

Diaspora in the Scientific Research and Higher Education in Romania -Diaspora and her friends. Event presentation

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The initiative of the president of Romania, of 15th February 2016, to launch a wide public consultation regarding the field of education and research, with the purpose of drawing the directions of development on the level of the year 2030 horizon, was the first step of the undertakings aiming to maintain the connection with the diaspora and to involve it in the Romanian research on the Higher Education level.

In the first stage (2016-2017), the consultation aimed at catching up the vision of the society (NGO, educational actors, schools and universities, teachers, pupils, students, public institutions, employers, experts, etc.) and the second, the period

2018-2030 aims at converting it into a national, unitary, integrated vision and in strategic objectives of the country.

2017 will have as objective the elaboration of a strategy and of an operational plan which illustrate the layout for achieving the assumed challenges, while 2018, promoting a coherent legislative mix and an adequate governance system, will aim at starting the reform for an Educated Romania.

The National Debate for Education and Research conducted in Timișoara within the Conference “Diaspora within the Scientific Research and the Higher Education in Romania- Diaspora and its friends” by the Western University and organised by the Department of Educational Sciences of the Faculty of Sociology and Psychology was grounded on a new, inclusive, bottom to top approach, which started from the needs of the society and from the good practices and included an online consultation tool, thematic regional debates, as well as events organised by all third parties (NGOs, coalitions, institutions, private actors). The description of the first stage of the debate is available at:

<http://www.presidency.ro/ro/angajamente/romania-educata>

Within the event *Diaspora within the Scientific Research and the Higher Education in Romania- Diaspora and its friends*, took place a session dedicated to this consultative undertaking, unfolded within the exploring workshops which lasted more than two hours and aimed at identifying the priorities and the vision for research in Romania (2030).

There were debated topics such as:

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- *Predictability, stability and professional prestige in the development of the teaching and research career.*
- *Ethic, impartiality and scientific rigor in research*
- *The collaboration between the academic and research environment and the private environment*
- *The transfer of the research results on the level of the public policies and the practice in the field*
- *The mission and functions of the higher education institutions - the teaching function, the research function, the public/social function*
- *Cutting short the cycle of research and innovation: the transition from the research idea to the market (product, policies)*
- *Open innovation*
- *Social innovation*
- *Romania in the European Field of Research*
- *Smart specialization*
- *The system of the public research organisations - focus and correlation with the economy's structure and the society's challenges*
- *Autonomy, management and leadership within the public research organisations*
- *Open science*
- *Research, innovation and tech entrepreneurship*
- *International competition for talents in the research and innovation field*

Exploring workshop: *Education for innovation - how do the new educational systems answer to the new generations* Moderators Ph.D. Prof. Romița Iucu (University of Bucharest) Ph.D. Prof. Alis Oancea (Univ. of Oxford) Ph.D. Prof. Simona Sava (Western University of Timișoara) used a method based on working -groups and the purpose of the session was to offer the participants the chance to state possible suggestions and recommendations regarding the priorities and vision for research- development-innovation (2030), starting from a set of debate generating topics.

Depending on the schedule of each workshop, the session dedicated to the National Debate for Education and Research lasted between 90 and 120 minutes, within which, the moderator had an essential role in presenting the debate context, the method by which the discussion topics were chosen from the list presented, as well as the objectives of the session (*by open vote, by post-it, by reasoning, etc.*), mediated a debate for choosing 5 topics from the list of 15 to be debated in 5 groups balanced as number, depending on the interest for a certain topic of the 5 voted as priorities.

The thematic discussions took place in two rounds aiming at:

- Identifying the bench-marks (3-5) and the good practices examples in the field of scientific research, development and innovation (Round 1/15 minutes)

- Converting directions (as country objectives) (3-5) for Romania at the horizon of 2030, in relation with the identified bench-marks (Round 2/25 minutes)

At the end of the second shift, the completion of the exercise and the reporting in plenum were announced by the moderator, centralised and included in a *ppt template to be projected*.

Each group presented its discussion results in plenum (5 minutes/topic), following the structure of the rounds (3-5 benchmarks/ each topic+ 3-5 converting directions/ each topic) and at the end of the presentation, the moderator closed the session, mentioning the presentation of the conclusions regarding the vision and country objectives concerning research, development and innovation in Romania: aspirations and directions for measures for the Educated Romania 2030, within an interactive plenary session.

The panel with the topic *National and international developments in approaching innovation in education* in which the main actors were: Dr. Magdalena Isac (Univ. of Groningen/ CRELL_EC), Drd. Dakmara Georgescu (UNESCO Programme Specialist for Curriculum, Teachers and Higher Education), Dr. Alexandru Crişan (Senior Adviser, the World Bank) was moderated by Ph.D. Prof. Carmen Creţu (UAIC, Iaşi) while Ph.D. Prof. Simona Sava (Western University of Timișoara) presented the last Studies and researches concerning innovation in education (OECD-CERI) and Ph.D. Prof. Romiță Iucu, Ph.D. Prof. Lucian Ciolan (University of Bucharest) the study „Romania 2030 – educational trends and challenges.,,

Of a real interest were also the six debate sessions.

The first, entitled „*Changes that should be brought to the educational system from the perspective of the evolution trends 2030* (Input, issues, researches to be made, key-messages) had as moderators Ph.D. Prof. Anca Nedelcu (UB) and Ph.D. Prof. Ion Albulescu (UBB). Drd.Dakmara Georgescu (UNESCO) emphasised the *Dilemmas of the change from an international perspective* and Senior Adviser Alexandru Crişan (BM): *Educational change – a "game with glass beads"* (Herman Hesse): certainties, uncertainties, paradoxes.

From the office in the classroom: a UNICEF study regarding good practices in the early education in Romania was the title of the investigation conducted by Ph.D. Prof. Anca Nedelcu (UB) and Ph.D. Prof. Carmen Rusu (Univ. P.V. Montpellier) emphasised *Priorities of the Romanian education regarding early school abandon and integration on the labour field*

The topic of the second debate session was: *Reconsidering the results of learning from the perspective of the evolution trends 2030 Input, issues, researches to be made, key-message* moderated by Ph.D. Prof. Muşata Bocoş (UBB) and Ph.D. Ass. Prof. Mariana Momanu (UAIC). Dakmara Georgescu (UNESCO): presented *Controversies regarding the `results of learning`* , Magdalena Isac (Univ. of Groningen): *The results of learning from the perspective of the new priorities for European cooperation in the field of education and professional development (ET2020)* and Carmen Rusu (Univ. P.V. Montpellier) emphasized *How close is the today's teacher to the tomorrow's pupil?*

The presentation of the debates synthesis of the two plenary sessions managed to emphasise some uncertainties but also some opportunities.

Debate session 3: Reconsiderations regarding curriculum, the conception of the educational environment (digitally mediated) and of assessment for stimulating innovation in input, research that is to be done, key messages; moderated by Magdalena Balica, PhD (ISE) and lecturer Mariana Crașovan (UVT). Interventions from:

- Musata Bocos, Daniel Andronache (UBB): *The status of curriculum integration in the theory and practice of education. Critical analyses*
- Alexandru Crișan (BM): *Curriculum - in what direction? A new wave? "A thousand and one questions"; a few answers (a look toward/from the Emirates in the Gulf)*
- Dakmara Georgescu (UNESCO): *Learning and curriculum in the digital age: what is "new" and what is "old"*
- Catalina Lomos ("LISER, Luxembourg): *MathemaTIC - a digital platform that supports differentiated and individualized learning of mathematics in primary school. A case study of the implementation and assessment strategy for this innovation in Luxembourg*

Exigencies in educating teaching staff for the stimulation of the education of future innovators were the topic of debate session no. 4 moderated by Professor Carmen Crețu, PhD (UAIC) and Reader Cătălin Glava, PhD (UBB). The guests of the session made interventions by means of research such as:

- *For an integrated public policy regarding human resource management in education* (Serban Iosifescu, ARACIP):
- *"Reference frameworks" for policies and strategies for educating teaching staff: international milestones for today and tomorrow* (Alexandru Crișan, BM):
- *Influencing national policies related to teaching staff - SABER studies promoted by the World Bank* (George Pataki (BM/ UAIC):
- *What are the results of Romanian higher education? Discrepancies between teaching qualifications obtained by graduates and labour market demand* (Ion Albulescu, Mirela Albulescu, UBB):
- *Comparative study regarding the initial education programs for teaching staff in Romania and the US. A few conclusions* (Cătălin Glava, UBB):

In Debate session 5: *Changes to be made in governance and in the implementation of policies for innovation in education*, moderators: Madlen Șerban, PhD (ESF), Professor Lucian Ciolan, PhD (UB) maintained the active interest in the discussed issues and monitored analytical interventions regarding:

- *Public policies in vocational education and training (VET): innovation and challenges. Subtopics: 1. formulation of VET policies and their timeline: innovative approaches; 2. implementing public policies in VET: roles and innovative practices* (Madlen Serban, ETF):
- *Lights and shadows in establishing the basis for education public policies using evidence: "fairness" and "equal chances" in education"* (Șerban Iosifescu, ARACIP
- *The internationalisation of higher education: opportunities for Romanian universities* (Dan Popescu, NARIC, UK):

The last debate session, no. 6, moderated by Ciprian Fatrusnic, PhD (IȘE) and Simona Iftimescu (UB/Presidential Administration) was about *Priorities and visions for (educational) research in Romania (2030) Input, issues, research that is to be done, key messages, conclusions*) and the guests highlighted key aspects identified during accomplished research:

Educational research – *Performance, visibility and relevancy for the national area* Carmen Cretu (UAIC):

Mobilisation of research at the level of educational practice: challenges and opportunities Georgeta Ion (Autonomous University of Barcelona)

The plenary analyses synthesized the debates from the sessions, drew conclusions and determined future actions.

The debates of Workshop ***Education for innovation - how education systems respond to new generations*** highlighted the elements that could bring innovation in research:

- TIC – with advantages related to performance and the diminishing of effort and imminent dangers to physical and mental health
- Good practices in other systems that involve transfer and adaptation
- Research of education phenomena and processes
- Entrepreneurship elements promoted in education
- Usage of open educational resources
- Multiplying authentic learning experiences
- Focus on heutagogy elements

It was argued that innovation in education is not enough, and that there is a need for education that promotes innovation, reflectiveness, that capitalizes on interdisciplinarity, that changes even the perspective regarding research and education and that can allow a real coherence between policies (ideologies, philosophies), (on the basis of which curricular counselling is generalized, counselling practices in the area of education for innovation are diversified, the professionalization of the field is accomplished and the need for corresponding expertise is fulfilled), research and practices, so that the development of innovation skills is achieved through research and so that education is for change.

In research and innovation there is still a great deal of bureaucracy, in the determination of solutions the focus remains on results and underfinancing represents a major impediment. NO POWER. NO POINT.

In reference to innovation for learning, there are expectations of learning for innovating, educational analysis at a micro (action research) and macro (system-reform) level, capitalization on results of learning at a system level. Learning for innovation involves creativity, change, valorisation, adaptation, development, education, curiosity, validation, collaboration, systemic expansion, ambition, perseverance, consistency, research, asking questions. The analysis of the results obtained within the debate sessions was done based on answers to a series of questions such as: ***What do you mean by „an educated Romanian 19 year old” in 2016 and 2030?***

Learning outcomes for 2016 must characterize the student as Beautiful, Free, Open, unselfconscious, With open mind, Critical, active citizen, whereas for 2030 the adjectives should be along the lines of And beautiful, more freely, Open, freely, creatively, With open mind, Critical – Reflexive, European citizen proactive, Equal opportunity, Autonomous (decision-financial), emotionally mature digital wise.

In regards to the second one; ***What contextual (social, economic, cultural, political, structural, system-level etc.) factors enable or inhibit the achievement of these outcomes in Romania?***

highlighted negative aspects included the lack of a development strategy for the educational system, discontinuity in interventions, lack of perseverance, the national research strategy that DOES NOT finance educational research and a disconnect from real life.

The presence of education in public discourse, the valuable community of specialists (Romania and Diaspora), and availability are nominated as positive aspects.

A general vision, a national strategy for innovation in education based on coherence, relevancy, fairness, reaction, public educational policies, a personalized curriculum (tendency 83% personalized, 17% frontal), theoretical results of research correlated with educational practices are the answers given

to the question: ***What parts of the system face particularly acute challenges in terms of educational quality and equity***

According to the answers given for ***What researchers are to be done?***, research teams act in order to establish coherent educational policies, for the internationalisation of higher education, the introduction of curriculum counsellor status by means of bachelor studies programmes, the revigoration of the concept of a curriculum area in the spirit of curriculum related innovation and of the paradigm of competence, the exercise of discourse practices related to learning at the policy level, the creation of discourse practices related to learning at the policy level, qualitative research (qualitative research culture), research – action, of analyses of educational needs, learning analyses / big data in HE, of the general profile of the young person/adult, qualitative and quantitative research on the results of learning

The next question, ***What measures and indicators of learning outcomes need to be prioritized in Romanian education in the medium term, and what part does innovation play in this?*** brings into the discussion answers related to results of learning – skills, innovative, diverse ways of assessment, development of the capacity for innovative assessment, 360° assessment, Definition/clarification

In regards to Teacher education, according to the answers to the question ***What are the feature of successful educational policy and governance nationally and internationally?*** the majority of respondents consider that the particularities of school policy are related to intelligent educational community, professional ethics, integrated policies, distinct financing: institutions, people (teachers), research, the mental ecology of the education community, learning communities

Teachers (***How can teacher education contribute to innovation?***) can contribute to innovation by means of educational master programmes – professional development of teaching careers (MA, Ph.D Europe in T.E.) and education for teaching – integrated learning (inter-, transdisciplinarity), and in regards to the features of a successful national and international system.

What are the features of a successful teacher education system nationally and internationally? respondents consider to be important the professional development - professional standards centred on the quality of teaching, teacher prestige, support services for professional and personal development, models, vision and coherent and open and continuous practices for initial education based on a vision and flexible strategies, the practices of initial and continuous education, the flexibilization of the education curriculum, the focus on mentoring (Apprenticeship) (online mentoring), assessment of the teacher by criteria that reflect the quality of teaching, the importance of assisting teachers with programmes for continuous vocational education and with the implementation of innovation/changes, professional learning and collaboration communities

The long-term effects of teacher education (***what are the medium – term challenges in Romanian teacher education?***) are related to professional development, social status, a focus on results (at the level of the person being taught)Coherence: teacher education, curriculum, management, flexible international standards, diverse routes for education (in accordance with national standards)recognition of skills,international mobility,

Long-term priorities for change in education and professional development (***What are the medium – term priorities for change in Romanian initial and in-service teacher education and professional development***) are the motivation for a teaching career - curriculum

- Integrating ed. theory and practice in the T. E. programs
- Instrumental bridges between initial and in-service learning
- Transition to school and insertion programs
- What capabilities are a priority for the beginning/ experienced teachers? (locally, nationally, internationally)
- Promoting communities of learning
- Mentoring and personal development
- Collective capabilities
- Interdisciplinary approaches to learning content and curriculum standards
- A focus on instrumentalizing curriculum development capabilities

Educational policy and governance (***What are the on-going challenges in educational policy and governance in Romania?***) pursue the compatibility of public educational policies, visibility and impact of research in Romania on educational policy and public debate, the need to establish assessment criteria for this impact and policy making, coherently formulated educational policies, impact evaluationsupporting and educating teachers, international openness

What are the medium – term priorities for change in Romanian educational policy and governance systems? Are related to research based decisions, real communication between, researcherbuilding a platform for researcher Building a platform for researchers. Connecting the ed. researchers and practice to wider (intl) communities, Building a platform for researchers, Connecting the ed. researchers and practice to wider (intl) communities, Human resources development (competency – based approach.

Educational policies and governance can contribute to teaching innovation capacity through policies / strategies / measures for rewarding performance and the excellence of staff that innovates and disseminates the information, financing teacher training for innovation, programmes for stimulating innovation in the rural environment.

The guests of Diaspora have been involved particularly in the organization of activities. It has been a pleasure to discuss with Alis Oancea, professor, Oxford University, Georgeta Ion, UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA DE BARCELONA, Dr. Catalina Lomos, Researcher LISER (Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research), Esch-

sur-Alzette, Luxembourg, Dr. Magdalena Isac (Univ. of Groningen/ CRELL_EC), Drd. DakmaraGeorgescu (UNESCO Programme Specialist for Curriculum, Teachers and Higher Education), Dr.Alexandru Crişan (Senior Adviser, World Bank), Carmen Rusu (Univ. P.V. Montpellier), Dan Popescu (NARIC, UK).



Beside the debates and individual discussions, which were profoundly entertaining, amiable and thoughtful, some of the guests were asked to respond to a survey targeting the following aspects:

- TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF – XXXXXXXX – THE PERSON AND THE PROFESSIONAL
- WHAT'S YOUR AREA OF INTEREST

REGARDING RESEARCH? PLEASE, TELL US ABOUT IT!

- WHAT ARE THE MAIN RESEARCH DIRECTIONS IN...?
- WHAT ARE THE MAIN REASONS OF YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS CONFERENCE?

“I was invited by professor Carmen Cretu, my mentor and coordinator during my studies in Iasi. I was happy to receive the invitation, as I am very curious to meet people from the national and international educational environment and to feel the pulse of the Romanian education. Just like everybody else in Diaspora, I remained emotionally and professionally connected to Romania and I would love to be able to contribute somehow, by collaboration, in order to bring a positive change, especially in the educational environment” Catalina Lomos.

“First of all, to see my friends – I haven’t seen some of them in 10-15 years – and also to learn and see, from the primary sources, what’s really going on in the world: the official documents and works published are often a pale image, sometimes distorted, of reality, highlighting political priorities and cultural roots (even biases)”. (Serban Iosifescu)

I owe my presence here, first to the professors in Iasi and second, to the organizers of "Diaspora and Friends", a truly professional event. The main reason is the interest in the progress of education, dialogue and projects, along with ambassadors of the international academic community.

WHAT DOES EDUCATED ROMANIA MEANS TO YOU?

- *To me, an educated Romania means, first of all, equal chances for everybody, beginning with a series of values mentioned these days: trust, flexibility, transparency, sense of belonging, recognition, wellbeing. Romania for people and through people. The open dialogue among all participants in this process represents the only way of change, innovation and progress. (Carmen Rusu)*
- *I don't think it's time now for punctual changes, but for major directions, defined at a social and political level, achieving under the principles of stability and continuity. I think it's time for an "Educated Romania", for the entire Romania to be educated. The attention must be directed to the education of the entire society, be it formal or informal, punctual or global, civic or scientific. It's time for our national values, civic and social principles to be brought in the limelight, and for the initial and continuous training, again, formal or informal, to be accessible for everybody. (Catalina Lomos)*
- *The open dialogue among all participants in this process represents the only way of bringing change, innovation and progress (Alis Oancea, Oxford Univ.)*

IN YOUR OPINION WHAT ARE THE DIRECTIONS OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH REGARDING THE LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION OF GRADUATES?

STATE FEW OF THE OPPORTUNITIES LEADING TO CHANGE IN EDUCATION

- *One common point – that we have ambassadors carrying Romania in their hearts, wherever they might go, inspiring and believing in a better future. (Victoria Cojocaru)*
- *The Government's failure to engage the teachers' mind and soul and to transform them in active partners in preparing the educational policies, represents one of the biggest weaknesses of reforms, having major consequences on the dynamics of relations experimented in the class and at institution's level. To me, an educated Romania means, first of all, equal chances for everybody, beginning with a series of values mentioned these days: trust, flexibility, transparency, sense of belonging, recognition, wellbeing. Romania for people and through people. The open dialogue among all participants in this process represents the only way of change, innovation and progress. (Carmen Rusu)*
- *I shall mention just one of the multiple opportunities under debate; that these days, the participants in this event sent a common message: we have ambassadors carrying Romania in their hearts, wherever they might go, inspiring and believing in a better future. Alis Oancea*

STATE FEW OF THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS, DESCRIBING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PUBLIC POLICIES IN EDUCATION

- *Plus: openness to public, debate, as a result of an increase of the public opinion's interest for subjects related to education.*
- *Minus: lack of coherence and continuity (each change of a Minister comes with a change of tune...); lack of consistency (public policies are not based on evidence, on research and assessment results); lack of a professional assessment of the impact of most policies implemented and of the assessment of the added value (economic and social) of the respective policy (of the so-called return on investment and social return on investment).*
- State few of the globalization challenges and possible solutions from the educational perspective.

AS INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS, WE KINDLY ASK YOU TO EXPRESS YOUR OPINION RELATED TO THE POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS OF THE REFORM OF THE ROMANIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM– CHALLENGES, PERSPECTIVES.

IS THERE A LAST QUESTION YOU WOULD LIKE TO ANSWER, IF ASKED?

If I may, I'd like to change roles and ask you one question, this time. I've seen that you wrote about the importance of developing the emotional intelligence in children, a subject of interest to me. Do you think that in the future we will have the possibility to give more importance to such competencies and in selecting teachers? How much does the emotion count in the class?

The rewarding and pleasant atmosphere, the high level of sociability of guests, open to our collaboration proposals, as partners, regarding important projects, publications, organization of conferences and congresses, was enjoyed by all participants, leaving a sense of belonging to a big family.

We remember the words of Catalina Lomos

As in all successful conferences, we all want to build networks, to build a network of specialists where we can get back later with questions and collaboration proposals, and to return to our work richer and more erudite, more prepared for new and old. Of course, for the diaspora the conference was more than a common one, it was close to our hearts, it was the moment when our work and experience seemed to play an important role, also relevant for the ones at home, for Romania will remain for all of us, diaspora or Romania, home...Thank you!

We remained in contact with all the participants and we are ready to give effect to thoughts and plans made together. We will meet again soon and we won't let the hope perish, irrespective of circumstances. We are education specialists, researchers and friends.