Corvinus University of Budapest (Budapesti Corvinus Egyetem)

EU A Evaluation Report

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1. Foreword

1.1 Background Information on the EUA Institutional Evaluation Programme and its Philosophy

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP), launched in 1994 by the European University Association (EUA) with the aim of preparing universities to meet the emerging needs for external accountability, is a cornerstone of EUA’s strategy to develop strong universities for Europe. Since 1994, 230 evaluations have been conducted in 39 countries (mostly in Europe but also in Latin America and South Africa) by EUA.

This programme is an external evaluation to help the institution to improve, but not an accreditation. It does not judge the quality of teaching and learning or that of research, nor does it rank or compare one university against another. In this way, the evaluation is responsive to the university’s needs, mission and situation, and is future-oriented since it emphasises the development of the university. The main purpose of this programme is to contribute to increasing the capacity of universities for both strategic thinking and internal quality culture in order to adapt to their evolving environment. Each evaluation is approached supportively and offers recommendations for improvement without passing formative judgements on quality levels and teams believe that improvement-oriented evaluation is more effective in encouraging the academic community to change.

In IEP, the national, regional or sector-wide evaluations are one of the developments that have taken place in recent years as national evaluations were completed in Portugal in 2002 (Medical Schools), in Ireland during 2003-2004, in Catalonia in 2005, and more recently in Slovakia and once again in Portugal in 2007. Such system evaluations could lead not only to improving the institutions’ capacity to change but also to strengthen their national system further as a whole in Europe.

The methodology of the Institutional Evaluation Programme consists of:

- A self-evaluation report (hereinafter SER) prepared by the university, requiring descriptive and analytical assessment based on a SWOT analysis. The self-evaluation report, which is considered as key to the success of the evaluation, mainly focuses on four key questions:
  ✓ What is the institution trying to do? (Referring to the mission of the university)
  ✓ How is the institution trying to do this? (Referring to the fulfilment of its mission in terms of organisation, management and structure)
  ✓ How does the institution know it works? (Referring to the quality tools available)
  ✓ How does the institution change in order to improve? (Referring to the capacity for change and improvement)
- Two site visits by the evaluation team: During the preliminary visit following the receipt of SER, the evaluation team becomes acquainted with the university and its environment. In the main visit, the focus is on finding out whether and how effectively the university’s strategic policies and quality procedures are being implemented.
An evaluation report written by the team: The evaluation report, based on the SER and both visits, details the evaluation team’s findings and conclusions regarding the capacity of the university to improve its performance and internal quality processes and mechanisms that monitor the current performance of the institution. The evaluation team notes good practices, focusses on difficult issues and recommends improvements.

At the request of universities, a follow-up visit can also take place two years after the initial evaluation.

The evaluation teams are comprised of three current or former rectors or vice-rectors and an academic secretary. The team members, holding key qualifications such as experience in successful university leadership and a thorough knowledge of European higher education systems, come from across Europe to provide an international and European perspective. Moreover, the institution may opt to have a student in the team as the fifth member as included in this evaluation.

By its nature and aims, the institutional evaluation programme adds a European and international dimension to quality assurance. It offers a not-for-profit approach and fully geared towards the needs of the university.

1.2 Institutional Review of the Corvinus University of Budapest

The evaluation phase of Corvinus University of Budapest (CUB) began with the formal application of the University to the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) in June 2007. The official request was made by Professor Tamás Mészáros, the Rector, with no special focus request.

The review team, which was appointed by the Steering Committee of the Institutional Evaluation Programme, consisted following five members:

- Professor Finn Junge-Jensen, President, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark (Chairperson).
- Professor Patrick Masterson, Former President, European University Institute, Ireland.
- Professor Helena Jasna Mencer, Former Rector, University of Zagreb, Croatia.
- Professor Fatma Göktepe, Former Dean of Natural & Applied Sciences Graduate School, Suleyman Demirel University, Turkey (Academic secretary).
- Rossella Iraci Capuccinello, PhD student, Catholic University of Piacenza, Italy (Student member).

2. Introduction

2.1 Outline of the Visits

In January 2008, the review team received a 31-page Self-evaluation Report (SER) with 9 informative appendices which includes lists, tables and regulations to explain institutional management, facts and figures in detail. The SER was prepared by a 12-member Self-evaluation Steering Committee (SESC) chaired by Professor Ildikó Hrubos, former vice-rector for academic affairs. The composition of the group was
satisfying as they were from different generations, different faculties and different positions. The members of the SESC, consisting of academic staff, administrative staff and students were:

- Katalin Bácsi, PhD student (Academic secretary)
- Zsuzsanna Illés, Head of the Vice-rector’s Office (Secretary)
- Ádám Angyal, Professor
- Andrea Jávorffy-Lázok, Corporate Relations Manager
- László Kollányi, Associate Professor
- Balázs Kotosz, Assistant Professor
- Szilárd Podruzsik, Assistant Professor
- Zoltán Szántó, Professor
- András Szirkó, Final year student
- István Temesi, Assistant Professor
- László Udvardy, Associate Professor

The evaluation team appreciates the work done by the SESC in providing a very informative, comprehensive and self-critical report with a clear translation in English containing many critical data and issues related to the university.

After receiving the SER, the team made a preliminary visit to CUB between 02 and 04 March 2008 to get a better understanding of the whole structure and system within the university to enhance the strategic development of the university and management for change.

The review team also requested and received further information and documentation in several areas including promotion criteria for academic staff, recruitment policy of the university, number of publications distributed over several categories for each faculty, description of students, scholarships and tuition fee regulations, number of students in non-degree programmes, budget figures forecast for next two years as well as revenue and income share of each faculty, statutes of the university, mandate of Scientific Council etc. The related documents were ready in time for the main visit. The main visit of the review team took place on 25-28 May 2008.

During meetings and discussions during both visits, the review team had an opportunity to discuss many important issues with quite a wide spectrum of actors related to CUB and had a good impression of the different bodies and stakeholders related to the university. In summary, during both visits the team met and had intensive discussions with:

- The Rector (Professor Dr. Tamás Mészáros)
- The members of university management such as vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, vice-Rector for International Affairs, vice-Rector for Strategy and Development, deans and elected Academic Senate members
- The members of Self-evaluation Steering Committee
- Members of the staff and students from seven faculties (Faculty of Public Administration, Faculty of Food Science, Faculty of Business Administration, Faculty of Horticultural Science, Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Landscape Architecture and Faculty of Social Sciences)
- Members of Economical Council, Finance Department, Quality Coordination Committee and Scientific Council
• Members of International Office and vice-deans for international affairs
• Directors of MBA and postgraduate programmes, Innovation Company and Regional University Knowledge Centre
• Central administration staff members including heads of the Rector’s office, central academic and information technology office, international office, office of quality assurance, central finance department, human resources office, communication office, central library, career development office and corporate relations office
• Central student delegation
• External partners including representatives of local governments, corporates and other stakeholders as well as representatives of Hungarian Accreditation Committee and Ministry of Education and Culture.

All these meetings and the various programmes were very efficiently organised under the personal supervision of Professor Norbert Kis, Vice-Rector for International Affairs and liaison person coordinating the process.

On the last day of the main visit, the chair person of the evaluation team, Professor Finn Junge-Jensen, presented the oral report to an audience of over 40 members consisting of the University’s top management members, deans, both academic and administrative staff members and student representatives. This is the basis for this final review report.

2.2 Outline of the Review

The review team would like to express its sincere thanks to the Rector of CUB, Professor Tamás Mészáros, who took a full part in the process, for his initiative and support of the institutional evaluation process as well as his very warm welcome and hospitality during both visits. Similarly, the team wishes to express its sincere thanks to Professor Norbert Kis, vice-Rector for international affairs, for the very efficient preparation and precise organisation of all meetings during both visits and the provision of effective working conditions for the team. The team also would like to thank vice-rectors and deans who actively supported the team during both visits, all the staff and students as well as stakeholders from outside of the university for their significant contributions through open and in-depth discussions.

The team also acknowledges the significant contribution of Professor Ildikó Hrubos, the former vice-rector of CUB for academic affairs and chair person of SESC, for her initiative with regard to IEP and coordinating the work of the SESC in preparing self-evaluation report supported by several sub-committees as well as preparation of supplementary documents needed by the evaluation team. Similarly, the work of SESC was also appreciated for providing such an informative, comprehensive and self-critical report, which is an excellent document on many fronts, containing much important data and issues related to the university including a clear and well-focused SWOT analysis together with a detailed recommended actions list.

When the degree of involvement with the SER was explored by the evaluation team during the meetings, it was clear that university units had been requested to compile certain reports, and there had been active collaboration with representatives from each of the seven faculties of CUB and from those of the student union. The report
was also discussed at different stages by different bodies such as Faculty Councils, Financial Board, Scientific Council, Quality Coordination Committee of the university, the Rector’s cabinet and Senate as well as being available on the University web site to its staff and students. The evaluation team believes that all dissemination activities carried out and the active involvement of various parts contributed to the quality awareness within the university although awareness of the IEP initiative seemed a little vague since there was no news or information about the visits of the team and on the IEP on the web page of the university.

2.3 Outline of the Review Report

During the evaluation process, the team was concerned with the current mechanisms and processes for strategic management and quality assurance and focused on the capacity for change of CUB in order to increase the quality and development of the university.

This final report of Corvinus University of Budapest is based on the oral report and uses the SER, the data and information obtained during both visits as well as from the additional information provided by the University. The evaluation report explicitly focuses on the following points:

- The role of the institution in a national and social context.
- Progress in relation to internationalisation and Bologna reforms.
- The effective research capacity of the University.
- Size of disciplines and interdisciplinary studies.
- Evidence of existing inter-institutional arrangements in teaching, research, administration, services and internationalisation.
- Particular strengths and weaknesses with regard to policies, management, funding, prevailing cultures and attitudes.
- Student support services and student employability after graduation.
- Ability to attract foreign students and teaching staff (The proportion of foreign students studying in Hungary in the academic year 2005/2006 was ca. 3.2% of the total number of students\(^1\)).

3. The Regional, National, Institutional and Social Context

3.1 Higher Education and Research in Hungary

In Hungary, higher education institutions may operate as state or non-state institutions recognised by the State. State higher institutions are funded by the Hungarian state and budgetary authority is exercised by Ministry of Education while the military and police higher education institutions are maintained by the Ministry of National Defence and Ministry of Justice and Law Enforcement, respectively. There are some other bodies which are not higher education institutions themselves but serve to safeguard scientific life from external intervention, limit state interference when needed and represent the special interest of higher education, such as the Hungarian Higher Education Accreditation Committee (HAC), the Hungarian Rector’s

Conference, the Higher Education and Scientific Council, the National Council for Doctoral Studies, the National Credit Council and National Bologna Board.

The modernisation process in Hungarian higher education began in 1993 as the HE Act was adopted by the Hungarian Parliament giving the universities more autonomy as well as the right to award scientific degrees including PhD degrees. However, previously research activities were pursued mainly in the research institutes of the Hungarian Academy of Science and in other research institutions while scientific degrees could only be awarded by the Academy before this Act came into force. The reform of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences seems to be work in progress and division of labour or cooperation between Universities and Academy still seems to be a debatable issue.

In 2000, the long re-organisation process involving the merger of state institutions was finally over and institutions were able to be designated as university only if their activities cover at least two different disciplines of science. This restriction led to an integration process which resulted in positive significant changes in Hungarian universities with the creation of large and diversified regional institutions.

The HE Act was re-legislated in 2005 when Hungary joined the EU, which in turn meant joining the European Research Area and the European Higher Education Area, thus replacing the separated university and college levels with an integrated form of successive cycles of Bachelor and Master levels, emphasising quality rather than quantity and introducing a large degree of financial autonomy to the universities. This Act at the same time gave scope for more industry focused research, business and entrepreneurial activities and included specified regulations in terms of institutional management and financing as well as acknowledging the National Union of Students as a legal entity.

Currently, there are 3 types of higher education in Hungary: State, church and private. Each sector has university and colleges offering 5 different types of training: higher vocational, bachelor, master, doctoral and specified vocational postgraduate training. Hungarian higher education comprises a total of 72 independent institutions (2006) with 31 state higher education institutions (18 university and 13 colleges in total) and the remaining 41 institutions are non-state higher education institutions (7 university and 34 colleges in total).

In Hungary, the total number of HE institutions was 57 in 1989. The main reasons for such an increase in relatively short period was the church institutions joining the system and the foundation of 15 new private HE institutions during that period.

Although the participation rate of a typical cohort in higher education did not exceed 10% before the political change of 1990, apparently this figure reached 50% after 1990’s and such a big and uncontrolled expansion brought new discussions about the quality of education and accreditations of these institutions².

In Hungary, the total R&D expenditure was HUF 207,764 million in 2005, a 14.5% rise compared to 2004 while the R&D expenditure of higher education was HUF

² I. Hrubos, Questioning the University—the Case of Hungary, Revue Internationale d’Education, Sevres, No.45, Sept.2007.
52,246 million\textsuperscript{3}, this means that 25.1\% of all R&D expenditure is allocated to higher education as compared to 23\% in EU27\textsuperscript{4}.

3.2 Brief Profile of the University

As one of the leading universities in Hungary, the history of CUB stretches back to the 1850’s. The foundation of CUB was based on three predecessor institutions working in different disciplines. The modern-day Corvinus University of Budapest was established with the merger of the Budapest University of Economic Sciences (BUES), which was known as Karl Marx University of Economic Sciences from 1953 to 1991, with the College of Public Administration in 2000 and with three faculties of Szent István University (Faculty of Food Science, Faculty of Horticultural Science and Faculty of Landscape Architecture) in 2003. The university then collectively accepted the new name ‘Corvinus University of Budapest (CUB)’ in 2004 reflecting an institution that brings together several disciplines ranging from social sciences to natural sciences and providing a very unique offer on its educational palette. Currently the university has 7 faculties spread over 3 different campuses on both the Buda and the Pest sides of the Danube, namely:

- Faculty of Public Administration
- Faculty of Food Science
- Faculty of Business Administration
- Faculty of Horticultural Sciences
- Faculty of Economics
- Faculty of Landscape Architecture
- Faculty of Social Sciences

In addition to these, the University has other facilities outside the city such as the model farms and botanical gardens.

The university has implemented the Bologna reforms including multi-cycle system. This transition has been taking place since 2005/2006 academic year and is due to be completed by 2009. There are 22 undergraduate programmes (3 are interdisciplinary), 25 graduate programmes, 4 joint programmes with partners within the EU and 8 accredited doctoral schools with 5 in social sciences.

The total number of those participating in higher education in Hungary is 430,431 (2006/2007)\textsuperscript{5} of which the number of full-time students is 249.139. In terms of student numbers, CUB is the 7\textsuperscript{th} largest accredited higher education institution in Hungary. The university had 17,708 students all together in the 2007/2008 academic year including part-time students (the share of full-time students is about 60\%, very similar to the national figure above) and there is no big fluctuation in total student numbers if the figures of last four years are examined.

The average student–to-full-time academic staff ratio was 27.1 to 1 in 2007 although it varies from one unit to another. e.g. it is 46.8 to 1 in the Faculty of Public

\textsuperscript{4} OECD
Administration while it is 15.5 to 1 in the Faculty of Food Science. According to the SER, the average age of the academic staff is 45.6 and there is a lack of a middle-aged generation, probably due to the drainage by business and public sector after the change of the regime. In fact, as west-European universities and labour market currently have better offers for living, studying and working, such a drainage is not specific to CUB, but is rather a national issue.

In 2007, there were a total of 1546 employees at the university with 748 academic staff (121 professors, 239 associate professors, 224 assistant professors and 164 assistant lecturers as the proportion of academic staff with scientific degrees is 60% of the total). The ratio of academic staff to other staff is nearly 1 to 1. The ratio of female academic staff is 39%, with very few at the top level but increasing lower down the hierarchy.

According to the SER, the average student admission rate is 3.1, which is well over the national average figure of 1.3, indicating that CUB is very attractive destination for students. In some units there seems to be a very high demand, such as in the International Relations BA Programme at the Faculty of Social Sciences, only 1 student accepted out of every 125.7 applicants.

When completing rates are examined, the highest completing rate is in Computer Economist Programme (Faculty of Business Administration), Viticulture and Winery Engineering Programme (Faculty of Food Science) and Sociology Programme (Faculty of Social Sciences) (100%) while the lowest rate seems to be in the Horticulture Engineering BSc Programme (21.1%) of the Horticulture Faculty and the Economics Study Programme of the Faculty of Economics (25.5%).

### 3.3 The Role of the University within Regional Context

Location is one of the reasons for the strong attraction of CUB, since the university is in the capital which is seen as the heart of the scientific and cultural life of the country.

CUB has a leading position in some disciplines such as business administration and social science. According to the Financial Times ranking list of the best 35 business administration schools in Europe, the Faculty of Business Administration occupied 25th place in the 2006 ranking. This is considered as a significant result, as, from the same region, only the Warsaw School of Economics was included in the same list. Also, CUB is one of the total 17 schools participating in the CEMS (the *elite group* of the community of European Management Schools) programme since 1996 and accepted to the PIM (Programme in International Management) in 2001 which is an exclusive worldwide organisation of business schools.

The university offers courses in non-degree programmes as well as offering degree opportunities for a significant number of part-time students making a considerable contribution to the regional development. It also has close collaboration with public administration institutions and important companies in the region. One example of such cooperation is the Corporate Chair System with CUB as the first institution in Hungary to introduce this system with support of ten companies.
Another regional contribution is the Research Knowledge Centre of the University which has the goal of promoting economic development in the region and increasing competitiveness of enterprises related to the food-chain as its activity based on the participation of three units of the university; Faculties of Food Science, Horticultural Science and Business Administration. Through its support for innovation activity of SME’s of the region, consultancy services and advanced labs, the university has an important role providing services to the companies and farming institutions.

4. Constraints and Institutional Norms

4.1 Strategic Management, Governance and Autonomy

Increased global growth of international competition in higher education and increasing trends in cross-border education and research puts universities under pressure to find additional financial resources as well as to attract the best faculty and students possible. On the other hand, there is an increasing need for multidisciplinarity, especially for research focused universities. Unless the institution has a broader range of disciplines, it will not be able to focus on the problems facing today’s complex and the fast moving world.

The team observed that Corvinus University of Budapest is a unique institution considering the mixture of the disciplines it currently has. For example, the Faculty of Food Science, which is the only one in the country on one hand and the Faculty of Social Sciences on the other, reflect the broad extent of university’s unique educational palette. In fact, as one representative commented during a meeting, CUB can also be considered as a unique lab to study social changes and observe the real effects of different political and economical climates over the years since the university as well as the country itself has experienced real changes and challenges over a long period.

As a state university, CUB has an autonomy given within the given framework by HE Act of 2005, which acknowledges that higher education institutions are independent legal entities with associated powers exercised independently. The right to establish their independent organisational and operating rules including decisions regarding personnel and economic independence is also expressed in the right of disposal over their own property, and the development of their training system. The Senate, with 38 members at CUB currently, is the supreme decision making body. Each faculty is represented equally by 3 members while student representatives make up 1/3 of the Senate, which can be considered as a substantial representation of students in this top decision body of the university. The team strongly believes and supports having students in the governing bodies since they are important partners in the university.

The Senate has the following powers:

- Initiate the approval of the educational and research programmes as the bases for the training provided in the higher education institution
- The ranking of academic lecturer, researcher and managerial applications

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• The establishment of the Scientific Council, standing committees and other councils of the institute
• The termination or launching of a programme
• Decision on the basic budget and raising loans
• The utilisation or alienation of real property
• The conclusion of a cooperation agreement.

The Senate has the authority but no responsibility while the Rector and Financial Board are responsible for decision-making and monitoring the implementation of these decisions at institutional level. In addition, the deans have important duties at faculty levels since they have power in terms of many important academic issues and other administrative tasks and so on. The evaluation team, on the other hand, was informed during both visits that high degree of faculty autonomy is the main feature at the university, thus leading to a high-degree of de-centralised structure within the institution due to the long history of faculty autonomy. This was also pointed out in the SER. Therefore it is not surprising that faculty identity among staff and students seems to be stronger compared to the university identity. The evaluation team recommends the University take some serious actions to gain a strong CUB identity among both its staff and students.

In addition, the evaluation team advises the University to develop new incentives to encourage its staff towards inter-disciplinary and inter-faculty studies, although it appreciates the fact that integration is still in a transition process. Another suggestion could be the further encouragement of students to choose more selective courses from different faculties.

The evaluation team also observed a very fragmented structure within the university; many departments, which are in fact chairs or professorships, and a lot of organisational units. The evaluating team strongly believes that the university can have fewer departments, perhaps even fewer, or at least better co-ordinated faculties by combining for example the activities of the Faculties of Business Administration, Public Administration, Social Sciences and Economics into one unit. The team also advise rationalising some departments since there seems to be some duplication (communication departments in both the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Public Administration, or the legal studies department of the Public Administration Faculty and the political science institute of the Social Sciences Faculty can be given as examples for such duplications), and, therefore, less than optimal use of financial and human resources.

However, in parallel with the fragmented structure mentioned above, the organisational culture varies between campuses or between faculties and each intends to keep its own culture. There is some cooperation already, but others are much more hesitant to get into close cooperative work. Those who are very hesitant perhaps fear that if there were strong inter-faculty studies, that might lead to the merging of those units in near future. In fact, the best way to avoid unwelcomed or unproductive mergers is to promote a productive balance between academic autonomy and integration by promoting and instituting the organisational measures to ensure inter-disciplinary and interfaculty co-operation.
The evaluation team recommends the university facilitate interactions between different disciplines, faculties and departments at an appropriate level. The awareness for a need to share and combine knowledge needs to be increased further. Motivating two units of the university to work together in this respect is strongly advised by the evaluating team; e.g. cooperative work between the oenology department of Food Science Faculty and the marketing expertise of Business Administration Faculty can contribute to promoting higher value added and well branded wine production both at national and international level. The team believes that a central fund can be created to support new initiatives like the specific example given above involving more than one faculty so that an increased cross-faculty activity can be facilitated.

4.2. Internationalisation

Internationalisation of higher education is briefly defined as the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution as the reflection of globalisation. In fact, globalisation has not only created new material potential for higher education institutions such as foreign students, international research activity, new languages for instruction, ideas for organisation but it has also washed back into the re-shaping of national or regional higher education systems all around the world as it has in Hungary.

As indicated by the Conference of Ministers in Berlin (2003), Europe should be made the most competitive and most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustaining economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion so that it can maintain its leading role in today’s fast moving world. Therefore, the international profile is a necessary condition for delivering the quality of research and education needed in a national context due to the growing importance of the knowledge society, new trade agreements which cover trade also in education services, innovations related to ICT and the emphasis on the role of market and market economy.

CUB, being well aware of such a rapid change in the world, is strongly committed to internationalisation as its Institutional Development Plan, which was approved by its Senate in 2007, defines the university as a research university oriented towards education, where the scientific performance of the academic staff measures up to international standards and where students can obtain a competitive degree of a standard and knowledge content identical to similar-profile universities7.

The evaluation team has already seen a growing activity in internationalisation and a strong commitment in the central administration. The establishment of an International Office, an informative on-line ECTS information package available on the university web page for incoming students, Diploma Supplements being issued and full EUA membership of the University since 2004, some programmes already running in a foreign language, joint-degree programmes, good international partnership profile of the institution (long term agreements with over two hundred universities) and active participation in EU-financed LLL programmes are some good examples in that respect. Similarly, the recent appointment of one of the vice-rectors

7 SER, Appendix V.
for international affairs can also be considered as another significant indication of a strong institutional will for internalisation.

However, much more focus on internationalisation will be needed both in education and research to preserve its position and become a major player, although CUB has a very strong position in Hungary at the moment. In today’s world, students are increasingly exposed to a cross-cultural environment and they need the competences to work in it. During the visits, the evaluation team was informed that students would like to have more foreign professors in their tutorials. Having a foreign professor would not mean that their math or science teaching would be different in content, but they can provide very different perspectives and thereby contribute to the cross-cultural environment in the university. Similarly, if research is undertaken partly in another language such as English, the institution becomes even stronger internationally.

Although CUB is committed to internationalisation and shows strong development in many areas, there are however several barriers to the fulfilment of this task, such as language policy, critical mass of foreign students and teachers, comparable credit transfer system and internationally recognised research. The lack of internationalisation support or policy by the Hungarian Higher Education authorities is another setback for those universities which aim to further improve their international profiles, and therefore higher educational institutions need to conduct negotiations with their respective ministries and politicians to support this.

Language competences of both its students and academics are fundamental. The younger staff and many of the students seem to have very good skills in foreign languages. Indeed, the translator was not needed during most of the meetings held with the team. There are already some programmes run in foreign languages mainly in English but also in French and German, for highly marketable subjects and the team appreciates these efforts. However, the team strongly advises the establishment of a unified language centre as currently language training lies within the responsibility of several organisational units. Such a centre could also organise one-to-one teaching sessions or courses for students or professors in e.g. English, intended not only for lecturing in English, but also for daily discussions or conversations and also awaken the interest of the staff and students in self-learning methods.

As mentioned earlier, providing an international student environment with a critical mass of international students and faculty is another fundamental issue. CUB already has a good number of foreign students as they come not only from neighbouring countries (nearly 60% of the foreign students) but also from countries like Germany, Norway and Israel. As indicated in the SER, the incoming non-Hungarian student ratio is 7.2% in 2007, which needs to be improved for a university aiming to become a major player in the international arena. The evaluation team believes that the target figure should be a minimum 10% to reach the critical mass level. On the other hand, the level of outgoing student numbers is quite low (around 4%) although a balance between incoming and outgoing student numbers is expected in principle. The number of foreign full-time teaching staff which increased from 7 in 2004 to 17 in 2007, again needs to be improved further as well as the teaching staff mobility in both directions.
The number of outgoing teachers is 204 while the number of incoming teachers is 85 in 2007, already an improved figure compared to a few years back. The team believes an increased number of visiting professors can contribute to strengthen the international profile of the university even if the visit is only for a short period. Promising results can flow from the university by providing them with housing, research assistants and perhaps transport or by seeking the support of some companies or even by inviting those professors retired recently. In fact, the university has already some advantage in this as the cost of living is comparably low. The recent initiation to build mini flats for incoming students and visiting professors is a good example of the institution’s strong will to increase the number of incoming professors and was appreciated by the evaluation team.

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) that translates the inner operation of the single university into the European system, and thus promotes mobility by opening up institutional and cultural boundaries, and establishing a “virtual European university” has been in place in Hungarian higher education institutions as all public institutions and institutions recognised by state were required to introduce and apply the credit system as of September 2002. However, during both visits, the evaluation team heard about student complaints in some departments regarding the difficulty in getting the recognition of credits obtained abroad which emphasised the need for a compatible ECTS system. Therefore the team recommends standardising the ECTS system for comparability and that formal measures are taken to recognise the credits obtained abroad. In addition, the low level of the Erasmus funding is a hindrance to student mobility since it cannot hope to cope with the high cost of living in a number of western European countries.

The team believes that by eliminating those barriers mentioned above and creating a strong international branding through promotion of the university as a whole rather than a group of individual faculties, CUB would become more attractive for both students and academic staff. In fact, there are already promising examples within the University such as the good position of the Faculty of Business Administration in the Financial Times ranking, already running some programmes mainly through the medium of English but also in German and French, joint-degree programmes as a result of the cooperation with strategic partners, good international partnership profile of the institution and active participation in EU-financed programmes which contributes to mobility, curriculum development, intensive programmes and research. However, the quality assessment of those programmes taught in English or in any other foreign language is another urgent task for the university to tackle.

Another area in which the team believes some action is needed is providing incentives for mobility of professors and students including an increase in grants for students and professors going to study abroad through Erasmus as well as providing financial support for those academics participating in international conferences. Among students, the team received different information in different faculties. For PhD students taking part in international conferences, the evaluation team appreciates the grant scheme available to support high quality research but apparently the information is less widely available. Therefore, the team advises the university to increase the communication in this field and to provide more encouragement for young academics by deans or heads of departments. In fact, this
would be to the benefit of the university since the research staff would then serve as
a window on the world to a bigger extent than is the case today. It would thus be
important to make international travel funding available to an even wider set of
researchers.

Although CUB would like compete internationally for students and teaching staff,
surprisingly not much was mentioned about research staff or projects. However,
internationally recognised research is another fundamental requirement of
internationalisation as mentioned earlier, and therefore needs specific attention.
Support for international publishing, such as extra funds for translation, can also be
helpful, as well as increasing the financial motivation for teaching and research
activities in an international context.

4.3 Teaching and Learning

As mentioned in earlier sections, pursuant to the provisions of the HE Act, the former
structure of separate university and college education was replaced by a multi-cycle
system in an integrated form as a result of the Bologna agreement. That means all
two levels of higher education, i.e. bachelor’s, master’s and PhDs, are to be
provided at the University. The bachelor’s study is 3 years and the graduate may
then continue to study for a master’s degree. In Hungary, the first cycle programmes
started in 2004, and the following year, i.e. in the academic year of 2005/2006, CUB
launched three bachelor degree programmes while completing the introduction of
these programmes in the academic year of 2006/2007 showing a good performance.
However, the transition process is still underway and due to be completed by 2009
when all graduate programmes will be announced, and therefore the effect or output
of the multi-cycle system is not clear yet.

More effective learning processes are preferred in today’s modern university
teaching. The evaluation team observed a heavy emphasis on traditional teacher-
centred education in many cases which was characterised by limited teacher-student
interaction tending towards rather a rigid system. Therefore, more focus in moving
the trend from teaching to learning and supplementing traditional lectures by
developed new learning processes or pedagogical methods such as including case
studies or project work more intensively have been recommended. The strong
theoretical teaching in some areas needs to be combined with applied perspective
which will win acceptance. However, this task should be done under the responsibility
of the faculty and not left up to individual professors. In the same vein, strong
language laboratories providing DVDs, audio systems etc. are also needed for a
more effective language teaching.

The age profile of academic staff might be seen as an obstacle at some units as
sometimes this profile can inhibit the transition from traditional individual centred
research to more collaborative work, which should be encouraged in the allocation of
research grants etc. On the other hand, the team also observed “inbreeding” is quite
high at the university, which is a potential risk for any higher education institution,
limiting diversity due to poor hiring practices. However, this seems to be a national
issue rather than an institutional problem since there is little mobility in Hungary with
quite low wages compared to the industry, so generally internal candidates get the
positions. Still, CUB needs to create a clear and uniform human resource policy
within the whole institution to attract talented staff. Getting new staff with a PhD degree from abroad might be a good solution, but new ideas and policies are needed here.

The team observed that there is a heavy workload and high number of contact hours due to the difficulties in moving to the Bologna system, although apparently attending the courses is not compulsory. For example, there seems to be a tendency at some units merely to compress the same course contents of the former 5-year university degree syllabus into three years of today’s bachelor degree, thus leading to an overload. Therefore, the team highly recommends that extensive monitoring and revision of curricula in comparison with counterparts within Europe is undertaken.

On the other hand, the university has a highly developed quality assurance system in teaching and the team was impressed with the quality improvement process carried out in the university. However, there is still little known about the employment of the graduates and reception of CUB graduates in the labour market.

Evaluating the portfolio of programmes is another serious issue which needs to be dealt with carefully at institutional level. The team is of the opinion that it is difficult to judge whether there are too many departments or not. However, it strongly believes that there is a need to develop an evaluation process of these portfolios, although the team felt that CUB intends to wait for decisions on the educational portfolio until the greater number of bachelor graduates are in work and this is expected as from 2009-2010 onwards. On the other hand, clearly there is a need to have more master programmes by using its own resources. The SER points out that reaching a 50/50 balance between undergraduate and postgraduate student numbers is the future aim of CUB, although no clear strategy to obtain that was indicated. Considering the consequences of such an intended balance, the team respects the freedom of research but believes that CUB needs to choose some units as frontlines and/or implement e-learning facilities to include frontliner foreign researchers in its teaching staff to be able attract more and talented students not only from Hungary but also from abroad.

Systematic international benchmarking is another important tool that can be used to improve the international profile of the university further. The team strongly recommends CUB choose its partners and have a systematic benchmarking.

Teaching evaluations are widely regarded as an important mechanism to ensure the feedback of students on the teaching. At CUB, the mechanism is already established to carry out student surveys during every academic term and the team appreciates the fact that teaching prizes and awards have already been issued every academic year mainly based on the results of these surveys. However, during the meetings, the team heard that the number of the participants can be very low sometimes and therefore the survey results can not be made public. In this case, there is a need to implement a scheme for a compulsory participation for each student. The outcome then can be widely disseminated when the required applications are completed.

While the evaluation of teaching is essential, it is also important to seek students’ opinions on their overall educational experience by using exit questionnaires for graduating students, surveys with students following their participation in international
exchange programmes, interviews of incoming international students, evaluation of specific student services (library, career office, IT facilities etc).

The university has three libraries altogether with 887,000 volumes. The central library has very modern facilities, although the need for more electronic journals was raised at some meetings with students. The annual budget of central library is HUF 200 million (less than 1 million Euros) and when considering roughly 10,000 students on the Buda site, the team believes the library budget is pretty modest as it comes to around 12 Euro/student.

The students seem to be quite satisfied in general with the facilities that CUB is able to offer. Only some students mentioned the need for more green areas and renovated dormitories as well as a desire to have a sports centre on the Pest campus. Regarding the student information system, the central database, called Neptun, also available in English so that foreign students can get access to the related data, is appreciated by the team but it does seem to the students to need to be more detailed and more systematic.

The team congratulates the University on its efforts to establish a Career Development Office (CDO) in 1996, which was the first career management unit in Central and Eastern Europe. The office has the duty of tracking graduates to establish a continuous contact between students and industry so that a sustainable link between graduates and employers is maintained. This shows that the University is ahead of some European institutions although the students on the Buda site still seem to prefer to deal with their own faculty rather than contact CDO which is situated on the Pest site. According to the SER, at the moment, CUB graduates have no difficulty in finding employment after graduation although the level of difficulty in tracking of graduates seems to differ from faculty to faculty. A graduate tracking study was already carried out in 2007 and there was about a 35% return which can be considered as a reasonable figure. However, a consistent annual graduate survey carried out systematically every year is recommended by the team.

4.4 Research

Although each member and component of a university has responsibility with respect to teaching and research, the particular importance of high quality research is rightly emphasised by the SER as research is the fundamental role of HE institutions; this is also explicitly declared by the HE Act of 2005. On the other hand, internationally recognised research is necessary for top national positioning as well as for recruitment opportunities. Therefore, there is a need to develop a stronger international position in selected research areas.

At the level of teaching, with a diminishing demography, Corvinus University will be increasingly challenged by other universities. To maintain its premier position nationally, it must position itself more effectively internationally and, to do this, high quality cooperative and prioritised research is essential but without harming individual research freedom. Moreover, an increasing ability to recruit and retain a high quality faculty depends upon the ability to provide a vibrant research environment.
Consequently, the university must foster and promote active and interactive research activity at individual faculty, inter faculty, regional and international levels. In this regard, the work of individuals and faculties can be greatly helped by the activity of the newly formed Innovation Centre acting as the central project management unit, which has already supervised over 50 project proposals within the first five months of 2008, and the Regional Knowledge Centre, which has one of the most advanced food analysis labs in Europe. These two units should be positively supported.

The evaluation team heard few times during the meetings that some staff feel that research strategy belongs to the central management. It is important, however, that the central management has sufficient financial means to promote strategic and collaborative initiatives in research and development. Therefore, the team strongly believes and recommends establishing a central funding scheme for seed money for new initiatives/research projects especially in support of inter-disciplinary or inter-faculty research projects in order to promote cooperative and prioritised research further. Similarly, promotion and salary incentives for high quality international research should be developed to counterbalance the attraction of financially rewarding contract research for companies. There is also a good potential for university-industry relations especially following the recent introduction of the Innovation Tax Scheme by the government as the team heard that some faculty staff has already been hired within this scheme.

However, what seems to the evaluation team as capable of playing the most significant role in the promotion of international research standing of the university is the Scientific Council. This is a council required by legislation and therefore legislators should pay heed to its advice. Moreover, it is composed of members representative of the academic community who have an outstanding academic and research achievement and includes in its membership eminent external scholars. It is therefore ideally situated to provide impartial and expert advice on research initiatives which range across departments and faculties and seek to operate on an international scale. Because of its academic prestige and moral authority, it can play a key role both in promoting big prioritised integrated projects and be a support to individual researchers. It can also help resolve the difficulties which can arise between these two objectives. We recommend that the work of the Council be strongly supported at all levels of the university and that budgetary financial resources be found to enable the Rector and University to follow up the recommendation of this Council. Otherwise its vital work will be undermined and its distinguished members disillusioned instead of playing a more proactive role in integration and also in research quality assurance. Such financial provision can help to provide seed money for new research initiatives and in particular for big projects.

Maintaining stronger PhD programmes as well as incentives for international publications are two other important issues that require attention at CUB for maintaining a profile of a strong research university. There are already eight established doctoral schools and one proposal being evaluated by HAC, but the team believes that action is needed to strengthen this picture further.

The evaluation team would like to congratulate the university on its performance as measured by the number of publications and citations per professor in some fields. For example, a good performance by Faculty of Food Science has been shown, as
the articles in food science & technology subject area alone constitutes 28.8% of the whole institution’s international publications in Web of Science. However, there is a need to increase the eagerness of faculties to monitor the number of publications of academic staff regularly in order to demonstrate that the whole university is active in research and wants every researcher to be active. A stronger weight for research in academic promotions is also recommended by the team.

4.5 Financial Resources

State universities in Hungary are state-funded institutions run mainly on a central budget the amount of which is determined by the government.

The total annual budget of CUB was HUF 15,298,763 in 2007 with an annual growth rate of almost 8% while 10% of the state budget and 5% of revenues is given to the Rectorate. The total income, which is around a reasonable figure of 4000 Euro/student, consisted of:

- State funding of which teaching and scientific normative grants, student bursaries, programme subsidy, private public partnership programme (PPP), subsidy and school education tasks (52%),
- Own revenues including teaching revenues, dormitory contribution, asset utilisation, innovation research, vocational training contribution and tenders (48%). The share of own revenues seems to be increased significantly mainly due to the increased asset utilisation and vocational training in recent years as it was 44% of total budget in 2004.

According to the SER, the target growth in budget expansion is only 1 billion HUF, from 15 to 16 million HUF roughly. While such a goal is considered as quite modest by the team, the reduction of the state budget in coming years and a decrease in student numbers was given as the reasons to explain this.

The number of state-financed and maximum number of total enrolled students the university can receive is centrally determined by the government, based on the offer of the university as well as the areas of education. State supported full-time students do not pay fees while part-time and distance-learning students do. From 2008 onwards, all students should have paid tuition fees in different amounts for bachelor and masters degree but a recent referendum held in March 2008 voted for no fees and they were abolished.

Internal resource allocation mechanisms seem based on tradition although the team heard about the coefficients used for distributing the budget among faculties. Apparently, these coefficients are made up of a combination of teaching activities, research activities and the activities in other services although the team heard some complaints during the meetings that there is, in fact, an uneven distribution depending on the power of the faculty.

Increasing competition for national and international financing resources would also affect the university globally as government funding is decreasing. Therefore the university needs and should seek for further EU funding and projects. Also there will be more reliance on private sources such as sponsorships and other sources as well as a need for building a dedicated and well-organised fund raising system. Such
additional resources would help the university to cope with the “lean” summer months, especially from June to September. For a start, corporate logos in the entrance of the main building might convince and motivate others to have a closer relationship with the university. The team believes there is no room for complacency and if the institution does not take such measures, it can be increasingly adversely affected by international and national competition for scarce financial resources.

Another dimension for dealing with increasing international competition and decreasing state support can be by creating central funds for initiating and supporting new ventures in non-degree programmes. The university should also give more emphasis to attracting external funding for research and education and increase the revenues from post-experience education by creating stronger and more professional areas. In the Public Administration Faculty for example, through adult education and LLL programmes, CUB could easily generate further income.

In addition, three campuses spread over both sides of Danube in Budapest has a promising asset utilisation potential. The team already observed the significant impact that the renovation of old buildings or the building of completely modern units in the framework of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) in investment projects has had on providing more attractive surroundings for both academics and students. It was also pleased to hear that the modernisation of the Public Administration and Food Science faculties in 2008-2009 was already in the pipe-line. Therefore, the team believes that the university is doing a great job in creating more attractive campuses on the Pest side as well as by its planned activity for the Buda side and supports the University leadership for such strategic planning for institutional development initiatives in that respect. On the other hand, the botanical garden and its recognised reputation from the past deserve stronger marketing and advertising.

As mentioned in earlier section, having a central fund in the Rectorate to finance cross-faculty activity would not only find acceptance but appreciation in the years ahead. The team advises, for example, 2% from each unit to go to such funding if CUB wants to become stronger as a whole institution in such an internationally competitive context.

5. The Capacity to Change

A clear mission and vision, an effective strategic planning and establishment of quality culture, action plans and milestones are important institutional elements in fostering the capacity for change while the financial and human resource management within the national legislative framework are two further important elements.

As mentioned earlier, the first question in the IEP Guidelines is: What is the institution trying to do? i.e. this refers to the mission and vision, along with mid-term and long-term strategies of the institution while the next question -How is the institution trying to do it? - relates to the activities of the University. The third question -How does the institution know it works? - deals with quality monitoring and assurance tools used within the institution and the last question -How does the institution change in order to improve? - relates to transformation processes taking place within the University to
implement new strategies for improving the university's position at a higher level as foreseen in its Institutional Development Plan.

In the following part of this section, the answers to these questions that the evaluation team was able to garner from the SER and during both visits will be analysed to highlight important points in regard to how to manage the changes. This should be the key issue for this university since many things have been changing recently: i.e. merging, autonomy, multi-cycle system, number of students etc.

5.1 Mission

According to the SER, the short term goal of the university is to maintain its leading position in Hungary and enhance its international reputation. Also, the need to develop an elite rather than a mass programme of education, in other words, quality versus quantity, was repeated at several interviews of the team as also indicated in the SER.

The University had already completed its ten-year Institutional Development Plan (IDP) by January 2007 in which the mission and purposes of the university were included. In the IDP, Corvinus University defines itself as a research university oriented towards education, where the scientific performance of the academic staff measures up to international standards and where students can obtain a competitive degree of a standard and knowledge content identical to similar-profile universities\(^8\).

To accomplish this mission, the institution summarises its purposes mainly as providing high quality programmes meet European qualification requirements, taking active part in collaboration with the Doctorate Schools in Hungary and international arena, launching more courses in English and increasing foreign students, and finally creating modern infrastructure. The team finds the IDP coherent and dynamic with clear answers at the desired level in terms of teaching and research quality and it congratulates the University on that. However the answers to the questions of who is going to do this and how that is going to be done are still missing.

The evaluation team notes that CUB has already made significant progress towards accomplishing its mission and was impressed by the action plan included in the SER with clear goals, timetables and responsible persons in the management followed by a SWOT analysis. Therefore, the team advises the university to include those timetables as part of the IDP through the detailed discussions in Senate and other committees. The team believes that a clear definition of its mission and vision in shorter statements is also needed in the IDP.

The Quality Handbook prepared by the University Quality Coordination Committee, which was set up in 2004 to develop, coordinate, monitor and review the tasks and activities related to quality management and assurance and supported by Faculty Quality Coordination Committees, is also worth appreciation in this context as it is a very solid base for the future.

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\(^8\) SER, Appendix V
5.2 Mid-term and Long-term Strategies

The Rector and members of CUB seem very aware of the fact that the transition is a challenge that the University has to face. For example, they are already aware of the changes that Bologna and European research programmes will bring about. The university has already transformed its degree programmes to be suitable for multi-cycle degree programmes. Although such a change was due to external circumstances rather than internal stimulus, now the university seems to be aware of the fact that it has the opportunity to get the best out of this transition process. In fact, radical changes were already on the way over the last four years. As a result of integration, the university has a new name, a new image, a new identity, a new website etc. The team would like to contribute to this change process and hopes that this evaluation will be a useful impulse.

The evaluation team observed that some faculties feel that they are the core part of CUB referring the others as the other side of Danube which signals the lack of university community identity. So, first of all CUB should increase an awareness that there is a need for a change at university, faculty and individual level starting with an enhanced appreciation of the common good; i.e. a proud institutional identity. To succeed in this aim, the university needs to include more staff in the process of discussing changes and decision making and afterwards in its implementing. Another element would be to speed the transfer of knowledge on processes of change by proper dissemination of information in broader academic community. Some faculties, on the other hand, do not feel the same urgency to change, especially about running similar courses in different faculties or promoting inter-disciplinary studies etc.

Although the IDP is the product of a systematic bottom-up approach, it still has some weak points in regard to clear strategies to reach solid aims. For example, both the SER and meetings indicated that CUB wants to reach a 50/50 balance in regard to undergraduate and postgraduate student numbers. However the IDP fails to give answers regarding the clear strategy to reach to this goal.

As mentioned before, the institutional evaluation aims to assess the quality monitoring mechanisms and their use in the strategic development of the university. CUB has many quality mechanisms in place that can contribute to an effective quality culture and its capacity to change. The evaluation team appreciates the work done in quality management and assurance so far. Similarly, it welcomes the EQUS accreditation study in the Business Administration Faculty as well as the fact that CUB will be hosting the EQAF forum in November 2008. However, it believes that making quality indicators public and benchmarking quality indicators of individuals, faculties or other universities would promote the changes further within the institution.

6. Conclusions and Final Recommendation

In today’s very fast moving world, the change process and the pace of the change process is very important. The Corvinus University of Budapest, which is in fact an association of faculties, seems to have managed well so far by merging different universities of distinct organisational cultures under one roof without destroying the academic freedom of faculties.
The university has a very good platform, very good image and great potential. Greater functional co-ordination and management require urgent attention and co-operation at an institutional level, as highly decentralised faculties out of touch with the institutional objectives of the university inhibit the attainment of these objectives. The university should address the necessary changes now and not wait until later. The faculties have been together for a while but with a very limited cross-faculty activity, therefore the cross-faculty activity needs to be facilitated as soon as possible across the two sides of the Danube.

The team believes that CUB needs to develop a sense of urgency and a common organisational culture with an emphasis on academic entrepreneurship as well as increasing awareness within university of the need for change. At the moment, the university is able to give encouragement to the faculties but little direction.

The following main brief points, which are derived from the evaluation process, are recommended by the evaluation team:

i) Strategic Management, Governance and Autonomy
   • Facilitation of interaction between disciplines, faculties, departments
   • Structural changes, merging of faculties and/or departments promoted in a way that not centrally dictated but co-operatively agreed
   • Introducing strong incentives (financial as well as other rewards)
   • Strengthening its human resource management with a clear vision

ii) Internationalisation
    • Developing a strong international branding
    • Establishing a unified language centre
    • Introducing new incentives for mobility of professors and students
    • Financial support for international publishing and participation in international conferences
    • Increasing the number of courses in English and standardising the ECTS credit system
    • Increasing internationalisation activity, the number of exchange students and teacher mobility further with systematic motivation

iii) Teaching and Learning
    • From teaching to learning: developing new pedagogical methods
    • Evaluating portfolio of programmes
    • Considering consequences of balance between undergraduate/postgraduate number of students
    • Systematic international benchmarking
    • Making student evaluations public
    • Having regular annual graduate surveys
    • Elaborating the student information system

iv) Research
    • Establishing strategic priorities for selected research areas as well as identifying the needs and new areas for society
• Encouraging the role of the Innovation Centre and the Regional Knowledge Centre
• Strengthening the role of the Scientific Council
• Establishing seed money for new initiatives/research projects
• Taking further action to have more and stronger PhD programmes
• Introducing incentives for international publications
• Negotiating at governmental level for the involvement of the Ministry of Education in the promotion and funding of research

v) Financial Resources
• More emphasis on attracting external funding for research and education by introducing dedicated mechanisms within the institution for fund-raising
• Increasing the revenues from post-experience education
• Creating central funds for initiating and supporting new ventures
Envoi

The evaluation team once again would like to express its deep thanks to the Rector of Corvinus University of Budapest, Professor Tamás Mészáros, for initiating and successfully finalising the process as well as for his very warm welcome and hospitality. The team also wishes to express its sincere thanks to Professor Ildiko Hrubos for chairing the Self-evaluation Steering Committee and to Professor Norbert Kis, the liaison person, for the very efficient organisation of all meetings during the visits. The team also would like to thank the Self-evaluation Steering Committee and all members of staff and students with whom they met and who provided valuable information through very open and frank discussions.

The review team strongly supports the leadership of Corvinus University of Budapest in its eagerness to become a world university and hopes that this evaluation will be a useful contribution to the change process that the university faces. The evaluation team wishes the university every success in its efforts to become more integrated, more international and more research-oriented with a good infrastructure not identified by being on the left or the right side of Danube but by firmly bridging the three campuses over both the Buda and the Pest sides, and concludes this evaluation report with the slogan of the institution: *Scientia mea-adiutor meus* (my knowledge is my helper)…