

## THE EUROPEANISATION OF UNIVERSITIES

Interview with Professor *ANDREI MARGA*,  
Rector of the “Babeş - Bolyai” University, Cluj - Napoca

1. Mr. Rector *Andrei Marga*, you’ve recently come back from the European Rectors’ Conference (The European Universities’ Association), which was held at Santiago de Compostela University in Spain. What are the results of this Conference ?

*Andrei Marga*: The European Universities’ Association is an advisory organisation of the European Union, the principal organization concerned with university subjects. Decisions from the Rectors’ Conferences are to be found in all options of European university politics. On the other hand, these decisions are based on the expertise of institutions specialising in university development and, of course, on highly consistent debates. The general aim, the starting point of the Association and of the European Union, too, is the acknowledgement of the essential role of universities in the formation of social leaders and in generating scientific research - in modernized societies.

The annual conference at Santiago de Compostela, focused on a crucial aspect of university reform, which was initiated in 1992 at Bonn, namely, the innovative management of universities. As a representative from the European Union, pointed out eloquently, the 80s were a “joke” as compared with these present years, considering the requirements of a society addressed towards universities and “challenges” due to the digital revolution, globalization and the new economy of world knowledge. Without innovation, European universities cannot face these requirements and “challenges” and the innovative service of universities cannot work without specialized management and, even more so, without competent leaders. The Conference at Santiago identified resistance to change in universities (the fear of lose of position, reorganisation of disciplines): it established practical correlations between strategic planning and strategic development, between strategic visions, working practices and tactical coordination.

Then, focusing on three requirements - continuous and lasting development together with Europeanisation - the session outlined the operational components of these routes of university development, which

will integrate more profoundly universities with their cultural surroundings. Thanks to the contributions from the heads of the European Union, the process of Europeanisation of universities has been specified commencing with the needs of professions' "common market" and the increased mobility of the young generation. The inter - connection between universities' national, regional, European and overall undertakings, the creation of a European dimension through institutional contracts, the creation of a common curriculum between universities, the attainment of linguistic competence, the route towards transferrable credits and the consolidation of professionalism have also been specified.

2. There has been much talk about university reform in our country, too. How do you regard the actual state of Romanian universities, from the point of view of the European options available now ?

*Andrei Marga* : No university can be treated in a static way any more, without losses. A dynamic management is crucial, but this is almost impossible in our country. Many leaders restrain their activities to tactical coordination, without ever employing working practices and strategic visions. And, what's more, there is a continuous self - flattery in our country. But, nowadays, only the poor ride the high horse. The rich favour merciless criticism and an atmosphere of change through the practice of intelligent creation. I think that the universities cannot be wholly exempted from the responsibility for the poverty of the country (Romania will continue to be one of the poorest countries in Europe!), because of its precarious technical substructure, for the poor circulation of information and dissemination of modern culture, for the superficial nature of religiousness and reduced intellectual production (Romania will continue to be, as it was in the period between the two world wars and in previous decades, one of the European countries with the smallest export of specialized literature!). Of course, there are individual scientific performances of a high standard. But, to be truthful, the burden of intellectual contribution in our country is shouldered by only a few people.

But, to give a more direct answer, I'd say that university reform, which is more an individual enterprise depending on the stature of an academic leader, has to be undertaken systematically, from a position of

real responsibility. To idealize the past is no solution, for, frankly, universities in the period between the two world wars had their faults, too. The perpetuation of the present leads to anachronisms. We need reform and this means, above all, to match the university's curricula with that of European universities' curricula, to relaunch our own scientific research, to subsidize it anew, to initiate university investments again and to computerize activities. It also means university autonomy controlled by criteria of performance, a new interaction between universities and the economy, as well as the incorporation of a Euroamerican universities' network.

3. What's the position of the "Babeş - Bolyai" University with regard to its reformation within the European coordinate system ?

*Andrei Marga* : In December 1989, the **University Democracy** movement launched a program to eradicate the effects of communism in universities. The **Charta of the "Babeş - Bolyai" University** was adopted in 1992. It expressed the attachment of Cluj University to the European tradition of free thinking and democratic ways. The new **Charta of the "Babeş - Bolyai" University** (1995) absorbed the modernization of the organization and functions of the University after 1989 and chose the options necessary for a university of performance matched in with the European system of today. Like other classical universities, the image of "Babeş - Bolyai" University isn't one from the past, neither recent nor from long ago. In order to perceive the proportions of the problem one has to bear in mind that the "Babeş - Bolyai" University attained in 1995 parameters unprecedented in the history of Cluj universities and attained them at every stage of university development: number of students, specializations and faculties, linguistic diversifications, number of postgraduate students, scientific production and speciality contributions, presence in the international circuit, Euroamerican cooperation, international mobility of specialists and students, international libraries and lectureships, integration with international associations and so on. Because of its rapid development, "Babeş - Bolyai" University is considered to be one of the most dynamic universities from Romania and from this part of

Europe. Nevertheless, the time has come to elaborate a project of institutional development.

Therefore, the Rector's Office has drawn up the project entitled **Institutional Development of "Babeş - Bolyai" University in 1996 - 2000**, the first such attempt in Romanian universities, a project destined to bring to an end the reform of matching the university with European ones and to place it firmly in the structure of European performance on its own account.

4. What is the novelty of the **Institutional Development of "Babeş - Bolyai" University in 1996 - 2000** ?

*Andrei Marga* : The **Institutional Development of "Babeş - Bolyai" University in 1996 - 2000** commences from structures authorized at present, but itself adds new components. I shall mention a few. New departments with double specialization (law - economy, law - modern languages a.s.o.) will be set up; the Arts, Law and European Studies departments will reorganize themselves in order to prepare the premises of Romania's European integration. There will be transversal departments, structures of interdisciplinary research and administering post - university preparation (The National Synthesis Department, The Department of Contemporary Research, The Department of Continuous Formation and Distance Learning, The American Studies Department, The Department of Poll and Prognostication a.s.o.). The university will enter into a contract with European universities in order to implement transferrable credits and the use of the "Socrates" programmes. The curriculum, the courses and seminars will be in accordance with the system of the European Union; excellency centers of the university will be delimited and performance departments will reorganize themselves as institutions of scientific research. Participation in international research programmes will be a criterion of evaluation and financing. The **Office of Academic Self - Evaluation**, which appeals to internal and external evaluators, will be set up. Every Department will be connected to the Internet and, from 1998 on, students will get an entrance card to the Internet after the entrance exam. The **curriculum** of every faculty will be accessible to the public, on OPACs in the library. Scholarships will be diversified, hostels will change

to “two in a room” system and canteens to a **fast - food** system. The **Bureau of Regional Accomodation**, the **Bureau of Public Relations**, the **International Transport Park** of the “Babeş - Bolyai” University will be set up. There will be taxes on all activities that exceed the constitutional principle of the gratuity of universities. The position of professor will be equal with that of the manager of an institution; the employment of professors from other countries as well as temporary posts will become possible. The number of years spent in a given job will be cancelled as a criterion of taking up posts. The licence diploma will include communicative abilities in two modern languages. International mobility will become a condition of accepting positions in the field of teaching and research. International cooperation will be undertaken by departments and faculties. All technical services of the university will take over the role of consultation and expertise. Secretarial and office staff will undergo training in the system of European mobility. Cooperation will commence in the form of Euroamerican networks. There will be “open days” for the countries with which the university cooperates. Special forms of actions will be developed for regional cooperation, Europeanisation and globalization. The income of the staff will depend on performance. “Babeş - Bolyai” University will plead for the promotion of universities in the budgetary hierarchy. It will enhance the supplement of incomes through research contracts, the opening of offices and consultancy services and expertise as well as through other services. The senate will develop projects of improving university legislation in the country under the auspices of modernization, compatibility and European integration.

*(June, 1996)*