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*Performance in Research, Performance in Teaching – Quality, Diversity, and
Innovation in Romanian Universities Project*

“Carol I” National Defence University in Bucharest

EVALUATION REPORT

April 2013

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Performance
in Higher Education





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1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of “Carol I” National Defence University (NDU) in Bucharest. The evaluation took place in 2012/2013 in the framework of the project “Performance in Research, Performance in Teaching – Quality, Diversity, and Innovation in Romanian Universities”, which aims at strengthening core elements of Romanian universities, such as their autonomy and administrative competences, by improving their quality assurance and management proficiency.

The evaluations are taking place within the context of major reforms in the Romanian higher education system, and specifically in accordance with the provisions of the 2011 Law on Education and the various related normative acts.

While the institutional evaluations are taking place in the context of an overall reform, each university is assessed by an independent IEP team, using the IEP methodology described below.

1.1. The Institutional Evaluation Programme

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA) that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture. The IEP is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

The distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are:

- a strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase
- a European and international perspective
- a peer-review approach
- a support to improvement

The focus of the IEP is the institution as a whole and not the individual study programmes or units. It focuses upon:

- decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management;
- relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision-making and strategic management as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms.



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The evaluation is guided by four key questions, which are based on a ‘fitness for (and of) purpose’ approach:

- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does it know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

1.2. “Carol I” National Defence University and the national context

The “Carol I” National Defence University (hereafter NDU) began life as the High War School in 1889; it was granted its present name in 2005. Though its main campus is in Bucharest, there is one department in Brasov, namely the regional department for defence resources management studies.

NDU is part of the Romanian higher education system, which comprises 112 public and private higher education institutions. Similar to all other public universities, it is regulated by the Romanian higher education law. On the one hand this provides for self-government and the development and implementation of its own policies and strategies. On the other hand, this law also clearly regulates the influence of governmental and administrative bodies on NDU, such as the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport (Ministerul Educației, Cercetării, Tineretului și Sportului), the Executive Agency for Higher Education and Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI) and the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS). The bodies set, for instance, the standards to be implemented in the design of study programmes or have an impact on the recruitment of academic staff.

NDU is special in that it belongs to the seven military higher education institutions established in Romania. It has therefore, in contrast to the civilian universities, whether public or private, an additional authority to answer to, i.e. the Ministry of National Defence (Ministerul Aparării Naționale). This situation creates constraints and challenges especially if standards and requirements of the two major authorities, i.e. the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of National Defence, seemingly contradict each other.

In compliance with the Law on Education of January 2011, all higher education institutions were classified by UEFISCDI in 2011 and ranked into classes of twelve advanced research universities, thirty teaching and research universities and forty-eight teaching universities. NDU was classified in the second group as a teaching and research university. Moreover, NDU’s study programmes received a “high degree of confidence rating” when ARACIS completed its evaluation in 2010, which also included a review by an international expert.



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Similar to the two authorities on the national level, there are two entities on the international level which have an impact on teaching and research at NDU, i.e. the Bologna Process and NATO. Romania signed the Bologna declaration in 1999 and a national law was adopted in 2004 to assist universities in the implementation of the principles and objectives, with which NDU complied. Romania's accession to NATO in 2004 had an equally decisive factor on the armed forces in general as well as teaching and research of military and national security and intelligence sciences at NDU.

NDU had a student body of 2 721 in the academic year 2011/2012. Though no students attended Bachelor programmes due to a decision by the Ministry of National Defence, 523 participated in Master programmes and 338 were working on their PhD theses. The majority of students, i.e. 1 860, were registered for postgraduate courses. As postgraduate courses run for a substantially shorter period of time, these 1 860 correspond to 781 full-time students, and thus the overall number of 2 721 to 1 642 full-time students.¹ Of the overall 2 721 students, the military student body amounted to 2 122 students (approximately 78%); 310 were civilian students employed by government (approximately 11.5%) and 289 civilian students outside government employment (approximately 10.5%). The students were taught by 86 members of academic teaching staff, approximately 50% military staff and 50% civilian staff. In 2012, the budget of NDU comprised approximately 33.4 million lei, with 30.15 million lei being provided by the state and 3.25 million lei originating from NDU's own-resources budget in the form of 2.5 million lei earned via tuition fees and 0.75 million lei from scientific research grants.

1.3. The self-evaluation process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by a group (SEG) of five professors, five associate professors, a lecturer and an expert, who convened regularly every week. NDU deliberately selected more than the recommended number of participants in order to allow a larger number of opinions to be expressed and considered. The necessity and usefulness of the self-evaluation was readily acknowledged by the SEG. However, selecting and harmonising contradicting information proved to be the greatest challenge in the self-evaluation process. Though students were not included in the SEG, their response was welcome during the period when the report was made available to the entire academic community. The Self-Evaluation Report (SER)² received little adverse comment from the university community, which in the view of the SEG reflected positively on the quality of the draft document. The exercise of

¹ 523 Master students + 338 PhD students + 1 860 postgraduate students = 2 721 students; 523 Master students + 338 PhD students + 781 full-time equivalent of postgraduate students = 1 642 full-time equivalent of students

² "Carol I" National Defense University, 2012 institutional self-evaluation report. Bucharest. The page numbers stated in this report relate to the printed version.



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drafting the SER, including the SWOT analysis, had the beneficial effect of enabling NDU to detect its major objectives for the near future.

As a result of this process, the team was provided with a self-evaluation report (SER) of 31 pages and appendices amounting to 160 pages. The SER as such adhered to the IEP methodology as stipulated in the guidelines and covered not only information related to the four key questions but also a detailed SWOT analysis and a remedial plan in order to overcome the weaknesses. The numerous appendices, including fundamental documents such as the University Charter of April 2012 or the Strategic Plan 2009-2014 of July 2009, organograms, statistics related to the student body, the financial situation, internal evaluation results as well as the previous evaluation by ARACIS, substantiated and supported the information provided in the SER.

1.3. The evaluation team (later the team)

The self-evaluation report of NDU along with the appendices was sent to the evaluation team in October 2012. The two visits of the evaluation team to NDU took place from 27 to 29 November 2012 and from 18 to 21 February 2013 respectively. In between the visits NDU provided the evaluation team with additional documentation related to financial figures, more detailed information on the different groups of the student body, several documents related to quality management and assurance, including information on the recently drafted quality manual. This supplementary information arrived well on time and was valuable in the preparation for the second visit.

The evaluation team consisted of:

- Jean-Louis Vanherweghem, former Rector of the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium, team chair
- David M. Vincent, former Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Strategy and External Affairs at the Open University, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom
- Nadja Kiiskinen, PhD student, University of Helsinki, Finland
- Dorthe G.A. Hartmann, Course Director and Instructor in English for Specific Purposes, University of Greifswald, Germany, team coordinator

The team would like to express its sincere thanks to NDU's Rector Professor Teodor Frunzeti as well as the Vice-Rectors Professor Bucinschi and Professor Roceanu for the welcome and hospitality provided during their two visits.

Special thanks are also offered to Mr. Chiriac, MA, Expert at the International Relations Office of NDU and liaison person for the team, for his excellent preparation and support before and during the visits. Thanks are also due to the members of the self-evaluation group as well as



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all staff and students of NDU whom the team met and could discuss relevant matters in an open and constructive way. Thanks are also extended to the military stakeholders and civilian partners who were prepared to meet the team and thus gave the team an insight into NDU from a rather different angle.



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2. Governance and institutional decision-making

2.1. Norms, values, mission, goals

As stated in the Preamble of the University Charta of April 2012 and repeated in the SER, “Carol I is a public military higher education institution, part of the national education system and subordinate to the Ministry of National Defense”. (SER, App., p. 127; SER, p. 7). Thus, it is part of two usually rather separate systems, i.e. of the educational as well as the military systems in Romania, a status it shares with only a small percentage of the higher education institutions in Romania, namely the six military academies.

NDU’s mission is, pursuant to the University Charter,

to teach and train commanding officers, military and civilian experts at a high level in order to skilfully perform their duties in the field of “*Military sciences, intelligence and public order*” (SER, App., p. 65)

as well as

to ensure high professional training to the personnel from the Ministry of Defence, from the national security and defence system or from other public, national or foreign institutions and organisations. (SER, App., p. 65)

This mission is reflected in the Strategic Plan for 2009-2014 of July 2009, which places equal emphasis on both phases of the life-long learning process — basic instruction as well as continuous training in defence and national security. In addition, it focuses on scientific research and NDU’s further integration into the national and international educational space as two major parts of its mission (SER, App., p. 127). All four aspects were repeatedly addressed during the visits to NDU as strengths or opportunities to be further developed.

Regarding norms, the team learned that, based on NDU’s twofold status as a military educational institution, educational as well as military and national as well as international principles and provisions need to be adhered to. Due to the fact that NDU is subordinated to the department of national defence, norms set by the general staff are as relevant as those provided by NATO and mediated by the Ministry of National Defence. The educational norms comprise the Romanian Law on Education and the Bologna Process on the national and international levels respectively. To find a balance between these often contradictory norms is generally seen as a challenge to if not a constraint upon the fulfilment of NDU’s mission.

NDU has been in a process of reform during the last two years. Structural plans have been developed to organise NDU as well as Romanian military education more efficiently and effectively. One plan is an internal merger of all departments that are still separate entities



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into a second faculty, which will head these departments; at present, there is one faculty comprising four departments and five individual departments. The other plan is to merge all military educational institutions of Romania under the auspices of NDU.

Both plans have been promoted with great effort, though it became apparent to the team during their visits that the more autonomously NDU can act, the easier it is for the university to accomplish its goals. As a result, the first plan has nearly been completed and only the last steps need to be taken in order for the new faculty to start work in April 2013 and for the study programmes of the former separate departments to be reorganised before the programmes and courses start in October 2013. The second faculty will be beneficial firstly in that procedures will be harmonised throughout NDU as its departments will be able to apply procedures similar to those of the departments of the first faculty. Harmonising education within NDU will also enable the university to develop and promote an overall plan for the national military educational system.

The last remark relates to the second structural plan, the external merger. As the team learned in meetings with the rector and the SEG, NDU considers itself to be the leading university in military education in Romania. As such, it needs to be proactive in developing the national military educational system, which would also increase its own external visibility. Very much promoted by NDU, the plan to merge all the military educational institutions and have those institutions become faculties of NDU was strongly supported by the general staff. However, at the time of the second visit, the team was told that the plan, which was first formulated seven years ago, was temporarily suspended.

If accomplished, all three cycles, i.e. Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes as well as postgraduate courses will be offered at only one consolidated institution. As far as the subjects and methodologies are concerned, the team was told that such an institution would be beneficial to students and graduates in that they obtain a more comprehensive and holistic view on the subject as common issues and methodologies could be detected and implemented more easily. Nevertheless, branch-specific criteria would equally be taken into consideration and developed in the faculties. Thus, this institution would profit from the synergic effects, on the one hand, but would also ensure the specificities of each branch at the same time.

Besides the structural plans, NDU pursues goals that have a direct impact on civilian society. One major concern is to enlarge the body of civilian students at NDU, though it is essential to understand here that the phrase "civilian students" does not necessarily refer only to civilians proper but could also include civilian employees of the Ministry of National Defence, of the ministry of the interior or other governmental and administrative bodies. Still, as the team learned, NDU has become attractive to civilian students more broadly because of the



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approachability of the staff as well as their technical expertise and NDU's student-centred teaching. Furthermore, NDU intends to expand its cooperation with non-military universities to promote a holistic approach to the subjects covered.

2.2. Governance and activities

Management structure

NDU follows a conventional university management structure, thereby complying with the statutory provisions of the Romanian Law on Education of 2011. The University Charter distinguishes between management structures and management positions. The former comprise the Senate, the Board of Trustees, which corresponds to the administrative council stipulated in the Law on Education, and boards on the different levels of the hierarchical structure of management from the Faculty Board to the Department Boards. Responsibilities are clearly defined and depend on the level in the hierarchical structure the respective body belongs to. In addition, there are numerous boards and committees, in which staff is encouraged to participate. Student involvement in bodies of self-government is explicitly supported, and students, as the team understood, are very much independent in the organisation of their elections.

Regarding the management positions, the rector is at the head followed by the vice-rectors, the dean and the department directors as well as directors of separate academic and administrative entities, such as, for instance, the director of the doctoral school and the general administrative director. What is exceptional about NDU's highest management position, i.e. the rector, is the fact that, similar to all military educational institutions, he is also the commandant of the university. Once he has been elected by the Senate, he is appointed commandant by the Ministry of National Defence. This very particular situation may impair the legally requisite balance inside the governance between the Senate's line with the president of the Senate and the rector's line with his board of trustees. However, the case has not occurred at NDU up to now due to the goodwill of the partners.

National requirements

As a military institution, NDU is supposed to respond to military national requirements in respect of curricula, student recruitment and selection of staff. Regarding the first issue, most of the programmes and postgraduate courses are established at the request of the Ministry of National Defence. If NDU takes the initiative itself, its proposal needs to be approved by the ministry. The general staff as well as the human resources department of the ministry set the educational requirements. NDU develops the programme accordingly. Finally, ARACIS needs to accredit the new study programme and stipulates the number of students to be admitted to the programme, which means that NDU cannot, for instance, autonomously raise the number of students for any specific award. Though an autonomous public institution,



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ARACIS was established by government ordinance and thus reflects the position of government if not the Ministry of Education. All in all, it is the requirements and stipulations by the two authorities that guide NDU in its establishment of study programmes.

Turning to the second issue, the recruitment of students, it is once again the Ministry of National Defence that initiates the recruitment by advertising the places on the programmes via the military intranet and pre-selects the candidates. NDU conducts entrance examinations and selects the successful candidates. Here, they are free not to admit all candidates to the programme even though there may be sufficient places. From the students' point-of-view, attendance of study programmes and postgraduate courses is closely linked to their military and academic careers, though personal development is also an incentive. Whereas the Master programmes as well as the postgraduate courses are essential for advancement in the military career, the PhD degree is a prerequisite for joining the academic staff of NDU and starting a teaching career.

Considering the third aspect, the recruitment of staff, candidates are drawn from the armed forces, with the great majority of them being NDU graduates, as well as civil society, the latter also comprising retired officers. Prospective military academic staff needs to fulfil two classes of requirements. On the one hand, their qualifications need to comply with the stipulations of the Law on Education, which means that they are required to hold a PhD as well as have published a set number of publications. On the other hand, they must have obtained a specific military rank in order to be considered for a position of teaching staff at NDU. There are also budgetary constraints which affect especially military academic staff. The ministry of defence determines the salary to be paid to military academic staff, which is rather limited in comparison to the payment in the army proper. There is no room to manoeuvre for NDU to raise the salary and thereby attract more officers to teaching and research at NDU. Civilian academic staff, on the other hand, can be paid a higher salary, though still rather limited. The fixed state budget, allocated by the Ministry of National Defence, cannot be supplemented by NDU from its own resources to the extent that it might wish. This is because the admission of fee-paying students in addition to budgeted students, who need not pay tuition fees, is restricted by the number of students allowed on each programme. As a result of these multiple requirements for employment as well as budgetary constraints, NDU currently cannot fill all teaching positions.

Finance

As indicated in the previous paragraph, NDU is mainly dependent on the state budget, which constitutes 90% of the entire NDU budget. Contrary to civilian universities that are allocated financial resources on the basis, primarily, of student capita, NDU receives a line-item budget by the Ministry of National Defence on a fixed annual rate basis irrespective of student



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numbers. The payment of all military and civilian personnel as well as the maintenance of the buildings are supposed to be covered by this budget.

Consequently, NDU's own resources represent only 10% in the university's entire budget. There are two resources from which NDU can draw: fees from non-budgeted students as well as funding of research projects, both nationally and internationally. Whereas the number of fee-paying students is restricted by external factors, as illustrated above, research funding is also rather limited as competition is high. The team learned that it has been rather challenging to secure research funding lately with a low success rate for applications.

2.3. Quality assessment practices

When meeting members of the Board of the Internal Audit and of the Board for Quality Assurance and Assessment, the team was introduced to the wide scope of auditing taking place at NDU. The Board of the Internal Audit covers fourteen different areas, including institutional and administrative structures as well as finance. Consequently, the area of governance and institutional decision-making is regularly monitored and recommendations are provided.

Members of the Board of the Internal Audit explained, for instance, that the Board may inform that certain managerial structures are in need of improvement. Management will act upon this information and improve structures accordingly. Equally, the Board of the Internal Audit had initially emphasized that it would be advantageous if the independent departments were merged into one faculty when the plan to establish a second faculty was finally drafted in order now to be implemented.

2.4. Strategic management and capacity for change

As indicated in the previous section, all areas of NDU, including governance, teaching and research, are constantly monitored. On the basis of this quality assessment, strategies and objectives are regularly reviewed and, if necessary, reconsidered. Whereas the present Strategic Plan covers the years 2009-2014, strategies may be adjusted and more concretely specified in the annual operational plans, which clearly allocate responsibilities and include deadlines unless the specific strategy is meant to be acted upon permanently. The implementation of the plans is annually reviewed by the Senate.

In both plans, the strategic and the operational plans, human resources, logistics as well as finance are, for example, addressed. Though such documents are produced and reviewed frequently, the team felt that the tasks could be more concretely phrased and responsibilities more clearly allocated. However, the team also realised that, with NDU being a rather small



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educational institution, certain procedures and strategies seem not to have to be as much institutionalised and enunciated as in a larger organisation.

When drafting the SER, NDU conducted a SWOT analysis and developed a remedial plan for the weaknesses detected. Interestingly, quite a few of the areas of governance and institutional decision-making, which the team noticed as putting constraints on NDU, had equally been identified by the university. Among others, they include;

- restricted academic autonomy;
- low capacity of attracting extra-budgetary funds;
- insufficient teaching and research staff due to employment constraints;
- demotivating pay for the whole personnel (SER, p. 31).

Again the remedial actions and specific activities as laid down in the plan, need to be further substantiated by NDU.

To conclude, NDU complies with its mission and provides basic instruction as well as continuous training in military, national security and intelligence sciences. Its governance and institutional decision-making is determined by two sets of norms, military and educational, and consequently two types of national and international authorities, i.e. the Ministry of National Defence and NATO, on the one hand, and the Ministry of Education and the Bologna Process, on the other hand. As a result, constraints are twofold and lead to an even more limited autonomy no matter if study programmes, recruitment of students as well as staff and the budget are concerned. However, NDU is successful in developing, for instance, organisational structures, as the nearly accomplished creation of a second faculty proves, a plan the team can only encourage NDU to fully complete.



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3. Teaching and learning

3.1. Norms, values, mission, goals

As NDU is dependent on two authorities, the Ministry of National Defence and the Ministry of Education, norms and values in teaching and learning also originate from two sets of rules, military regulations as well as the Law on Education. The two transnational sources for norms and values in teaching and learning have been mentioned before, too, i.e. NATO as well as the Bologna Process. Here it was interesting for the team to understand that NATO requirements may have relevance for the content of curricula, especially in programmes and postgraduate courses related to international issues, such as those offered by the department of joint operations, security and strategic studies and the regional department for defence resources management studies. As there is no NATO specific methodology or structure of teaching military staff yet, it does not have any direct impact on the structure of the curricula or course design. This is, however, where the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area come in. As the Law on Education is to be applied to all higher education institutions in Romania, military educational institutions were and are also required to adhere to its provisions, such as, for instance, the three cycle structure.

NDU's mission is to educate qualified personnel for high-level command positions in, first and foremost, the military, but also the security and intelligence sectors. As the figures of the academic year 2012/2013 illustrate, 68% of the students participate in postgraduate courses; 92% of them are actually high-ranking military officers. The remaining 32% of the students attend Master programmes (19.5%) or focus on PhD studies (12.5%). The mission is also reflected in the number of programmes and courses: the university offers nine Master programmes as well as 54 postgraduate courses; PhD studies are completed by research.

3.2. Student body and governance and activities in learning

In order to accomplish its mission, NDU deliberately focuses mainly on face-to-face pedagogy, which is, to some extent, supplemented by e-learning. As the team learned in its visits to NDU, face-to-face teaching is in general considered essential for Bachelor and Master programmes. Other methods, according to the Rector and NDU teaching staff, deliver lower learning outcome than if the students learn face-to-face.

NDU has incorporated the major objectives of the Bologna Process in its teaching and learning, including the student-centred approach, distance learning and the establishment of a life-long learning system. Turning to the first issue, the team learned that in general interactive learning prevails. Lectures on a specific issue are accompanied by seminars, in which the Socratic method is applied. Input and discussion are followed by case studies,



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exercises and scenarios, all closely related to the actual issue. Training is given in military knowledge and skills which are essential to accomplish military tasks. Thus, for instance, it has become increasingly important to teach intercultural communication and competence, which are ultimately applied in operational fields and in relation not only to military personnel but also civilians in these operational fields. In a similar way, language learning is tailored to the individual student's levels, interests and needs in their professional lives.

Distance learning at NDU is offered according to sector-leading, Advanced Distance Learning (ADL) standards. As the team learned in its meeting with civilian stakeholders, who were mainly from the IT sector and had entered into strategic partnerships with NDU in order to develop standards and comprehensive solutions for e-learning, NDU has become leading in its ADL not only nationally, but also European-wide as well as globally. Various types of courses are offered: full online courses are available in the same way as blended learning courses and face-to-face courses which can rely on online educational support. As mentioned before, distance learning is utilised in Master programmes and postgraduate courses only, regardless of the fact that Bachelor programmes are not taught at present.

A life-long learning system is well established as the team realised from its visits as well as the documentation provided by NDU. It recruits successfully, with 68% of the entire student body attending the 58 courses in this system, and it is also successful in quality, as the pass rates and feedback by graduates and beneficiaries prove.

The team was indeed impressed by the extraordinarily high pass rates NDU provided. In the degree programmes, i.e. the Master programmes and PhD studies, 100% of the students who reach the final examinations also pass them. There are, for instance, PhD students who are expelled from the university as they do not pursue their studies diligently enough; however, these cases are rather seldom, which presumably originates from the fact that there is a rather rigid selection process in the very beginning and that the students have a strong career motivation for doing well in their studies. As mentioned in chapter 2, not only NDU but also the Ministry of National Defence are involved in the selection process. Though there is no externality in the examination process on the Master level, which is not uncommon in Europe as a whole, external referees are involved at doctoral level.

Not only do students complete their study programmes and courses successfully but they also find employment after their studies and postgraduate courses. 100% of the military graduates are absorbed by the labour market, which again can be explained by the close connection between the stakeholders and NDU. Programmes and courses are offered and supplied according to the demands determined by the human resources department of the Ministry of National Defence. These demands are based on the actual needs of the ministry and the army. As far as civilian graduates are concerned, time will tell whether they will find employment as



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easily as their military fellow students or graduates. If they are (prospective) employees of a governmental body, their employability will be equally high. However, it will be interesting to see how the employability will develop of civilian students proper who are exposed to the open labour market. At present, no figures are available.

Regarding student facilities relevant for their studies, there is a specialised reference and lending library at NDU with various sections including a textbook collection for language learning. Publications can be searched via the online catalogue. The last point leads on to the IT facilities, which are widely available. However, due to security reasons no WIFI system has been installed on campus. The learning management system can be accessed via secure portals only either in the teaching sections or the accommodation on campus. The students have access to teaching materials, such as PowerPoint presentations of lectures, simulation exercises related to theatres of operation as well as to NATO networks. An Atlantic Club has been established, which on the one hand provides access to resources, which also people from outside NDU may use.

The support services at NDU are highly developed. Accommodation is available on campus for single students and students with families. There is a medical centre, which provides first aid measures, medical and dental routine examinations and physiotherapy. Sports are an essential activity; accordingly there are various sports facilities on campus.

3.3. Teaching staff and governance in teaching

As indicated in the previous section, the quality of teaching is high as the team learned from students and military and governmental beneficiaries, who are in fact their employers, and civilian stakeholders alike. Students value the fact that teachers are approachable, are involved in scientific research but can also refer to practical experience. In the feedback graduates give six months after the completion of their studies or postgraduate course, they consider the attended programme or course to have a high relevance for their work, which certifies the effective course design and teaching of NDU teaching staff. Similarly, the military and governmental beneficiaries are highly satisfied with the learning outcome of NDU graduates, which relates back to a high quality in teaching. No information is available yet concerning stakeholders of the private sector.

In general, teaching staff is promoted on the basis of academic achievement, i.e. primarily research, and excellence in teaching. Both need to be proven when applying for promotion. As far as military teaching staff is concerned, there is a third aspect that is relevant for their promotion, i.e. their military rank, as there is a correlation between academic and military advancement. As a result, it is to some extent difficult for military teaching staff to fulfil all three requirements and thus be promoted.



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Similar to other aspects of university life at NDU, the pay rates of military teaching staff are established by the Ministry of National Defence. They are generally lower than in the operational fields. This is another reason why it is difficult to find military teaching staff for NDU. The salary can only be complemented by payment for extra hours of teaching or allowances from research contracts. However, as the team was informed by the rector, payment of extra teaching hours as well as merit rewards have been suspended. Thus, also the salary of civilian teaching staff is restricted to the monthly payments and allowances from research contracts, and no extra teaching hours are covered. What distinguishes civilian teaching staff from their military colleagues is the fact that their pay rates are established by NDU and are usually higher than that of the military personnel.

As mentioned before, the quality of teaching is high, even though there is a shortage of teaching staff. At present, this shortage is not overcome by increasing the number of students in lectures and seminars but by employed staff working additional hours in excess of norms. Moreover, employees of the Ministry of National Defence and members of the general staff provide guest lectures. Finally, military PhD students are employed as so-called military instructors and are thus eligible for teaching at NDU even without fulfilling the requirement of having been awarded a PhD title. In the future, as the team learned, NDU may offer additional training positions for prospective staff.

3.4. Quality assessment practices

Two types of quality assessment are firmly established at NDU, namely non-formalised quality assurance within staff and a multi-level systematic review of teaching performance inside and outside NDU. Regarding the former, the team was informed about an annual meeting of several days in which less and more experienced teaching staff participate. Workshops on didactics and teaching methodology are offered where experience and good practice examples are exchanged and advice is provided.

Concerning the latter, numerous levels inside and outside NDU are involved in the systematic review of teaching performance. Besides self-assessment, peers are also engaged. Equally, the head of the department assesses and discusses each teacher's performance, the discussion being mainly based on the students' evaluation and feedback. After half a year, the graduates and participants in postgraduate courses are invited to evaluate the course or programme attended. Finally, the beneficiaries are requested to provide their feedback on the graduates' performance after completing the course at NDU. Especially the post-course evaluation and the involvement of graduates and beneficiaries seems exemplary to the team.

As a result of the informal and formal quality assessment practices in teaching, there is a huge amount of data available. It appears to the team, though, as if this wealth of information is



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not fully utilised. Written documentation such as annual audit reports remain at a high level of generality. The team was advised that in a small institution the larger amount of follow-up is accomplished informally.

3.5. Strategic management and capacity for change

NDU's strategic management in learning and teaching manifests itself first and foremost in the ability and the willingness to continuously and, in fact, annually adjust the study programmes and postgraduate courses on the basis of the military stakeholders' needs and demands as well as the graduates' and beneficiaries' evaluation. In addition, NDU has proven farsighted in its engagement in ADL, developing the basis for advanced e-learning solutions.

Consulting the remedial plan for weaknesses related to learning and teaching, two issues need to be considered. The weakness identified concerning "insufficient teaching [...] staff due to employment constraints" (SER, p. 31) is supposed to be overcome by adjusting the number of study programmes and, in fact, only developing and offering programmes strongly demanded by the labour market. Accordingly, it is expected that there will be a reduction in the excess of teaching hours over the workload norm. As the team learned, this measure has already been utilised and heads of department and staff have reduced the number of courses offered. Still, NDU cannot act entirely independently in its attempt to overcome shortages as they are required to bear in mind their military stakeholders' demands and the need to provide for them.

It will be equally challenging for NDU to overcome the issue of "demotivating pay for the whole personnel" (SER, p. 31) as the university is even more dependent on external factors in relation to this issue. Not only do the two ministries as well as the law have an impact on the action suggested, namely "compensating financial shortcomings by extra income, under the legal provisions" (SER, p. 31) but so do the national and international bodies involved in the specific activity proposed, i.e. having personnel participate in research grants. As acknowledged during the visits, national and international competition is rather severe. Several applications for research grants in 2012, for instance, were not successful.

Thus, NDU's capacity for change is limited: it is challenged by the constraints of multiple requirements stipulated mainly by the Ministry of National Defence but also by the Ministry of Education, no matter if qualifications required for teaching staff, their promotion or pay rates and additional remuneration are concerned. Equally, international competition has proven challenging for NDU, especially regarding research grants.

In conclusion, as NDU's mission is to educate qualified personnel especially for high-level command position in the military as well as the security and intelligence sectors, the



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university strongly focuses not on the first but the second and third cycles, i.e. Master and PhD programmes, and in particular on postgraduate courses, thereby complying with the Bologna objective of establishing a life-long learning system. Learning is very much student-centred, and thus fulfils another Bologna objective. Pass rates are exemplary and are supplemented by equally outstanding employment rates. Here, the close link to the Ministry of National Defence and other governmental bodies proves invaluable as the university educates only those students who are actually needed on the military and governmental labour market; what the situation will be like for the civilian graduates who need to be absorbed by the open labour market remains to be seen. It might be helpful if NDU established a mechanism for tracking the entry of the civilian alumni into the job market and their subsequent professional development. Teaching is of high quality as the formal multiple-level quality-assessment system proves.

The team perceives, however, that NDU could use its asset of e-learning and ADL even more effectively in its own course design and teaching, and allow for more blended and distance learning in programmes of all cycles and in the postgraduate courses, thus not relying so much on face-to-face pedagogy. In the long run, this may also to some extent help in overcoming the shortage of teaching staff. The latter, i.e. the shortage of teaching staff, does remain a very critical issue; however, NDU has already taken decisive steps in reducing the number of programmes and courses offered and thus ensuring that teaching staff do not work too much in excess of norms and can maintain their high standard of teaching. Likewise, they are considering offering more training positions for prospective staff.



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4. Research

4.1. Norms, values, mission, goals

According to the “Strategies in the academic scientific research” (SER, App., p. 131) in NDU’s Strategic Plan for 2009-2014 (SER, App., pp. 125 ff.), there are four major objectives. Firstly, each study programme is supposed to be engaged in research. Equally, each teacher is meant to regularly allocate time to research. Thirdly, each research centre is required to organise an annual scientific event as the basis for scientific publications. Finally, NDU’s scientific journals should be promoted effectively.

Besides the norms as laid down in the strategic plan, once again the Ministry of National Defence is involved in setting norms and influencing research at NDU. The ministry has a direct impact on the defence and security strategic studies centre, which is an inherent part of NDU.

4.2. Governance and activities

Research activities at NDU are based on three pillars: teaching staff, the defence and security strategic studies centre and research contracts. As the team was informed, all teachers are involved in research, which demonstrates high standards set in relation to academic staff. Each teacher is supposed to allocate 112 hours per annum to research. Staff may develop their own projects closely related to their teaching or may use this time as part of a larger research project.

The defence and security strategic studies centre, the second pillar, has a specific status as it is directly linked to the Ministry of National Defence. This close connection is, on the one hand, reflected in the fact that the ministry decides on the number of researchers’ positions budgeted. Only recently, as the team learned, staff has been reduced by 50% because of the financial constraints prevalent in Romania as a whole. On the other hand, the ministry also suggests research topics for the centre and thereby has an impact on its research activities.

The third pillar relates to research contracts, national and international. As indicated previously, competition is high and resources limited, especially on the national level. Thus, the number of research grants secured has decreased, even though researchers are informed about and assisted in applying for research grants by the research projects and scientific research office. The office is also responsible for assisting the research centres in organising the mandatory annual scientific event.



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Collaborations in research are considered increasingly important at NDU, as the Strategic Plan for 2009-2014 (SER, App., p. 131) and the Operational Plan 2012-13 (SD,³ p. 21) indicate. NDU is part of research consortia, including private companies. As indicated before, various strategic partnerships were established with businesses of the IT sector in the past. In addition, the operational plan explicitly states scientific research partnerships to be established with civilian and military universities in Romania and abroad as a permanent strategy to be further developed. In one of the meetings the team learned, for instance, about a cooperation with civilian universities in Bucharest, which the joint operations, strategic studies and security department is involved in. Furthermore, NDU cooperates within NATO international networks.

Considering the outcome of efforts made in relation to research, three aspects need to be considered: research grants, PhD theses and scientific publications. Regarding the first issue, NDU has been successful in securing research grants, of which two are still running in 2013, one national and one international. The national grant is based on the National RD&I Plan (PNCDI II), whereas the European grant is part of the European Framework Programme (FP7) (SER, p. 21). All in all, grants for scientific research amounted to 749,727 lei in 2012.

Turning to the second and third issues, written output in research, 77 PhD theses were completed in 2010. There were 618 scientific publications in 2009 and 2010. These publications included books, chapters in books as well as articles in journals. Seven percent or 43 publications found entry into international publications, 4.5% or 28 into ISI Web of Knowledge indexed publications. The majority of the publications were published by the university's own international publishing house or national publishing houses acknowledged by the National Council of Scientific Research in Higher Education (CNCSIS). The figures, especially of international publications, are rather low. There are presumably two reasons for this: firstly, the topic as such, i.e. military or security issues, is rather specified, and secondly most of the dissertations are written in the Romanian language. All in all, a positive upward trend can be observed. Whereas in 2008 only two publications could be found in ISI Web of Knowledge indexed publications, already 16 publications had found entry into such internationally acknowledged journals in 2010.

4.3. Quality assessment practices

Similar to teaching and learning, research is constantly evaluated internally whether by peers, i.e. academic staff or staff involved in the International Publishing House. External quality assessment of research in general is reflected in the extent of NDU's success in procuring

³ "Carol I" National Defense University 2013 Supplementary documents required for the second EUA visit 18-21 February 2013. Bucharest. The page numbers in this report relate to the printed version.



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international research grants as indicated in the previous sub-chapter. External quality assessment of scientific publications is demonstrated by the extent of success in international peer-reviewed publications. As illustrated, the amount is limited, and there is room for improvement.

4.4. Strategic management and capacity for change

Though NDU staff is quite satisfied with their performance on the national level as far as scientific publications are concerned, the Remedial Plan (SER, p. 31) acknowledges that the number of papers published in ISI-indexed magazines needs to be increased. Interestingly, this activity is not so much seen in relation to research but rather in relation to the international visibility of NDU. Similarly, the need for a higher number of research contracts is not considered mainly an issue of research but of increasing the volume of extra-budgetary funds. Still, the university is aware of the fact that it needs to raise its scientific performance by engaging more in international research programmes, international events and publications, as also outlined by the Strategic Plan (SER, App., p. 131).

As has been illustrated, research is an inherent part of NDU. Thus, NDU has been classified as a teaching and research university. All academic staff are involved in research and are well equipped to do so as they have all been awarded a PhD degree. The team suggests that NDU becomes more proactive in their efforts to produce internationally visible research. In addition, more room could be created for research besides teaching. Researchers could be supported even more and more intensely mentored in drafting research grant applications to the EU. Moreover, staff could be encouraged to write their articles in the English language. Finally, NDU could consider how to utilise NATO networks even more for their own purposes also in relation to research. Thus, NDU would again be concentrating on focussing on their own strengths no matter how severe external constraints may be, such as the financial situation in Romania and the high competition for research grants, which they cannot influence.



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5. Service to society

As stated in the SER, NDU's "mission for society is to prepare military leaders and military and civil experts who are going to serve society through their activity" (SER, p. 18). Thus, NDU's principal service to society is mediated through the work of the Romanian and European defence forces. By closely cooperating with the Ministry of National Defence and coordinating their demand with the programmes and courses offered, NDU ensures that they teach the prospective employees which the Ministry and army need in order to fulfil their national and international objectives. In addition, NDU trains present employees so that they are well prepared for their (new) tasks in the Ministry as well as the army. The team concluded that NDU is successful in this mission. Any challenges NDU may encounter in terms of a limited budget originate from the overall situation in Romania and are approached firmly and in a determined manner and to date overcome effectively without any loss of quality in teaching.

Secondly, NDU is, among others, dedicated to the teaching of security and security policy and considers itself an authority on a true and democratic culture of security. Consequently, it may contribute this knowledge to Romanian society and provide its members with a concept of security not imposed by state authority. In addition, as the team learned from its meeting with the civilian stakeholders, civil society values the high level of education at NDU and the spirit in which young people are educated at NDU in general.

Thirdly, NDU has been outstanding in its research and development regarding Advanced Distributed Learning (ADL) skills. Though the results of this research were first utilised in the military sector, national and international alike, they are equally pioneering for education as a whole and civilian society. NDU's future, as private sector partners emphasized, lies to a great extent in continuing its research in this area and the application of the research results in its own teaching.

Finally, NDU has developed a good relationship with its stakeholders no matter if military or non-military. NDU is firmly established as part of the community of Bucharest, and local authorities value its contributions to local life. Non-military partners of the IT sector esteem NDU's openness to innovation in learning and the development of standards as an inherent part of the new means of teaching and learning. Turning to the military beneficiaries, the General Staff as well as the Ministry of National Defence emphasize the good working relationship with NDU and how much the military sector benefits from NDU's commitment to high quality teaching and research.

Generally speaking, NDU's service to society is mainly military or related to security, as the development of a concept of security relevant for society as a whole illustrates. Though a military educational institution, there is a high potential also for civilian society that NDU could exploit still further. The team can only endorse the recommendation that NDU



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continues and intensifies its efforts in research related to ADL. Thereby, it will serve (civilian) society. In the same way, continuing opening up to civilian students will ensure that an increasing number of young citizens will be exposed to the high quality teaching and spirit NDU promotes.



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6. Quality culture

6.1. Norms, values, mission, goals

Pursuant to the University Charter, quality assurance is a major concern of NDU in education as well as scientific research and is considered part of its public responsibility (SER, App., p. 118). The objective to ensure quality and establish a comprehensive quality management system and thus quality culture at NDU has recently been further implemented by the Quality Manual, the first draft of which was completed in January 2013. This handbook contains principles, norms and values which comply with SR EN ISO 9001-2008 standards.

6.2. Governance and activities

NDU has been eager to perform measures to ensure quality. One type of measure the team has been informed about is the national evaluation of 2010 initiated by ARACIS, in which NDU participated. This exercise included an international component as a foreign expert prepared a report for this evaluation.

A fully international evaluation is now being completed in the framework of the project "Performance in Research, Performance in Teaching – Quality, Diversity, and Innovation in Romanian Universities" organised by EUA-IEP. As mentioned in the first chapter, members of staff emphasized during the visits that this evaluation is considered a valuable means by which the university gained an opportunity to reflect on its mission, governance, teaching and learning and service to society, among others.

An important step in implementing quality assurance at NDU and further developing the quality management system was taken by establishing two organs, the Board of Internal Audit and the Board for Quality Assurance and Assessment. As already mentioned in chapter 2.3, the Board of the Internal Audit covers all areas of university life in its auditing, such as institutional and administrative structures, assets, study programmes, scientific research, quality assurance, assessment of teaching staff, accessibility of resources and data bases, public information and outreach to society. Its members are appointed on the basis of their expertise that is relevant for the respective aspect to be examined. By contrast the members of the Board for Quality Assurance and Assessment are elected, and they represent all status groups at NDU, including students.

Procedures of quality assurance have been clearly specified and tasks have been allocated to the bodies involved in quality assurance. After the audit, which takes place annually, conclusions and proposals are submitted from the Board of the Internal Audit to the Board for Quality Assurance and Assessment in audit reports, which are prepared for each of the



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fourteen aspects. These audit reports are analysed by the Board for Quality Assurance and Assessment before submitting them to the Senate. The Audit Reports are closely scrutinised by the Senate and may indeed be rejected if they are considered not detailed enough. Once the Audit Reports have been approved, the conclusions and recommendations contained in them may be considered for the next operational plan, which is also drafted annually.

Moving on to specific tasks and activities related to quality assessment, NDU has proven its capacity to conduct SWOT analyses successfully, not only in Audit Reports but also in the SER the team was supplied with. Similarly, NDU has been effective in establishing a multi-level evaluation process in teaching, as has been detailed in chapter 3.3.

6.3. Quality assessment practices and capacity for change

As mentioned in the previous sub-chapter, quality assurance is part of the auditing NDU conducts. Thus, quality assurance measures are evaluated and, if necessary, improved. Moreover, procedures allow for boards to reject the documentation of quality assurance measures and thereby require further investigation and evaluation by the body responsible. Finally, a wealth of data is collected in numerous evaluation processes and boards involved in these procedures, which, in general, would allow NDU close scrutiny. Here, it appears to the team, NDU could utilise the collected information more effectively and, after utilising the information, also record in a more differentiated manner which measures should be taken in order to improve and implement the proposals and recommendations.

To conclude, NDU strives for highest norms, also in quality assurance as the recently drafted Quality Manual proves, which adheres to SR EN ISO 9001-2008 standards. Consequently, NDU regularly exposes itself to national and international evaluations, which provide NDU with opportunities to evaluate themselves, reflect on their work in SWOT analyses and develop plans for improvement. In order to accomplish the task of quality assurance and thus establish a quality culture at NDU, elaborate procedures have been constituted, in which various boards are involved either providing expertise or representing all status groups. As emphasized before, this has, for instance, led to a highly developed multi-level evaluation process in teaching, which should be maintained. On the other hand, as also suggested before, the wealth of information collected in these procedures could be analysed more elaborately and be utilised more effectively, leading to a detailed remedial plan with well documented activities to be accomplished. This would allow NDU to further develop its excellence and regularly review the steps taken.



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7. Internationalisation

7.1. Activities

Internationalisation at NDU is primarily closely connected to NATO membership. As stated previously, NDU is a member of NATO networks and has benefitted from these since Romania's accession to NATO in 2004. There are three issues that may illustrate the impact of Romania's NATO membership on NDU. Firstly, at the very outset, there was a close cooperation between NDU and similar institutions in the UK. NDU was assisted in establishing NATO-based courses and, in fact, adopted the UK Army curriculum in its teaching. NATO membership has secondly been the reason for some courses at NDU now being taught in English; equally, students are more intensely trained in the English language in order to be prepared for working internationally. Now that Romania has been a member of NATO for eight years, NDU staff participates in missions to countries, such as Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldavia and Afghanistan. Here, NDU staff teach and provide their expertise to local armies.

Furthermore, NDU has been successful in forming eleven collaborations with foreign national military educational institutions in Europe and the USA, such as the National Defence University of the Slovak Republic or the Crisis Management Research and Training department of the Swedish National Defence College, NATO-related institutions, such as the NATO Defence College in Italy or international organs, such as the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) in the USA (SER, App., p. 167). All these collaborations mainly concentrate on international issues, in which the institutions can easily recognise common grounds. Lately, establishing joint study programmes has been discussed with universities in Eastern European countries.

Some aspects of NDU's work could be further developed, such as a foreign student body and teaching staff, student and staff mobility and the previously mentioned internationally recognised scientific publications, where the team accepts that there is room for improvement. There are several reasons for this: one is that military, security and intelligence sciences are still considered more national than international issues. Thus, programmes are offered in the native language of the respective country, which turns student mobility and mobility of teaching staff into a challenging project. Only as far as NATO-related issues are concerned, will mobility become more relevant and feasible. At present, there is only one example for staff mobility in this respect: the Director of the Department for Joint Operations has been invited to teach at the NATO School in Oberammergau, Germany, since October 2011. However, once again budgetary constraints come in, and applications for postings or training abroad have not always been approved lately. The issue of internationally-acknowledged scientific publications was discussed in detail in chapter 4.2 with the language



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of publication being the first major obstacle and the specificity of the topics being the second impediment to publication in internationally acknowledged journals.

7.2. Strategic management and capacity for change

NDU is aware of the necessity to improve its international visibility, teaching staff and student mobility as well as increase the number of international university agreements. This is clearly stated in the Remedial Plan, included in the SER (p. 31). It will indeed be beneficial for NDU to continue existing cooperation programmes on education and research with similar universities abroad and establish additional ones. In order to be successful here, NDU needs to continue developing study programmes taught in different languages, if not in English.

In conclusion, NATO membership of Romania has been beneficial to NDU's internationalisation in terms of opportunities for networking and exchanging expertise. Bilateral agreements with foreign military educational institutions have proven equally profitable, and it is here that NDU may detect even more synergetic effects in the future, for instance, by also offering joint study programmes. The team suggests that NDU exploits even more the advantages of NATO and EU membership, the former increasing staff mobility, the latter student mobility as students could participate in the military Erasmus programme. Offering more programmes in English in subjects of international concern will attract foreign students as well as foreign academic staff.



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8. Conclusion

As the team noticed during its two visits as well as by consulting the documentation provided, the National Defence University Bucharest succeeds in delivering high level service to both authorities it is dependent on, i.e. the Ministry of National Defence and the Ministry of Education, thus fulfilling its mission to offer basic instruction and especially continuous training in military, national security and intelligence sciences. NDU maintains a high level of teaching despite the budgetary constraints it has to face in the present situation of Romania.

NDU's strengths can be detected in the quality of its teaching, which is to a great extent ensured by a highly developed quality assurance system. This quality of teaching leads to satisfaction among students and graduates as well as beneficiaries and stakeholders. As a consequence, the employability of graduates is one of NDU's particular strengths. NDU does not only offer study programmes as part of the three cycles of the Bologna process, but has also established an extensive life-long learning system. An equally important strength of NDU is its niche of innovative research in Advanced Distance Learning (ADL).

In terms of constraints, NDU is restricted in its autonomy through the detailed strategic and operational oversight by the Ministry of National Defence. Consequently, it is difficult for NDU to respond to strategic challenges through the absence of independent financial resources. Even if resources were available, the approval of projects by the ministry would be necessary. A further constraint is the fact that NDU depends on two authorities, the Ministry of National Defence and the Ministry of Education. This has an impact on the design of NDU's study programmes as well as its financial situation. Both ministries need to approve study programmes, which, in fact, need to comply with two sometimes contradictory sets of standards; on the other hand, students' numbers for study programmes are determined by the demands of the Ministry of National Defence as well as the figures stipulated by ARACIS.

The level of internationalisation belongs to NDU's weaknesses. This relates especially to the mobility and diversity of the student and staff bodies and the number of scientific publications.

As the team learned, NDU does have various opportunities at its command. It can access international networks through NATO, which is equally relevant for teaching and research. NDU can exploit the advantages of Romania's EU membership by participating in the military Erasmus programme and applying for EU research funding. For NDU, it is indeed an opportunity to further open up to civilian students. This will increase the diversity of the student body and will have a positive impact on the own-resources budget. Finally, NDU considers the merger of all military educational institutions of Romania an opportunity as this could lead to a greater flexibility of the institutions involved in the use of their resources.



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NDU's positive development could be threatened if the economic crisis continued and the public budgets further decreased, whether this directly affects NDU's own budget or affects the army's budget, which would nevertheless have an indirect impact on NDU. A second major threat to NDU is the shortage of teaching staff, which will most probably have a negative effect on NDU if this shortage continues for a longer period of time.

On the basis of the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are provided:

- The team would like to encourage NDU to utilise its opportunities of NATO and EU membership and admission of civilian students to increase the level of scientific research, NDU's internationalisation as well as its financial resources.
- The team supports NDU in its plan to merge the independent departments into the second faculty. This will increase inter-departmental cooperation; furthermore, pooling and sharing resources will actually lead to a more effective use of these resources.
- The team recommends that NDU continues its research in the area of Advanced Distance Learning and likewise designs and offers more distance learning and blended learning programmes. Thus, NDU will leverage its sector-leading strength in e-learning in research as well as in its own teaching.
- The team encourages NDU to ensure that the present standard of quality culture and quality assurance is maintained and data are even more diligently utilised in developing further any aspects of administration, teaching and learning and research at NDU which are considered to be in need of improvement.

Envoi

The team would like to thank the university for the excellent arrangements and support provided before and during the visits and for the welcome and hospitality extended by the university. The team has enjoyed learning about the distinctive characteristics of NDU and values the insight they have gained into this military educational institution. The team appreciates the openness with which all members of the university and beneficiaries introduced the team to the challenges faced by the university and its plans to address and overcome them. The team hopes that the university finds their comments and recommendations supportive in its future planning. The team believes that NDU has the ambition and potential to be successful in its next stage of development and wishes the university well in this.