

Quality Research at Higher Education Institutions

PhD. Prof. Nicolae Dură

Ovidius University of Constantza

In his paper presented at the Ministerial conference organised in Bucharest on 17-19 October 2011 by the Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding, with the support of European University Association and the Romanian National Committee for UNESCO, a university professor from Swinburne University of Technology declared that "... the role of the Bologna Declaration and its impact on the purpose of Higher Education is weak. While it may have founding principles of enhancing democracy, promoting cultural diversity and equality, its role in producing a global competitive advantage is dominating the practice of implementation and as global competition increases, there is a danger that the member states, institutions will compete more fiercely with each other than they even do presently"¹.

The same professor declared that "the changing role of the State in the governance of the University is shifting the funding base of universities in many member states, and the need for the third stream funding is increasing. Third stream funding is the one which is not derived from the traditional activities of teaching and research, (...), but is rather generated from industry and other external funding sources, including community engagement. The support proceeding from the states proves itself insufficient to sustain universities and, hence, they have to seek funding sources elsewhere. The success or otherwise of universities at achieving this is being labelled as their ability to be "entrepreneurial ..."².

Hence our colleague's question who asked the 47 Education Ministries gathered in the works of the Bucharest Conference the following question: "Is Bologna sustainable in the Future"? And according to the his answer: "It is difficult to see one at present as we sit in the depression stemming from the global financial crisis ... While the Accord was full of good intentions, it is not possible to isolate Europe from the rest of the world, and as the rest of the world is bigger, Europe could become expendable if it were to exclude itself. As such, the boundaries of Bologna could never be maintained with any long term integrity. While it may make movement for some students and staff easier, it cannot offer - concluded professor Eddie Blass from Melbourne University - anything exclusive and,

¹ Eddie Blass, *Is Bologna Sustainable in the Future? Future Testing the Bologna Principles*, in A. Curaj et. al., *European Higher Education*, vol. II, p. 1064.

² *Ibidem*, p. 1065.

hence, dissolves into the bigger picture of globalization and internationalization of higher education”³.

We understand from our Australian colleague that according to his cognition the impact of the Process of Bologna on the purpose of Higher Education is weak, and the general principles stated in the Bologna Declaration signed on June 19, 1999 are only enhancing the global competition among the member states higher education institutions; at the same time, the above-mentioned principles are isolating and producing some kind of regionalization of the European Union member states from the rest of the world from the educational system point of view, including the quality of education and research.

We should also keep in mind that the role of the State in the governance of the University is shifting the funding base of the Universities, and that their funds could rather be generated from industry or different entrepreneurs, resulting in the conclusion that the Bologna Process is not sustainable for the future.

Considering the critical yet objective approach, we could admit that our Australian colleague’s opinion expresses the truth to a certain extent; indeed, there are not few students, even professors, who took advantage from the Bologna Process, although we cannot be very pessimistic as regards its future. Therefore, the pages of our contribution will make reference to certain Documents regarding the higher education resulted from the Process initiated at Bologna, on the one hand, and the assertions of certain actors and personalities who produced comments on such documents, on the other hand, especially about the quality of this education and, obviously, about the quality of research, which is the topic of our present communication.

As it is known, in Austria and in Germany there is still a strong resistance to Bologna Process. Moreover, in these countries “student representatives reject the Bologna Process in principle. They are in particular opposed - said professor Hans Pechar from Wien – to the very concept of employability which in their view subordinates universities to the demands of the labor market”⁴.

At his turn, professor Roberto Moscati said - during the works of the same Conference, organized in Bucharest (October 2011) on the Future of Higher Education, - that the “humboldtian” university model turned out since “the university tasks have progressively changed because of the multiple use of scientific research and thanks to the development of the new kind of relations with several sectors of society globally included

³ Ibidem, p. 1069.

⁴ Hans Pechar, *The Decline of an Academic Oligarchy. The Bologna Process and ‘Humboldt’ last warriors*, in A. Curaj, op. cit., vol. II, p. 613.

in the so called “university third mission”, “or third stream”⁵, which certainly implies the ability of the Universities to be “entrepreneurial”.

In other words, the multiple use of scientific research and the new kind of relations established by the University with several sectors of society were the reasons which the Humboldtian university model was replaced by the Bologna Process. But, as the professor Moscati himself pointed out, “the managerial revolution” produced by the changes occurred in the University Governance “... is not convincing as the only paradigm for the government of public institutions and the traditional model of government still finds applications in particular in the sector of higher education where there are no pure forms of management and academic self-government and state regulations still carry considerable weight”⁶.

Other colleagues said that Bologna process - seen as a “knowledge society project” – has also “many difficulties and shortcomings”, amongst which “the funding policy ... The fact that financing is a severely undeveloped dimension on the European Higher Education Area may be linked to the fact that financing has not been made a part of the space for dialogue brought by the Bologna Process”⁷. Nevertheless, it is well known that without well designed policy we cannot have qualified research and, *ipso facto*, qualified higher education. However, some participants in the works of the same Conference pointed out that the “financial sustainability is not one of the key challenges for Europe’s universities today” and such challenges must be overrun “if Europe’s universities are to continue to provide high quality teaching and excellent research”⁸. Yet, we have to admit that without a good “funding policy” we can’t provide any high quality research.

What is the meaning of the expression “Quality Research”? Which is the policy of the European Union for the quality higher education and the quality research? What connection is there between these two realities found in the context of the Higher Education Institutions and the necessity of promoting the mobility of the students, PhD applicants and professors? What concrete measures have the competent European institutions implemented for the quality research? Which is the impact of the measures undertaken by the Speciality Commissions onto the activity of the Higher Education

⁵ Roberto Moscati, *University Governance in Changing European Systems of Higher Education*, in A. Curaj, op. cit., vol. II, p. 599.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 604.

⁷ L. Matei, *A Policy Gap : Financing in the European Higher Education Area*, in A. Curaj et. al., op. cit., vol. II, p. 689.

⁸ E. B. Pruvot and Th. Estermann, *European Universities Diversifying Income Streams*, in A. Curaj et. al., op. cit., vol. II, p. 713.

Institutions as regards the quality of research and, *ipso facto*, the quality assurance of such education?

Here we have some of the questions that stand in front of each one of us and which we have attempted to answer in the pages of the present communication, based on the documentary material of speciality, as well as the vision and orientation that our organisation (EURASHE, through our representatives) has effectively been involved in bringing to life the principles stated by the relevant European Union institutions.

The Research Quality is closely related to the quality of the higher education. Therefore, the first part of my paper includes a number of brief remarks on the manner that such quality has been understood and expressed within the pages of the Resolutions, Communications, etc., thus aiming at providing the integrating synthesis of the two modalities for underlining the quality in the Higher Education Institutions, i.e. The Quality Assurance in this kind of educational institutions and The Quality of the Research carried out by the PhD applicants and the research professors assisted by the Mobility Program.

Since 1990, quality agencies have been created in almost all Bologna signatories, and “... quality was introduced in Europe through the 1995 pilot project, which focused on programme evaluations”⁹.

The Bologna Process, which started in 1998-1999 with 29 countries and now involving 47 signatories, has led to the launch of the European Higher Education Area in 2010, in which the quality of the education and the quality of the research became ones of the main preoccupations of the European Higher Education Institutions.

On 24th September 1998, the European Council adopted a recommendation to develop European cooperation and networking in quality assurance in higher education and to promote the establishment of quality assurance agencies in member states¹⁰. Thus it was established The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), which initially, as a network, included governments representatives, and later, in 2004, as an association excluded the government representatives.

As it is known, “the change in status reflected the initial reluctance of member states to a European quality dimension, but as ENQA gained professional self-confidence it imposed the transition to an association in order to have a stronger voice in the Bologna Process”¹¹.

⁹ Andrée Sursock, *Quality Assurance and the European Transformational Agenda*, in A. Curaj et. al., *European Higher Education*, vol. I, p. 257.

¹⁰ Andrée Sursock, *Quality Assurance and the European Transformational Agenda*, ..., p. 254.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

In 2002, in order to be promoted internal quality assurance in universities, the European University Association, with European Commission funding support, launched the “Quality Culture” project, which was recognized in the Berlin Communiqué (Bologna Communiqués 2003). Indeed the Berlin Communiqué “recognized the primary role of higher education institution in monitoring quality ...”¹².

As some researchers remarked, the concepts of quality assurance and quality culture are sometimes used as synonyms, “which they, however, are not”¹³.

London Communiqué (Bologna Communiqués 2007) endorsed the proposal of setting up a European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR).

Among the indicators for quality, there is also the “research output”¹⁴. But, this “research output” differs from country to country, being in fact determined also by different national regulations.

Until the Conference organized in Bucharest on 17-19 October 2011 by the Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding, with the support of European University Association and the Romanian National Committee for UNESCO, in the Documents resulted from European Higher Education Area we only find the concepts of quality assurance and quality culture, which were sometimes “used as synonyms, which they, however, are not”¹⁵.

The concept of „Quality Research” has also been adopted and put into circulation, which is the object of our contribution, because the organizers of the EURASHE Seminar on Implementation of Internal and External Quality Assurance have integrated this concept in the organic relationship with the other two concepts, i.e. quality assurance and quality culture. Besides, all three kinds of quality, assurance, culture and research have to be articulated together, since they are intrinsically linked to the Bologna Process, and they were developed and adopted in the same context of the Conferences of the European Higher Education Ministers.

In 2005, the European Commission has issued The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, with “a set of general principles and requirements which specifies the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers as well as of employers and / or founders of researchers” (EC 2005).

¹² Andrée Sursock, *Quality Assurance and the European Transformational Agenda*, ..., p. 255.

¹³ Tia Loukkola, *A Snapshot on the Internal Quality Assurance*, in A. Curaj et. al., op. cit., vol. I, p. 304.

¹⁴ Achim Hopbach, *External Quality Assurance between European Consensus and National Agendas*, in A. Curaj et. al., op. cit., vol. I, p. 276.

¹⁵ Tia Loukkola, *op. cit.*, in A. Curaj et. al., op. cit., vol. I, p. 304.

In 2006, the Committee on Culture, Science and Education of the Council of the European Parliament unanimously adopted the Document no. 10943, in which, among others matters, stipulate that “academic freedom in research and in training should guarantee freedom of expression and of action, freedom of disseminating information, as well as freedom of unrestricted inquiry in the pursuit and distribution of knowledge and truth”¹⁶.

The academic freedom in research supposes therefore freedom of expression, i.e. freedom to disseminate information and to distribute knowledge and truth. Yet, what truth? That is the question, and the Commission of the European Parliament has to specify, because we are faced with the situation where specific education institutions, both particular and religious, claim – on the behalf of the truth they invoke – to be entitled to disseminate teachings that violate the public order, the moral laws and the good behaviour.

In 2008, the Council of the European Union endorsed the Commission Communication of the European Research Area, entitled “Better careers and more mobility: a European partnership for researchers”¹⁷.

Among others, the text of the Commission Communication stipulated:

- a) systematic opening up of recruitment for researchers;
- b) meeting the needs of mobile researchers with regard to social security and supplementary pensions;
- c) improvement in work and employment conditions in order to make scientific careers more attractive;
- d) improvement in the training, skills and experience of researchers.

These four key actions of the European Research Area have been integrated into the list of Commitments of the “Innovation Union”¹⁸, which considered by Peter van der Hijden¹⁹, as “one of the seven flagship initiatives, launched by the European Commission in 2010 – to implement the overall Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”²⁰.

Other flagship initiatives relevant to the mobility theme are “youth on the Move”²¹ and “new skills for New Jobs”²².

¹⁶ Council of Europe (2006). Doc. 10943. Academic freedom and university autonomy. At <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link/Documents/WorkingDocs/Doc06?EDOC10943>

¹⁷ 1367/08 Council of the European Union 1367/ 08, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st13/st1367.en08.pdf>

¹⁸ COM (2010) 546 final of 6. 10. 2010, <http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/pdf/innovation-union-communication-en.pdf>

¹⁹ He is from Skills Unit, Research and Innovation Directorate General, Brussels, Belgium.

²⁰ Peter van der Hijden, *Mobility key to the EHEA and ERA*, in A. Curaj et. al., op. cit., vol. I, p. 381.

²¹ http://ec.europa.eu/education/yom/com_en.pdf

In 2010, the same European Commission had decided that, in 2012, to propose a European Research Area framework and to support measures to remove obstacles to mobility and cross boarder cooperation, aiming for them to be in force by end 2014.

Certainly, for the accomplishment of these purposes, they have to act for the quality of doctoral training, attractive employment conditions and gender balance in research careers; for the mobility of researchers across countries and sectors, including through open recruitment in public research institutions and comparable research career structures and by facilitating the creation of European supplementary pension funds; for the cross-border operation of research performing organizations, funding agencies and foundations, including by ensuring simplicity and mutual coherence of funding rules and procedures, building on the work of stakeholders funding agencies and their representative organizations, for the dissemination, transfer and use of research results including through open access to publications and data from publicly funded research; for the opening of Member State operated research infrastructures to the full European user community; and for the consistency of EU and national strategies and actions for international cooperation in science and technology²³.

Certainly, so many projects cannot be easily materialized, but it is beyond any doubt that we cannot have the research quality without a quality of doctoral training, without a mobility of researchers across countries and sectors, without agencies and their representative organizations for the recruitment of the researchers in public research institutions, without the publication of the results of the scientific work and without a national and international strategy for a real cooperation in the field of scientific research.

About the Europe's principal research and innovation policy document, "Innovation Union 2020", it is said that this "identifies specifically the need for a common approach to doctoral training. The focus is on attracting more people to research in Europe and ensuring that the PhD is a stepping-stone to employment in the wide economy"²⁴.

This need for a common approach to doctoral training is also imposed by the fact that PhD. is a transition point from education to research. In fact, the PhD. it is internationally accepted qualification to enable the graduate to embark on a career in research. This reality is clearly identified in the various research career structures put in place by universities and funding agencies²⁵.

²² COM(2008)868 final of 16. 12. 2008,
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriSero/LexUriSero.do?uri=COM:2008:0868:FIN:EN:PDF>

²³ Peter van der Hijden, *op. cit.*, p. 381.

²⁴ Conor O'Carroll et al., *The PhD in Europe: Developing a System of Doctoral Training that will increase the internalization of Universities*, in A. Curaj et. al., *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 462.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

As it is known, developing a new system of doctoral training increases the internationalization of universities. But this internationalization is affected by many factors, among which the mobility of researchers.

This mobility of researchers across countries and sectors implies to assure to them “attractive working conditions”, “social security and pensions”²⁶, as the Bologna Ministers have stated in their 2009 Communiqué.

Finally, we remember that in March 2010, Ministers from the European Union Competitiveness Council - which is responsible for research – met with their counterparts from the Employment and Social Affairs Council to discuss point measures to promote the career and mobility of researchers²⁷.

Certainly, we have to see that after a couple of years we still are in the middle of the discussions regarding the need of taking proper measures in order to promote the mobility of the young researchers and the already acknowledged ones, in such a way that they can also take advantage of the financial incentives provided through the European framework Programme for Research, as well as for that of the Research Careers, which facilitated job search and mobility.

On 4th February 2010, the European Council of Heads of State and Government wanted “the European Research Area completed by 2010 to create a genuine single market for knowledge, research and innovation. In particular, efforts should be made to improve the mobility and career prospects of researchers, the mobility of graduate students and the attractiveness of Europe for foreign researchers”²⁸.

From my point of view, the issues pointed out by this Council merely remain “*pium desiderium*”, as there are no real possibilities regarding the creation of the genuine single market neither for knowledge, nor for research and innovation. Besides, we do not see any concrete conditions for promoting the mobility of the consecrated and young researchers, such as graduate students and PhD applicants. At the same time, it is well known that the present-day economical depression restricts the possibilities of such persons for taking advantage of research scholarships, to attend the works of specific Congresses, etc.

As regards the attractiveness of Europe for foreign researchers, it also remains (to a large extent) on the level of individual or collective desiderate.

²⁶ http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Leuven_Louvain-la-euve_Communique%20C3%A9_April_2009

²⁷ Peter van der Hijden, *op. cit.*, p. 382.

²⁸ EUCO2/1/11Rev 1 of 8 March 2010,

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/119175.pdf

The Sorbonne Declaration of 25 May 1998 asked “the creation of the European Area of Higher Education as a key way to promote citizens mobility and employability ...”²⁹.

After one year, the Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999 referred to citizens, mobility as well as the mobility of students, teachers, researches and administrative staff³⁰.

Among the ten Action Lines, which were agreed in the Bologna Declaration (2009), and the subsequent Prague (2001)³¹ and Berlin (2003)³² Communiqués, we find: “promotion of mobility” (no. 4); “Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance” (no. 5) and “Doctoral studies and the synergy between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area” (no. 10).

The promotion of the mobility and cooperation of EU Member States for Education Quality Assurance, PhD Research, and the synergy between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area have been included amongst the 10 Commandments of The Bologna Declaration in 2009.

The Communicate of Louven-la-Neuve stated in 2009 that the “... mobility shall be the hallmark of the European Higher Education Area”³³. The fact that such mobility of the students, professors, and researchers had not yet become the hallmark of the European Higher Education Area has also been mentioned in the Resolution of 15 June 2000 of the Council of Heads of State and Government; this document established the European Research Area and invited the Member States and the Commission to cooperate in order to “identify and take action with a view to removing present obstacles to the mobility of researches to facilitate the creation of a genuine European scientific community”³⁴.

It is well known that the drawbacks that lay in front of the researchers’ mobility have not been removed so far; at the same time, neither the creation of a genuine European scientific community has been facilitated.

That the European Research Area – established on the Council Resolution of 15 June 2000 - has a legal base on Treaty of Lisbon (The Treaty on the Functioning of the EU), approved by 27 States on 13 December 2007. According to the Article 179 of this Treaty “The Union shall have the objective of strengthening its scientific and technological bases by achieving a European research area in which researches, scientific knowledge and

²⁹ http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/SORBONNE_DECLARATION1.pdf

³⁰ http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/BOLOGNA_DECLARATION1.pdf

³¹ For the Prague Communiqué, see: http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Prague_Communique.pdf

³² http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Berlin_Communique1.pdf

³³ http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Leuven_Louvain-la-Neuve_Communique%20C3%A9_April_2009.pdf

³⁴ 2000/C 205/01,

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2000:205:0001:0003:EN:PDF>

technology circulate freely (...), aiming, notably at permitting researches to cooperate freely across borders (...)"³⁵.

As Peter van der Hijden remarked, „there cannot be an European Higher Education Area when students are not free to leave their place and study abroad, in particular for degree mobility. The European Research Area cannot function when researchers are held hostage by local and national systems due to lack of open recruitment or rigged pension provisions”³⁶.

One of the major drawbacks of the mobility is the lack of financial support. This is because it is not in all countries that the professors and researchers afford undertaking scientific research activities in foreign countries. In other words, they are not free to go from one place to another. Therefore, the EU Policy should not hide such realities, and ask the Governments of such countries to include the research on the priorities of their agendas, because „a well functioning knowledge society requires a free flow of knowledge, students, teachers, researchers and knowledge workers in general”³⁷.

As professor Peter Scott (University of London) said, the Conference of Bologna researchers held in Bucharest in October 2011 demonstrated that “... it is difficult to distinguish between research on Bologna topics and research on European higher education more broadly. Everything, potentially, is connected with everything else”³⁸.

This reality has also been pointed out by the fact that the “final list” of Bologna principles and their “full implementation” has been established within the Conference, instead of engaging “... a discussion on the reality and new challenges of higher education beyond 2010, including testing and debating its foundations, its principles”³⁹. Indeed, certain participants in the works of the Bucharest Conference wondered if we should consider these “Principles” some kind of “Bologna Philosophy”. Indeed, we should wonder that it is or it is not possible to deviate from such “principles”; we should also ask ourselves if we are not considering the principles as fetishes and transforming them into taboos and dogmas. Anyway, the principles “have changed over the years and continue to change”⁴⁰, hence the necessity to review the existing principles from time to time.

³⁵ 2000/C 205/01,
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2000:205:0001:0003:EN:PDF>

³⁶ Peter van der Hijden, *op. cit.*, p.378.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ P. Scott, *Going Beyond Bologna: Issues and Themes*, in A. Curaj et al., *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 2.

³⁹ Pavel Zgaga, *Reconsidering the EHEA Principles: Is there a “Bologna Philosophy”?*, in A. Curaj et al., *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 32.

⁴⁰ A. Corbett, *Principles, Problems, Politics ... What does the historical record of EU cooperation in higher education, ”?*, in A. Curaj et al., *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 54.

Among others, about the official documents of the Bologna decade 1999/2010, - in which we find a real development of the fundamental items regarding the European Higher Education Area, but not the content stated by the fundamental principles of the Bologna Magna Charta Universitatum of 1988 (Ministers 1999), which has also been "... routed only in a particular European context"⁴¹.

The "final list" of the Principles of the European Higher Education Area has been fixed by the Ministerial Conference held in Bucharest on 17-19 October 2011, to which other seven themes have been added, aiming at stating "the results of Bologna – related research ..."⁴².

The seven themes were:

1. Learning and teaching
2. Quality Assurance
3. Governance
4. Funding
5. Differentiation
6. Mobility
7. Foresight.

Among others, it has also been stated that the efforts of the participants in the works of The Bucharest Conference have not been limited to establishing "the final list" of the European Higher Education Area, but "to maintain an open and productive debate about European higher education"⁴³.

In other words, we should not fetishize the principles or themes; all we have to do is to analyse and evaluate on critical and objective basis their contents and to make the comparison with the present-day realities. Hence, the necessity of making ourselves free from dogmatic understanding, as the European higher education, including Quality Research, is based on the continuous process of comparing and aligning our thinking to the realities of the day.

As underlined in The Bucharest Conference, "there is a need for Bologna to become a more systematic and more open process-more systematic, because the synergies that already exist and the potential for new connections need to be better recognised; and more open, because "Bologna" (as a policy theme and a symbol or "brand") offers European higher education a vital space for dialogue"⁴⁴.

⁴¹ Pavel Zgaga, *Reconsidering the EHEA Principles ...*, p. 20.

⁴² P. Scott, *Going Beyond Bologna ...*, p. 10.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

Even today the specialists take into discussion the so-called differentiation between universities of the European State, which is the consequence of the “growing awareness of the importance of global ranking of universities and also increasing pressure to differentiate institutional missions”⁴⁵. Establishing the hierarchy of the universities should mainly consider the criterion of the Research Quality in the Higher Education Institutions, not the number of students and professors, geo-political importance of the specific city or country, political or economical reach, etc. Therefore, I consider that our organisation EURASHE should keep on bringing the major contribution towards the implementation of the new orientation for establishing the hierarchy of the Higher Education Institutions, mainly because many famous Universities with important human resources in Research Quality have been excluded from the top of the 500 most important ones. Certainly, I have in view the Universities that have been activating for centuries within the area of the Byzantine culture, where the studies and researches in Philosophy, Theology, Law, History, etc. have brought important contribution in the quality of the scientific research.

The level of perceived barriers to mobility “varies between countries and nations. While the European citizens frequently indicate law funding and family and partnership reasons as the barriers to mobility, for foreign doctoral candidates, alongside to funding, the visa problem remains one of the strongest obstacles”⁴⁶.

Last but not least, the classification of the Universities in certain states has been based on their quality in research and teaching. Thus, in Romania⁴⁷, for example, the Universities were classified in three classes: universities focused on teaching, universities focused on teaching and research, and research intensive universities.

We still have to see if such a classification does or does not fit to our higher education system, because many times the classification and hierarchy are subjective and arbitrary, seldom motivated by the political influence.

The promoting mobility among students and professors has also been taken into discussion in The Bucharest Conference, but still the level of this mobility is less imperative. This is why I consider that EURASHE should come up with concrete proposals and even with its own strategy that covers such aspects. Thus, the Euro-Centrist vision promoted by The Bologna Process could be outrun.

Concluding Remarks

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

⁴⁶ S. Krstič, *Internalization and Competitiveness of Universities through different types of researches, mobility-facing the future*, in A. Curaj et. al., op. cit., vol. I, p. 518.

⁴⁷ A. Miron and L. Vlasceanu, *Relating Quality and Funding: The Romanian Case*, in A. Curaj et. al., op. cit., vol. II, p. 804.

The main objective of our paper was that to speak about the Quality Research at Higher Education Institutions as it is perceived in the context of recent European policy.

As we have noticed, after this perception the Quality Research at Higher Education Institutions is strongly interrelated with others issues, which concerns the Quality Assurance, Quality Culture, Mobility of researchers across countries etc. Therefore, when we speak about the Quality research at higher education Institutions, we should also have in mind the interdependence between such institutions and the surrounding realities, because it is only this holistic approach that allows the better understanding of the genesis and evolution of such realities, as well as their impact on the European Higher Education.

From the pages of my paper, the competent reader will understand that the European Policy (especially as regards the measures applied in the Research Quality) has certain deficiencies; therefore, our organisation EURASHE has to bring more actively his contribution through our leaders and members – experienced and illustrious researcher-teachers. At the same time, our Conference, which follows the guideline approach launched by the Ministerial Conference held in Bucharest in October, offers the possibility to interact and to contribute to the political process shaping the European Higher Education Area, which includes among others elements, Research Quality.