

THE FINANCING OF PROJECT BASED SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

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Abstract:

The research system in high education will have to suffer some important changes due to our country's European integration in the near future. High quality scientific research is required by the new evaluation systems, the teaching activity being completed by the research activity. The paper presents the situation of scientific research projects financed by the state, on one hand, and financed by private companies, on the other hand.

Key words: *scientific research, globalization, information, high education*

JEL classification: G32, I22

The educational system of a country is determinative for the level of that society and for our country to get in line with the European standards, to integrate into the European Union it is mandatory to restructure the educational system and the scientific research system in order to obtain a superior quality for these.

The higher education system and the scientific research must assure a solid education and lead to the development of fine intellectuals, and the globalization process, by implementing the knowledge based information society, brings great challenges in the domain of science and knowledge development.

The dynamics of the information society must be sustained by a quality education, by a proper legal frame, by a strong research field and not at last by the required material and financial means.

As a new member of the European Union, Romania must raise the level of quality of the scientific research. The state of the scientific research can be followed up by analyzing the performances, the impact upon the social and economic development. Facing the developing knowledge society, most of the social and economic fields are going through quick changes, many of these changes being hard to follow or accept by the human individual. Education is a field that “affected” by the development of the knowledge era is going through an impressive modernization process, due to the use of information and communication technologies. The quality in the education field has become a must, and is should be considered from the didactic point of view and from the scientific research point of view.

A high education institution needs to be clearly distinguished by a high school, for example, which is a place where only didactic activity is taking place. In universities the high level scientific research is a must, complementary to the teaching activity. The idea on which a successful high education system is based on is that the didactic activity is in connection with the scientific activity, as a university cannot “survive” only through didactic activity. In high level universities from developed countries a professor's activity is being evaluated twice a year and the main evaluation parameters are: citations, new courses introduced in the curricula, the percentage of updated courses, research grants etc. These are evaluation criterion that we will have to embrace.

A great challenge for the didactic stuff in a high education institution is the financing of research projects, and the participation in such projects, but especially

managing such projects, has become a must in the evaluation process of the academic staff in order to be promoted as an associate professor or a full professor.

The financing of research projects with money from public resources is even a higher challenge for academics from private universities in Romania, as, coincidental or not, only a few projects proposed by academics from private universities are financed from the total of proposed projects.

The state of the project based scientific research can be understood and determined making a small study upon some project competitions organized by the NURC (National University Research Council; in original: CNCSIS) in 2008 in Romania. These project competitions are eloquent as the research projects financed by NURC have the most weight concerning the evaluation of advancing files of the academic staff, so the competition has always been tough.

I have considered the projects proposed within the Research, Development, Innovation National Plan – PN II, particularly from the so called Human Resource (Resurse Umane) program, the competition for Young Ph.D. Students, and from the so called Ideas (Idei) program, the Exploratory research projects.

The projects for Young Ph.D. students are aiming to encourage young researchers, Ph.D. students working in high education institutions, in order to help them finalize their researches planned in their doctoral program. This program is also aiming to increase the number of Ph.D. students to finalize their thesis and obtain the doctor in science title.

Exploratory research projects are aiming the development of knowledge in any research field, including social-human, through fundamental research as much as through advanced research that will develop complex problems, and will acquire new knowledge regarding phenomenon and processes, regarding the validation of new original hypothesis, conceptual models and theories [www.cncsis.ro]. These projects are also after promoting original and high quality research, increasing the number of researchers financed through research projects, and mostly increasing the Romanian research visibility on international level.

In the year 2008, within the Human resource program, the Young Ph.D. Students competition, 420 projects have been proposed, and from these 411 have been declared eligible, requiring a total amount of 13.390.451 lei. From the rest of 9 projects one has withdrawn itself and 8 have been considered not eligible

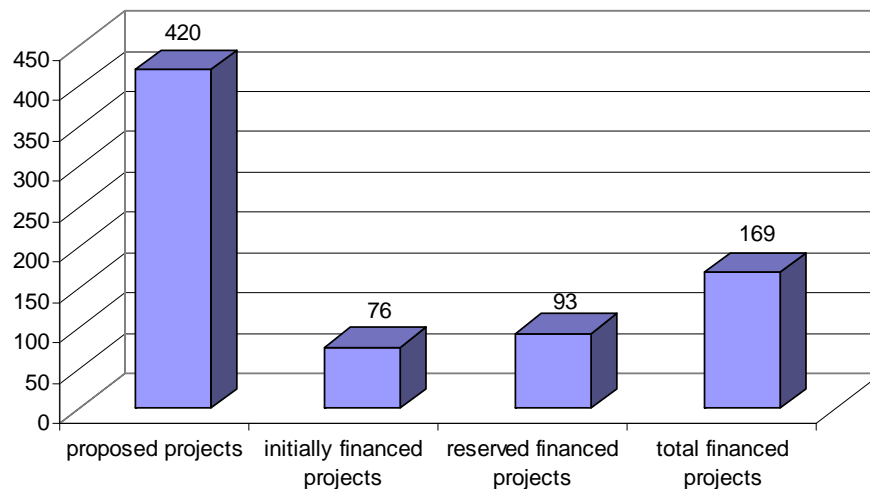


Figure 1. The situation of projects within the Human Resource program, the competition for Young Ph.D. students, in 2008, financed by NURC

From the 411 eligible projects, only 76 projects have been initially financed, the minimum financing score being established at 96 points, out of a maximum of 100 points. The amount of money required for the financed projects has been 2.703.645 lei.

A list of reserved projects has been set, totalizing 148 projects that have achieved scores between 90 and 95 points, their total value being 4.788.547 lei. Finally, from this list the projects with scores between 92 and 95 points have also been financed, this meaning 93 more projects, in amount of 3.064.880 lei.

Totally a number of 169 projects, in total amount of 5.768.525 lei have been financed, this number representing 40,2% of the number of projects initially proposed for the competition.

The situation of research projects for Young Ph.D. students, in 2008, is shown in Figure 1.

Within the Ideas program, the Exploratory research projects competition, the interests were higher, and the proposed projects have been sorted by Commissions. So, at the Commission 13, which was for Economic Science, there have been 245 proposed projects, from which only 78 financed projects. The financing score was between 87,45 and 97,03 points, and the total amount of money required for financing the 78 projects was 58.336.242 lei. The beneficiary research teams of these projects are from only 10 institutions (8 universities and 2 research institutes). Not even one of the 8 beneficiary universities is a private university.

The situation of Exploratory research projects, in the Economic Science field, in 2008 is shown in Figure 2.

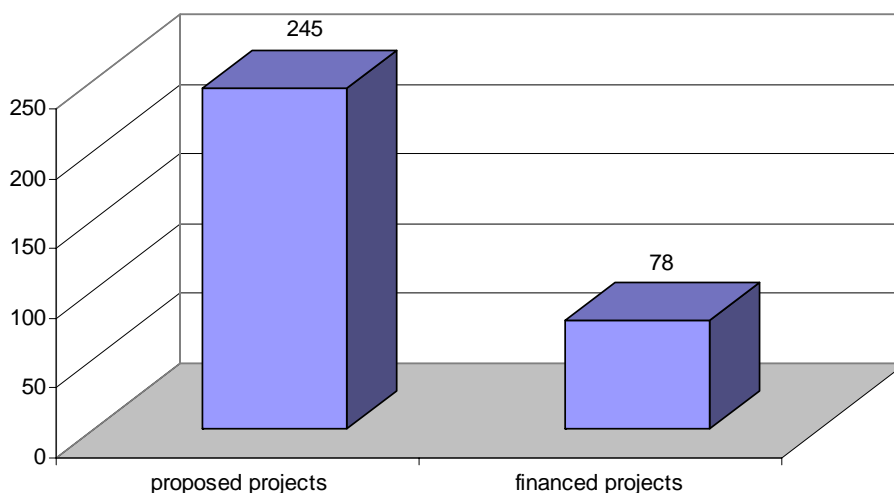


Figure 2. The situation of projects in the Ideas program – Exploratory research projects, in the Economic Science field, in 2008, financed by NURC

What remains to the private universities, besides continuous and often failed trials to obtain NURC financing, is the choice of research projects with the private industry. Unfortunately in Romania this kind of developing and implementing research projects with private enterprises is at a beginning stage and is developing very slowly.

The direct contact with private enterprises, that provide occidental universities substantial incomes from research, is practically almost ignored in the Romanian universities, they being limited to attracting financing from the state.

For example, according to some studies, the top Romanian universities have only achieved private financings that are not even the thousandth part of the financing received from the state.

Implementing research projects with the private enterprises is difficult, as it requires a higher implication, and a consistent offer from the universities. The companies are hardly coming and require services from universities, instead expecting to receive offers from them. In Europe a lot of universities require their students to have worked as researchers in different companies, so the students will be the connection between the universities and companies. Given that from 2012 the European high education will have to be allocated 2% from the GDP, which is almost double from the amount currently allocated to the Romanian universities, they will have to learn to receive financings through private research contracts, and not continuously expect financing from the state.

During the last years, with the adhesion of Romania to the European Union, the possibilities of financing from European funds have been developing. The available amount of money is huge, but so are the required effort and the quality of developing and implementing the projects. Initially universities were not allowed to access European funds, as they were not on the list of potential beneficiary of different types of programs and development axes. Currently the National Authority for Scientific Research has launched competitions for research-development and innovation, financed from structural funds, where universities are allowed to compete.

This research project development direction needs to develop quickly, because the funding that Romania has received represents only 52% of the country's participation to these funds, or normally they should overcome the whole amount of our participation [www.ancs.ro].

Universities represent the rocket launcher of future intellectuals which will take care of the proper functionality of the society using their highly acquired skills, and for them to be able to correspond to the requirements we must provide a high quality educational environment. This goal can be achieved only if the teachers are well-prepared regarding their didactic activity but also regarding their scientific research activities, which implicitly leads to improvement and completion of the didactic one. The scientific research will only become performing and efficient if in Romanian universities the several values will be developed: the concept of the well done thing, the free circulation of ideas, and, of course, the self confidence and optimism of the researchers.

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