



Report of the Living Values Project

University POLITEHNICA of Bucharest

30 June 2018

1. Your university and its mission; a brief description.

- (1) University POLITEHNICA of Bucharest (UPB) commits to the statute of a University of Advanced Research and Education. The mission assumed by UPB is conceived as a meeting point between education and scientific research: by professional training on the one hand and by knowledge production and innovation, on the other hand as the main objectives of the knowledge society and economy. The university's goals are also in full agreement with the provisions stipulated in Europe 2020 Strategy.
- (2) University POLITEHNICA of Bucharest commits to the concept of innovative university, both from the point of view of the human capital, which influences the innovating ability of a country, and also from the point of view of scientific research, which produces knowledge, as well as by means of the technological innovations and adaptations which have an impact on the economic growth of the country.
- (3) Owing to its cultural dimension, the university plays a tremendously important role in fostering national identity, social cohesion and a distinct institutional culture. To produce knowledge, mainly by scientific research, to transmit it further on by means of education and professional training and disseminate it by means of IT technologies, to use technological innovations and the cultural dimension, to promote a set of moral values – all these represent the elements which define the identity and the uniqueness of the university.
- (4) The university designs and optimizes the processes that lead to a knowledge-based society, to the achievement of the objectives set for a sustainable economic growth, better jobs and greater economic and social cohesion, in accordance with the goals established by Europe 2020 Strategy.

2. What were/are your institutional values? Please provide a copy of your values statement to date, together with the operational sub elements for each.

The University **values** reflect a commitment to:

- (1) **Academic autonomy** that entitles the community to self-governance, to scheduling resources and programmes according to its self-assumed mission and in compliance with the laws in force.

- (2) **Academic freedom**, entitling members of the academic community to freely pursue their professional development and the tasks undertaken, without manipulation, censorship and persecutions, in compliance with the laws in force, the scientific standards undertaken by the university and personal responsibility.
- (3) **Professionalism**, by encouraging and supporting performance.
- (4) **Professional honesty** that impels community members to promote scientific truth and fairness in all their work activities.
- (5) **Personal responsibility** in all professional and social activities undertaken.
- (6) **Promoting tolerance**, respect, truth and openness in inner and outer community relations.
- (7) **Equal access opportunities** to programmes and activities promoted by the university.

Under these aspects, University POLITEHNICA of Bucharest is approaching the Living Values project and facing challenges:

(1) Academic autonomy

University autonomy is guaranteed by the Constitution of Romania and represents the right of the university community to manage itself, to exert academic freedom, to assume its mission, strategy and the set of competences which enable it to accomplish its mission based on public accountability.

University autonomy includes the following components:

- a. Institutional autonomy;
- b. Didactic and scientific autonomy;
- c. Administrative and financial autonomy;
- d. Jurisdictional autonomy.

(2) Academic freedom

The University Senate warrants institutional and individual academic freedom to its community members. The members of the academic community are free to enjoy the freedom of creative teaching and scientific work provided they comply with the legal and professional conduct provisions. UPB supports and encourages young researchers through internal grants (GEX programs). UPB's strategy for research is based on the Horizon2020 main research topics. Accordingly, UPB promotes innovation and technological transfer of the research products.

(3) Professionalism, by encouraging and supporting performance

At UPB, we understand professionalism as a growing mindset of young and senior academics. UPB actively supports academic staff in developing their teaching and research competencies. In doing so, the University offers an educational program designed to provide young academics with appropriate knowledge and abilities in order to foster authentic learning. Moreover, the University invests in developing the research career of young academics by offering internal research grants through the Program Research Grants for Excellence. Thus, the PhD candidates and the faculty members are supported to be compliant with the professional standards, requirements and expectations of the academic environment.

(4) Personal responsibility in all professional and social activities undertaken

The University is required, in all areas of its policies, practices, procedures and services, to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment;
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

All students and staff in our University community have personal responsibility for their conduct and decision making in upholding the University's values, and for compliance with the legal framework in which we operate. The University is committed to promoting the highest standards of individual behavior and personal accountability, valuing social responsibility as a University and in our external partnerships. We strive to be a socially responsible institution and actively contribute to economic and social development through knowledge exchange, enterprise and entrepreneurship; establishing partnerships with businesses, social enterprises and public sector organizations which facilitate translation of our knowledge and understanding to wider benefit; raising educational aspirations around the world; and promoting volunteering and community engagement as a means of using our expertise to contribute to social well-being.

(5) Academic honesty

Academic honesty is one of the most important principle influencing the image of our institution. As higher education is focused on improving the quality of its programs, there is great value in emphasizing academic standards and integrity.

A. University Responsibility. It is the university's responsibility to provide an educational process that informs both students and faculty of their rights and responsibilities regarding matters as plagiarism and professional ethics. Most of what is considered unethical or dishonest behavior can be avoided if faculty and students clearly understand both what constitutes these practices and their consequences. The university community should also be aware of the procedures to be followed should a breach of academic honesty occur.

B. Student Responsibilities. Students must be aware that the consequences of violating standards of academic honesty are extremely serious and costly and may result in the loss of academic and career opportunities. According to UPB regulation, students found to have committed violations against academic honesty face removal from university classes and degree programs, and/or suspension from the university.

To avoid plagiarism, the university implemented a software designed to effectively detect and thereby prevent plagiarism. The goal of this program is to help reduce the impact of plagiarism.

Academic integrity is also ensured by the operation of the Ethics Committee and Academic Integrity, the adoption of a Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. The Ethics Committee and Academic Integrity operates according to its own self-regulations, while the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct is approved by the University Senate and is part of the University Charter. The Ethics Committee and Academic Integrity is entrusted with solving complaints, debating on

the cases submitted, proposing solutions and submitting, to the University Senate, the cases and solutions proposed.

(6) Promoting tolerance, respect, truth and openness in inner and outer community relations

UPB is devoted to promoting the respect for diversity, tolerance and appreciation for pluralism and civic responsibility. The Ethics Committee and Academic Integrity advocates for minority integration, inclusive classrooms and learning environments, addressing diverse learning needs, encouraging cross-cultural cooperation, and building a network of open-minded, liberal individuals.

(7) Equal access opportunities to programmes and activities promoted by the university.

University POLITEHNICA of Bucharest is committed to respecting the dignity of persons and the right to quality education for every person. UPB encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. Accordingly, UPB promotes equality and equity for all staff, faculty, current students and alumni. UPB is committed to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on gender, race, social and economic status, political and religious beliefs. All staff, students, faculty and researchers are recruited, evaluated and promoted according to their knowledge, abilities and competences. The UPB's charter declares and endorses all the aforementioned principles. Currently, 40% of our faculty members are women, 43% of all managers are women and over 40% of students are females.

If, however discrimination occurs, the students are encouraged to talk to their tutors, vice-deans or to address a complaint to Ethics Committee and Academic Integrity.

3. Why did your university decide to engage in the pilot process? (What internal or external goals or issues did you think that it would address?)

UPB is gearing up for a major milestone in 2018 when we celebrate 200 years of technical tertiary education. The 200 year anniversary represents a great opportunity to restate our values and to reaffirm our identity in the local, regional and international higher education landscape.

The decision to participate in the *Living Values Pilot Project* is based on the need to achieve the following goals:

- To identify the values profile of the institution
- To guide the development process of the university
- To enhance the engagement of the academic community in order to promote the values and principles of the university
- To encourage effective exchanges between UPB and MCO members

What were the relevant internal or external circumstances?

University POLITEHNICA of Bucharest is the oldest and most reputable technical university in Romania. Our university is actively involved in providing students with the best and most relevant learning experiences.

UPB invests in an open and innovative academic community that promotes cooperation and teamwork. University POLITEHNICA of Bucharest is involved in many research projects, which proves that the university has the resources and the openness needed and the students are positive about their involvement in these research projects. Moreover, UPB is highly performant in various

research domains (e.g. Chemical Engineering, Electrical engineering) and this fact contributes to the status consolidation at a national and European level.

The internal organisational environment is characterized by the presence of a significant number of young academics. 32% of the academic staff is aged under 41. Concurrently, the attractiveness for the teaching profession and for Higher Education research is decreasing constantly. Moreover, teacher's overload at a national level and not only puts quality at risk.

Under these circumstances, the leadership team of the university considers it is important to engage all the staff in the institutional project they propose. The involvement in this project will create contexts to share opinions, ideas, needs and interests and to reinforce the culture of communication and openness. We strongly believe that effective working relationships are critical to university success.

What benefits did you expect to gain?

From an internal perspective, we expect to:

- Improve value-based institutional governance;
- Develop and improve institutional practices;
- Spread good practice throughout the organization;
- Improve decision making process.

The main benefits of building value-based organizational culture:

- informed decision making for the strategic plans;
- cooperative solutions to organisation's goals;
- increased organisational effectiveness.

From an external perspective, we expect to:

- improve university reputation;
- gain insights from partners more experienced than UPB in terms of value-oriented leadership;
- build trust with stakeholders.

What difficulties did you anticipate? What reservations were expressed about engaging in the project?

Universities remain an aspiration for families and a priority for knowledge-based economies.

But somewhere along the way they seem to have suffered some kind of identity crisis. What are they for? Who are they meant to serve? And who should pay for them?

Maybe the biggest challenge is to find a renewed sense of purpose and to make a new contract with the public about how they can support one another. Working with highly skilled professionals could be difficult under some circumstances. It might be difficult for the leadership team to develop and promote a common set of values and a common language for everyone (taken into consideration that UPB has almost 5000 employees). In addition to academics' opinions, there are students' opinions and needs. To what extent would all these expectations work conjointly? This is a question to be answered during the implementation of these projects.

UPB has got a set of core values that can be identical to the students' and academics' expectations regarding UPB. We are concerned that we somewhat lack the necessary instruments in order to meet their expectations and also the institutional capacity to promote these values.

4. To what extent and in what ways was your university's involvement in the project linked to the development or implementation of its strategic plan? Please comment on any issues.

Participating in the *Living Values* project represents a starting point, a good opportunity to re-evaluate and discuss UPB's institutional project with academics, students and stakeholders. We expect that this on-going project will result in a new way of designing the strategic plan of the university leading to an increased organizational effectiveness.

5. How did you go about the project? (How was the project managed/steered and by which office holders? What was the role of the rector/president in the whole process? What stages did it have? Which stakeholders were involved? How effective was their involvement? What gaps did you identify in those stages? What were the sources and nature of resistance you encountered, if any, and how were these dealt with? Generally, what worked? What didn't?)

Even from the beginning of the MCO evaluation process, Mr. Costoiu, UPB Rector, involved all the decision makers in the university for the debate sessions with the MCO representative.

The MCO representative has had meetings with:

- UPB top management team;
- Deans;
- Academic staff;
- Students;
- Alumni & External Stakeholders.

The UPB Rector gave a brief presentation on the history of the institution and UPB strategic plan. He also provided a short description of the election process for the top management of the university and provided information about the new developments in UPB and focused on "excellence" in all their research and innovation activities.

UPB Vice Rectors also contributed to the presentation providing information about the goals, priorities and important projects of the university. They presented UPB and his role in the region - *UPB is the oldest technical university in Romania with a high reputation in engineering education has a leading role in the country's transformation in terms of "university-industry partnership". UPB gives priority to doing "excellent research", attracting and retaining "excellent staff", "excellent students", establishing strong ties between the university and the industry. UPB was able to attract extensive funding from the Government and EC Structural Funds for providing excellent research infrastructure for strengthening its capacity in Research-Innovation. 33% of the UPB's budget is allocated for research. UPB has been able to have two ERC grants besides other international and European funded projects. UPB gives importance to its international ties and provides additional funding to support its academic staff and students for developing relationships with international institutions. The university has fifteen Double Degree Diploma programmes with European Universities. UPB graduates' employment rate is 93%. The Alumni Association is well established and has a strong connection with the university. The University is committed to a continuous improvement process by transforming its internal structure and re-establishing its ties with its stakeholders according to changing conditions. UPB gives importance to maintaining flexibility in its actions and activities. Students have a role to play in all decision-making processes. Formal and informal decision-making processes are complementing each other to establish a transparent structure for all stakeholders.*

Which stakeholders were involved? How effective was their involvement?

At the meeting with the MCO representative there have been present several members of the most important companies in Romania that UPB is an active partner.

External stakeholders are always interested to recruit UPB graduates and they have expressed their satisfaction with the education that graduates received from their university. Excellence in teaching and learning seem important goal besides excellent research and excellent liaison between UPB and industry.

What gaps did you identify in those stages? What were the sources and nature of resistance you encountered, if any, and how were these dealt with? Generally, what worked? What didn't?

In the modern European context, an essential element in this is to involve students as equal partners in the governance and decision-making processes of the university. This involvement helps students and graduates to gain these qualities and attributes. However, just as importantly, the involvement of students is also crucial for the university in ensuring all decisions that include a careful consideration from the students' perspective. For their own academic and personal development, students therefore need to be encouraged and supported to engage and contribute meaningfully at every level of the institution.

6. What has changed in your university as a consequence of the project *or (depending on how far you have been able to progress)* what do you anticipate will change when the pilot project is completed? Have your values changed? If so, what are the new values? Have the ways in which you live (or intend to live) your values changed? (Processes, communications etc?) How, or in what ways has your university benefited (or do you expect your university to benefit) from its involvement in the project? Did the difficulties materialize? If so what action was taken?

- We should create an efficient quality assurance system for the university, which covers teaching, research and administration, and includes ongoing program evaluation and feedback to students.
- We should continue to develop its communication activities, both internally and externally, for the benefit of society and the university.
- We should use ideas from staff at all levels and stages of experience, not just to contribute to the written plans but also to take forward actions.

7. What are you plans for continuing with the project? What are the next steps or next developments to derive further value from it?

The UPB vision for the internationalization process proposes an organizational project through which the university strengthens its position at a regional, European and global level, providing educational and research services in accordance with the needs of the direct beneficiaries and the community to which it belongs. Strengthening the international dimension is expected to bring about improvements in education and research by encouraging mobility, cooperation and exchange of experience of the academic community by increasing the multicultural dimension and attracting more foreign students, leading to an improvement in the international reputation of UPB.