

Another academic year in an educational system without direction

On the occasion of the beginning of the new academic year, the **National Alliance of Student Organizations in Romania (ANOSR)**, which represents romanian students both at national and international level, wishes a successful and prolific year to all members of the university communities. However, we would like to bring forward the main topics of the educational system that should be improved in order to align the Romanian university system with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) standards.

ANOSR is raising concerns that this is **the second academic year in a row without an assigned Minister of Education**. This, together with the lack of continuity, vision and consistency in decision making processes, but also the adoption of discretionary measures, caused by **the change of 28 ministers in the past 30 years**, builds up the state of fact in higher education nowadays. Thus, one of the biggest problems continues to be, for 8 years now, **the chronic underfunding of education**, which disrupts the harmonious evolution of quality in education and, therefore, both the professional and personal development of the direct beneficiaries.

In the context in which this academic year will be held a new Ministerial Conference in which the future of the Bologna Process will be decided, Romania lags behind with the implementation of the current lines of action. Although student-centered learning should be a priority, both in public policies and in the measures adopted by higher education institutions, still no normative act in the educational field clearly defines this concept. Student-centered learning involves the use of innovative teaching methods, a collaborative relationship between the teacher and student. in order to support the achievement of predicted learning outcomes, while **students are seen as active participants in their own learning process**.

Ethics and academic integrity are topics that have been neglected by the university communities in Romania for a long time, due to lack of transparency and general disinterest. This is mainly because there were occupants of public dignity positions who plagiarized their doctoral theses. In this respect, **ANOSR has advocated for and succeeded in introducing the courses of ethics and university deontology for all study cycles**, which are optional for bachelor programs and mandatory for masters and PhD. Still, the efforts to popularize and respect the right ethics and integrity principles do not stop here, taking into consideration **the major importance of developing a culture of ethics**.

A phenomenon with a major social impact among graduates of higher education, which is **"brain drain"**, mainly due to the lack of access of graduates to quality jobs and personal development opportunities, but also to the poor quality of life in Romania, have led to the massive loss of qualified human capital. In order to reduce the rate of graduates leaving the country after completing their studies in order to define their professional career

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abroad, **ANOSR is constantly campaigning for higher investments in scientific and technological infrastructure and for updating the curricula of the study programs**, in order to comply with the students' needs and to increase their relevance as innovation arises in each field of study becomes, while complying with the aims of higher education defined by the Council of Europe: preparation for the labor market, preparation for active citizenship, supporting the personal development of students and creating a large base of advanced knowledge alongside stimulating research and innovation students.

Another priority in education for which **ANOSR** militates year by year is the **social dimension**, through which policies of equity and access to education should be implemented addressed to the categories of students from disadvantaged backgrounds or underrepresented categories. We note that in the previous academic year **no dormitory for students was completed**, considering the fact that the **current number of accommodation places is only sufficient for 23.96%** of the approximately 449,350 students. Also, there were no massive investments in student housing, the current conditions not complying with the imposed public health norms. At the same time, **ANOSR supports the assurance of equal rights and opportunities** for each person who wishes to attend university studies, considering that Romania is in the last place at European level in terms of the share of the population aged 25-64 graduated higher education.

As **education is considered a national priority**, increasing the quality of the teaching act must be a permanent goal for decision makers in the educational field and the university community, and the implementation of any measures to solve the current problems must be transparent, grounded and coherent, so that they meet the real needs of the system. Thus, ANOSR is fighting for the defense of rights, representing the interests of the students and will continue the efforts to increase the development of higher education.

"Despite the fact that we are facing a worrying situation regarding the education system, starting from the fact that we do not have, once again, an occupier of the position of minister, to underfunding education or failing to implement European strategies in the domestic education system, ANOSR will continue to fight to provide Romanian students with access to optimal conditions for learning and development in our universities. " - **Petrișor-Laurențiu ȚUCĂ, president of ANOSR.**

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