for the entire accreditation process and it is not paid per evaluated piece, like today, but also has national academic standards indicators. UNESCO could be a partner in this direction.

3. **Creating an Integrity Agency for Education (AIPE)** that has both an audit function and an Ombudsman function and is independent both of universities and of the ministry. Apart from the academic integrity, there are also administrative and financial problems. As the education domain does not have neither administrative control nor the possibility to prevent corruption, the problems go straight to the DNAEducation needs a powerful control body that would prevent incompatibilities, abuse of power and ensure the implementation of the law and maintenance of the standards and also to prevent dishonest behaviors’ generalization. AIPE can be the higher body of the education’s reform, operating in non-permanent teams in each problematic university, to which a permanent activity will be added to detect, to receive and to follow integrity issues in order to prevent corruption and fraud or to notify the competent bodies about their occurrence.

4. At the same time, the government must propose a **project to resolve the stimulants issues** that lead to massive distortions, like stopping promotions, including in security domains, due to the PhD title. The privileges related to the PhD title, like equivalence of the bar exam or promotion to military ranks, must be eliminated from the law, because they have corrupted its’ application. The exams for any school subject must be the same for everybody, with no exceptions. There are several perverse stimulants and they have to be eliminated from the law. The current “minimal” standards written by theologians, sociologists and other CNATCDU members are a clear example in this respect;
5. **Political parties must stay clear from the massive promotion of imposture** through interventions like the one of Ecaterina Andronescu on the CNATDCU ordinance. In general we must eliminate elements from the laws, not add new ones. At this moment there are no legal obstacles on the path to integrity. If even rich universities have issues with bribery it is not due to lack of resources, but academic culture;

6. **Generalizing rules in the education domain and especially in the research domain.** The PhD thesis must respect the same principles and rules whether it is in physical education, quantic physics or history. The PhD coordinator must be appointed according to a universal standard. Instead of one point for a committee and thirty points for another one, like it is now, why can’t we introduce a universal standard? It could sound like:

   Any person with a PhD title that operates in an education or research profile institution, public or private has the right to coordinate a PhD paper, if his PhD title or minimum three papers based on his PhD paper have been published in an ISI magazine or an A category publishing rated by the Romanian Academy.

   The title awarding is further made according to the law, but the right to coordinate should be liberalized, in order to eliminate the feudalism from the Romanian PhD institution. The restrictive criteria introduced by the education law were well intended, but they only focus on creating differences, meaning creating different categories of coordinators. This only worsens the problem, instead of resolving it.

7. **Resolving conflict of interest in the education domain by reiterating clear incompatibilities,** so that no one in academic management positions or accreditation and audit forums can simultaneously be a member of CNATDCU, to evaluate people and PhD schools with full independence, the rectors cannot be members of the parliament, etc.

8. **Trusting standards and accreditations to plausible actors, meaning the ones who have the most academic citations from each discipline, now that we know who they are.** Such a committee would include the most prominent people from each field who would be perfectly qualified to perform the activity in CNATDCU or other entities, without being tied to a certain institution (it is even
better for retirement) and so, they would be independent to exert their attributions. This way, the complicated nomination and auto-proposal processes will be eliminated and a secretary could compose an optimal CNATDCU from an academic and integrity point of view, using Google Scholar.

9. Online publishing of as many masters, PhD papers or other publications as possible, like SAR did in the public policies Library\(^{15}\) – an example that our academic experts have nothing to hide and make their work available to the public.

10. **Punitive measures against the plagiarist and also his coordinator if the coordinator is not the one who notified the plagiarism:**

   For the author:
   a) Immediately revocation of his PhD title as soon as the plagiarism has been proven by the institution which awarded it;
   b) In case the institution refuses, the Ministry of Education must have the authority to annul the respective title;
   c) Obliging the offender to return all direct material advantages gained from his PhD title obtained through plagiarism;
   d) Annulling all advantages, positions and academic degrees obtained through plagiarism;
   e) Firing the plagiarist from any academic position, permanently, both from public and private institutions, whether a civil or military institution.

**Punitive measures against the coordinating professor of the plagiarized thesis:**

a) Final and irrevocable annulment of the right to coordinate PhD theses in any domain, for the coordinating professor of at least two theses proved to be plagiarized;

b) Obliging the PhD coordinator to return any material advantages acquired from conducting the doctorate thesis proved to be plagiarized.

**Measures for the academic institution**

a) Dissolving the PhD school that coordinated of at least three PhD theses proven to be plagiarized;

\(^{15}\) SAR public policies Library, available here- [http://sar.org.ro/?post_type=biblioteca&lang=ro](http://sar.org.ro/?post_type=biblioteca&lang=ro)
b) Interdiction to incorporate another PhD school in a similar domain for the respective academic institution for at least 5 years;

c) Obliging the academic institutions to publish an updated list of their PhD coordinators for every PhD school, with their resume, including the scientific publications list;

a) Obliging the academic institutions to publish an updated list of the PhD students, per PhD school and PhD coordinator, indicating the thesis subject;

b) Obliging the academic institutions to publish the list of all persons who obtained PhDs starting with the year 2000, indicating the PhD coordinator, the thesis subject, the year it was presented and the library where it can be consulted.

10. Prevention and educative actions
   a) Introducing a mandatory course in all universities for 1st year students (bachelor degree cycle), in all study domains, that would develop competences like: research methods, research ethics, academic integrity;
   b) Introducing professional ethics courses in the initial professors’ training modules.

SUSTAINABILITY

The instruments created in this project will be used in the future by students – members of students’ organizations. So, periodically, students’ organizations have evaluated the integrity of Romanian universities according to the Methodology created in CUC3. Twenty students organizations leaders have participated in the training sessions organized by the Clean Universities Coalition. They have the necessary knowledge and competences to evaluate academic integrity, they can transmit it through other training sessions, to students from academic centers under evaluation.

Also, students’ organizations will perform actions to influence decisions within their respective universities, so that their management bodies could adopt measures that will reduce the integrity issues raised during CUC3 project.

On a national level, SAR together with ANOSR and other coalition universities, will act together so that the measures proposed in the recommendation section of the present report find themselves in public policies regarding academic education.

Needless to say, using the frames created in this evaluation, in present or in future, competent organisms could constitute a progress towards the current situation.
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Annex 1.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

I. EVALUATIONS

Chapter 1. Administrative transparency and fairness

1.1 Through the SAR application each evaluated university received a request according to Law 544/2001 to provide the following documents and information:

1. Person appointed to resolve public information requests according to Law 544/2001.
2. List of public information provided by your institution.
3. Collective work agreement.
4. Internal regulation, University Carte, Academic ethics and deontology Code, election regulations for management structures and bodies (professors and students), Students’ rights and obligations Code at the university, Students’ professional activity regulation, documents that regulated the settlement of complaints related to university breaches and any other documents relevant for the academic integrity evaluation.
5. Regulation for admission, bachelor degree, dissertation and PhD exams.
6. Activity reports for the years 2012-2014 and strategic plans/afferent operations.
7. University income and expense budgets for the years 2012-2015 together with the meetings protocols of the bodies that approved the respective budgets.
8. Organogram (academic and technical-administrative) and payrolls for academic year 2014/2015.
9. Results of the last evaluation for the academic year 2014-2015 of the courses/professors performed by the students.
11. Annual activity report of the Ethics Committee for the period 2012-2014, and also the componence of the respective committee.
12. Number of students enrolled and number of graduates for PhD and post-graduate courses over the last four years.
13. Acquisitions list over 10,000 euro (without VAT), for the years 2012-2015, indicating the financing source and the contracting company.
14. Income and conflict of interests statements for management personnel during 2012-2014 (Rector, Pro-rectors, Senate President, Deans, Department Managers, CSUD Manager, General Executive Manager and chiefs of all university structures).
15. List of sanctions for the last two years on ethics issues (plagiarism, discrimination, sexual harassment, etc.), mentioning the body that applied the sanction and the incrimination action and also the cases for which law 571/2004 was applied;

16. List of litigations with employees, students and third parties that the university has lost and also cases in which criminal pursuit was initiated or that were sent to trial by the District Attorney, indicating the cases for which the indictment was registered by DNA (National Anti-corruption Division), in the last 3 years;

17. Complete list of grants/projects won by the University in the last 3 years, indicating the grand title, the reference code, the financier’s or program’s name and the value assigned to the university;

18. List of patents/international inventions and ISI quoted published works from the previous year (2014);

19. Number of available positions, list of candidates signed in and list of admitted applicants in the last 3 years;

20. List of university employees who registered statements on their own responsibility, according to the law, with the afferent registration numbers, regarding collaboration with Security as political police.

Chapter 2. Academic fairness

2.1. The universities offer online courses and tutorials on academic writing to students and PhD candidates, there are writing guides for bachelor theses or PhDs , published in a visible manner;

2.2. The Ethics Code is clear, with explicit articles related to plagiarism, reproduction, academic fraud and intimation mechanisms and the afferent sanctions

2.3. The Ethics Code is clear, with specific articles related to reproduction.

2.4. The Ethics Code is clear, with explicit articles regarding other known forms of academic fraud, for example purchasing papers.

2.4. The Ethics Code was prepared (elaborated, discussed, debated) with the students who are informed about what is allowed and what is forbidden.
2.5. There is a clear plagiarism reporting mechanism that was used successfully at least once;

2.6. Press publications, for example the ones related to inmates scientific works coordination or political figures plagiarisms endorsed by the university, were followed by clear measures and sanctions;

2.7. Bachelor and master papers are verified against plagiarism;

2.8. PhD papers are verified against plagiarism;

2.9. Access to these papers is public and the terms are appropriate so that the bachelor thesis committees can read them.

Maximum: 10

2.2. Regarding the professors: Do the professors have the appropriate qualification and the necessary output expected from academic professors in their area of expertise? Indicators: Number of academic citations per PhD coordinator (the data will be gathered through Publish or Perish)

2.2.1. Total number of PhD/university/profile schools
2.2.2. Total number of PhD coordinators per school
2.2.3 Number of academic citations per school
2.2.4. Number of academic citations per university
2.2.5 Total number of academic citations divided to the number of coordinators

Chapter 3. Governance quality

Regarding the governance quality, they verify if:

3.1 For all professors (from assistant to professor) the selection and promotion system of the professors is based on merit, is competitive (contests organized between more than one candidate) and opened to anyone (young people outside the university, foreign universities graduates)?

3.2. Are there many breaches of meritocracy based on family relations? Mention if there are more severe cases of nepotism (a family member is appointed in a management position over the other person)?

3.3. Are there more litigations lost by the university or pending criminal complaints with negative impact over the university’s image or budget (last three years)?

3.4. Is there an administrative mechanism to seize corruption and sanction it, that was used successfully at least once in the last two years (bribery), protecting the identity of the informants? Mention the (more serious) situation if DNA has cases in the respective university and why the administrative mechanisms had failed and DNA had to step in.

3.5. Are the students’ evaluations regarding the professors communicated to the professors and do they have any effects on the professors’ performance and evaluation?
3.6. Is there a Student’s Academic Statute – Student’s Rights and Obligations Code in force and in accordance with the national one?

3.7. Is the university political? Are the management bodies of the university important members of political parties (current politicians, party branch leaders), do they teach or are mostly absent or does the university award PhD titles or professor honoris causa to politicians?

3.8. Is there a Collective Work Agreement at the university, eventually published on the website? Is the Collective Work Agreement respected in the activity sectors? Is the union’s representative invited to the Board of Directors? In general, is the union a partner that matters?

3.9. Were the elections for management positions and structures fair, disputed between several candidates and transparent, offering equal chances to all candidates and the possibility of the academic community to debate?

3.10. In general, do the professors arrive in class? Are there consequences for repeated absences?

3.11. Are the students’ organizations officially recognized by the university and are they represented in the decision bodies (Senate, Board of Directors, Faculty Council)?

3.12. Are the elections for the students’ representatives in the management bodies open, transparent and fair?

3.13. Were there pressures (threats, intimidation attempts) over the students’ associations/students’ representatives? (this can be verified by visits to the institution/press).

3.14. Are the students represented in support committees (ethics committee, evaluation and quality insurance committee, scholarship committee, accommodation committee).

3.15. Is sexual harassment expressly defined in the ethics code with the existence of a protection mechanism for the informant?

4. Financial management

Regarding the financial management practices we wish to find out if:

4.1. Are the acquisition announcements published on SEAP or on the university’s website, as well as the award announcements?

4.2. Is the university “captured” (are there preferred companies, who, in the absence of long term framework agreements, win over 50% of the tenders per category? Ex: construction).

4.3. Are acquisitions made in accordance with the law and the good practices? Are documents requested aleatory from their list (ex: organizing offer requests, tenders).
4.4 Do the income statements show a big difference between the university management and the rest of the academic personnel? (maximum 10 times)

4.5. Do the income statements corroborated with the interest statements show an average justifiable situation per university or do they raise suspicions of government for personal interest?

[meaning if they have profitable companies they can justify their income with houses and cars that cannot come from the university, ?]

4.6. Do the rector and pro-rectors have cumulated norms per project?

5. Antidiscrimination
We do not grade. Mention only what you find.

Regarding antidiscrimination we want to find out if:

6.1. Are there proper facilities and infrastructure for disabled students? (access to proper university spaces, academic materials/proper evaluation).
6.2. Are there methodologies and instruments to inform about discrimination?
6.3. Are there policies/strategies/measures to prevent and control discrimination within the university?
6.4. Were there any complaints against the university for discrimination cases (on any criterion) in the past 4 years?