

**UNIVERSITY OF ORADEA – A POLARIZING CENTER
IN THE CRIȘANA AREA**

Iuliana Claudia BAIAS

University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning – CSAT,
1 Universitatii St., 410087, Oradea, Romania, e-mail: baiasiuliana@gmail.com

Horia CARTIȘ

University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning – CSAT,
1 Universitatii St., 410087, Oradea, Romania, e-mail: horia_cartis@yahoo.com

Abstract: The University of Oradea is the main polarizing center for the intellectual forces (teachers and students) and it asserts, consolidates and develops the higher education in the Crișana area. The significant number of students that put in applications in each academic year, from the country and also from abroad, displays the prestige of this university. By training students in various fields and promoting effective partnerships with economic areas that can fructify the skills of the professionals trained in the university, the university actively participates in the development of the local and regional economy.

Key words: University of Oradea, students, local and regional development.

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INTRODUCTION

The University was firstly created as a mere institution composed of several teachers and students but over time it grew progressively, becoming a complex institution with more strength and desire to survive in a society which is constantly changing (Kerr, 2001; Vladimirescu OTOVESCU, 2007). Designed and built on the idea of a free development of all knowledge (literature, history, law, politics, economy, philosophy, human sciences, “scientific” science in the sense of mathematics and modern science of nature), the university is the place that trains and validates the skills of future specialists but it also fulfills other functions (Granel, 2002 Barnett, 2011). Nowadays this institution plays a role which is important in every civilized society.

The University of Oradea, located in Oradea is one of the prestigious higher education institutions in Romania. From its beginnings until now it has gained a place of honor in the system of higher education both nationally and internationally. As a public institution it respects and promotes the values enshrined in the Great Charter of Universities of Bologna, its main mission being to train specialists in different fields (mathematics, informatics, physics, chemistry, biology, health, law, social assistance,

political science, management, marketing, education, geography, history, physical education and sports, computers, music, theater, etc.) and generate new knowledge in order to stimulate the economic and social progress (Drecin and Măhăra, 2004; Hanțiu et al, 2009; Baias, 2011) and thus contributing in this regard to the local and regional development.

The presence of the University in the Crișana area gave young people the opportunity to study in their native place, thus helping them from going to study at other universities in the country and / or abroad.



Figure 1. University of Oradea

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the following geographical research methods: the method of bibliographic documentation (Cocean, 2005; Armaș, 2006); the statistical method (Khan, 1998; Petrea, 2005; Gomez and Jones, 2010;) used in the processing of statistical data on the evolution of the number of students depending on their residence, country of origin, nationality and on the evolution in the number of graduates from the University of Oradea between 2008-2012; the analysis method (Cocean, 2005 Clifford et al., 2010) - the obtained data and information are used for profile processing; the cartographic method - transforming the information in cartographic representations by using the GIS software (Petrea, 2005, Clifford et al., 2010) and the synthesis method - drawing conclusions on the students dynamics from the Oradea University during the period mentioned above.

DISCUSSIONS

Students are an essential component in the educational process conducted in a university. The main objective of teaching is to train, educate and prepare them for integration into the labor market. The mission of the university in the regional and urban development is one of its greatest challenges. The University is in a position to prepare specialists in various fields and find solutions to the problems that surface in the process of the territorial development. The skills and the efforts of the teachers get materialized in the high level of the professional training and in the performance of the future specialists. Therefore, the training of the students and their number represent main elements that define the importance of universities amongst the group of higher education institutions (Munteanu and Munteanu, 2004 Ianoș, 2010).

The University of Oradea has an important role in the economic development and in the local and regional territorial development. Achieving this mission is one of its greatest challenges. The University is in a position to fulfill this mission by providing access to knowledge and by training specialists. The annual registration of a significant number of students both from Romania and from abroad shows the importance of this University at

a local, regional, national and international level.

The number of students included in the undergraduate programs designed for obtaining a bachelor's degree from the University of Oradea between 2008-2012 refers to the number of students who participate in the four or five years of studies, not to those who register for admission in the first year. Observing the dynamics in the student's number, a decrease in the number of students registered for the undergraduate programs is noticeable starting with the 2009-2010 academic year, as a result of reducing the duration of schooling from five years to four and three years, a situation triggered by the reorganization of the higher education system in accordance with the Bologna process and by the economic crisis that had a major impact, the economic actors being forced to relinquish a part of or their entire activity, this resulting in fewer jobs for university graduates.

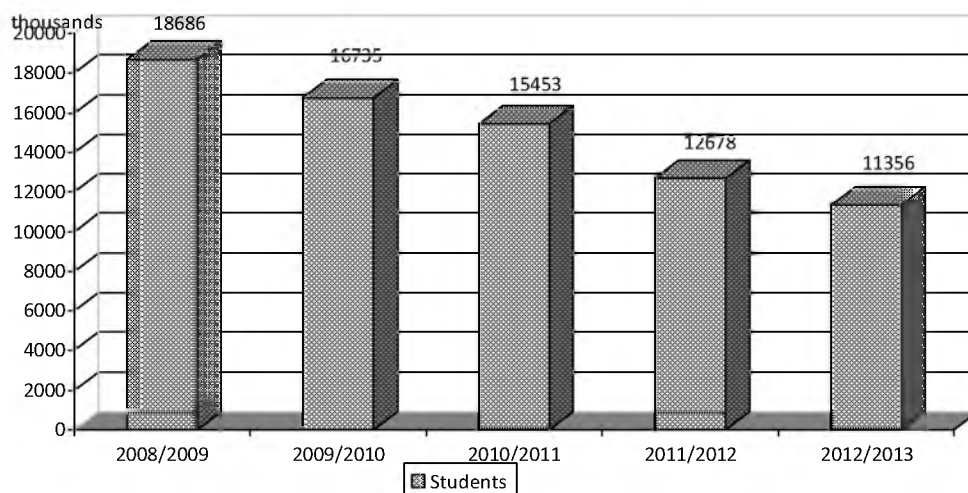


Figure 2. The dynamics of the number of students registered for the undergraduate programs, University of Oradea, between 2008-2012 (Data source: Bihor Statistics County)

The University of Oradea draws its students both from the country and from abroad (Figure 3). Even if the number of students has dropped, their geographic origin continued to expand. In what concerns the geographical origin of the students from the country, it is noted that most students come from Oradea, followed by students from other cities and towns from the Bihor county or from other counties: Alba, Bacău, Caraș-Severin, Craiova, Hunedoara, Maramureș, Mehedinți etc. (Figure 3).



Figure 3. The area of origin of the students from the University of Oradea for the 2012-2013 academic year

In the analyzed period, over 40% of the students attending the University of Oradea were students living in Oradea, which demonstrates that young people have chosen to study at "home" over other universities in the country or abroad (Figure 4).

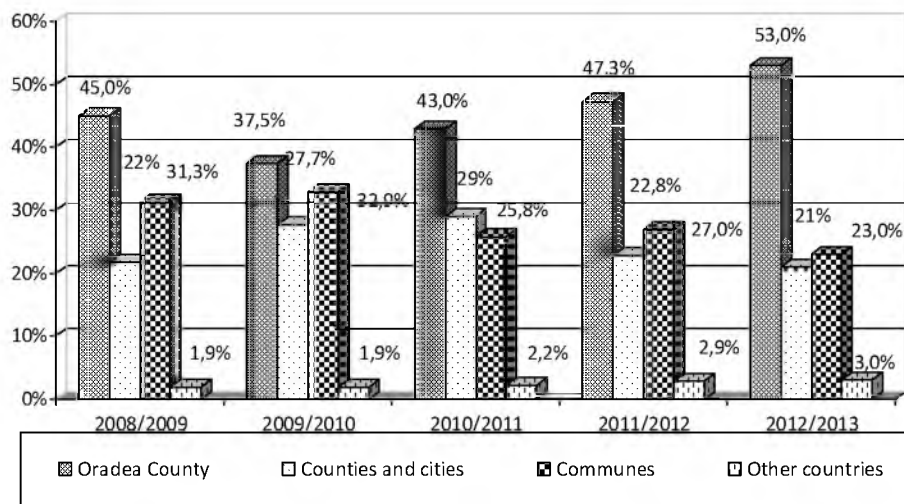


Figure 4. The evolution in the number of students registered for the undergraduate programs, University of Oradea, according to their residence, between 2008-2012 (Data source: Bihor Statistics County)

Between 2008-2012 the attraction area of the University of Oradea has changed at an international level, the number of foreign students increasing considerably during this period. Most students came from Europe (Figure 5 and Figure 6), the representative European countries being: England, Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, etc.. Out of these, the Republic of Moldova ranked first with 20% of all foreign students, a situation due to the facilities offered by the Romanian state to the Moldavian students:

tuition free places and scholarships. The following places are represented by Asian countries (South Korea, Iran , Japan, Malaysia , Palestine , etc.) but also by African countries (South Africa, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco , Mauritius , Nepal , Nigeria , Tunisia etc). The lowest number of foreign students are those coming from America (Bihor Statistics Departement; 1).

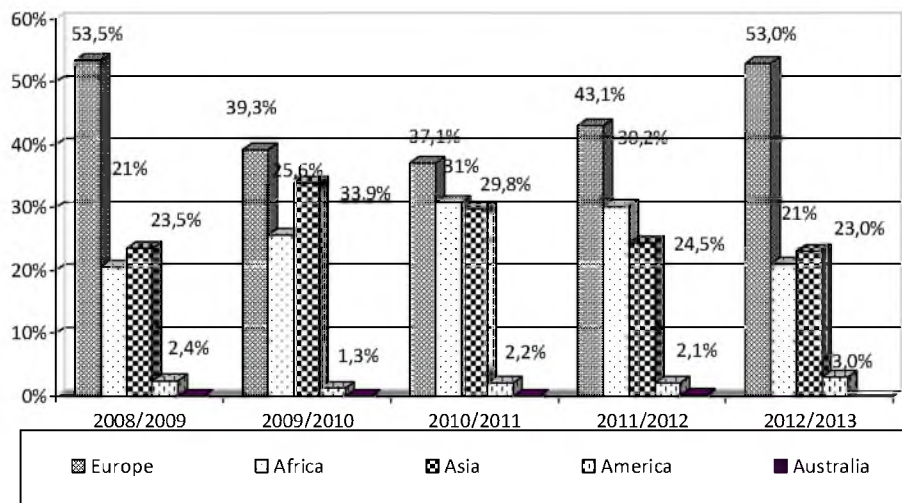


Figure 5. The evolution of the number of foreign students in the undergraduate programs, University of Oradea, according to their country of origin, between 2008-2012 (Source: Bihor Statistics County)

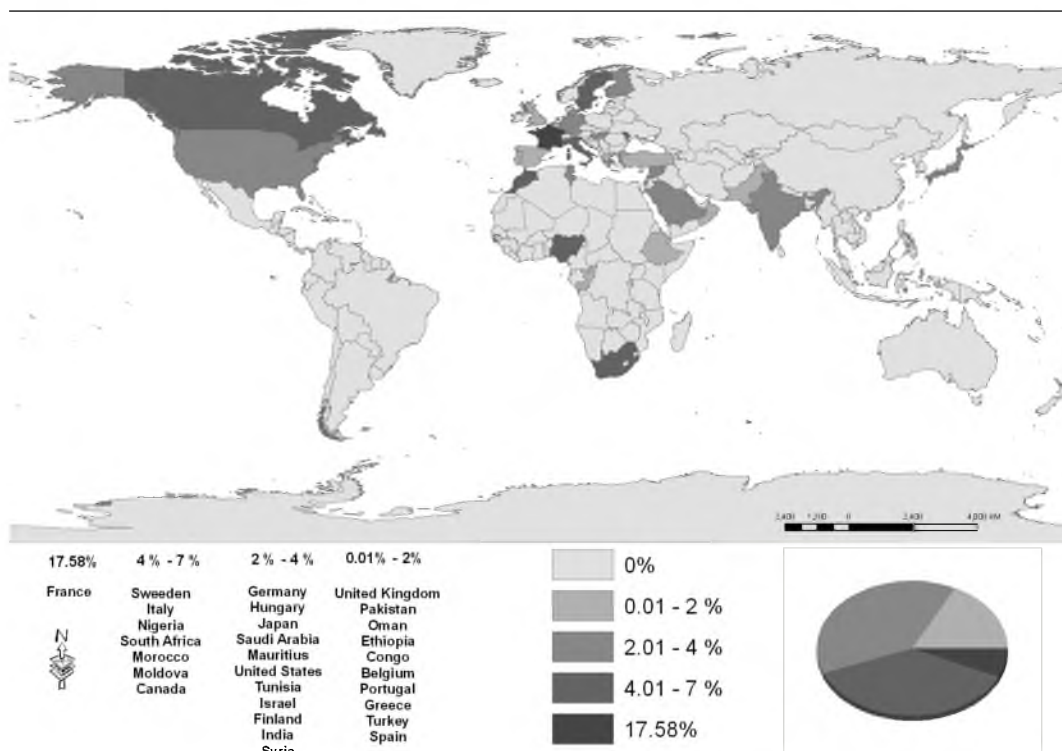
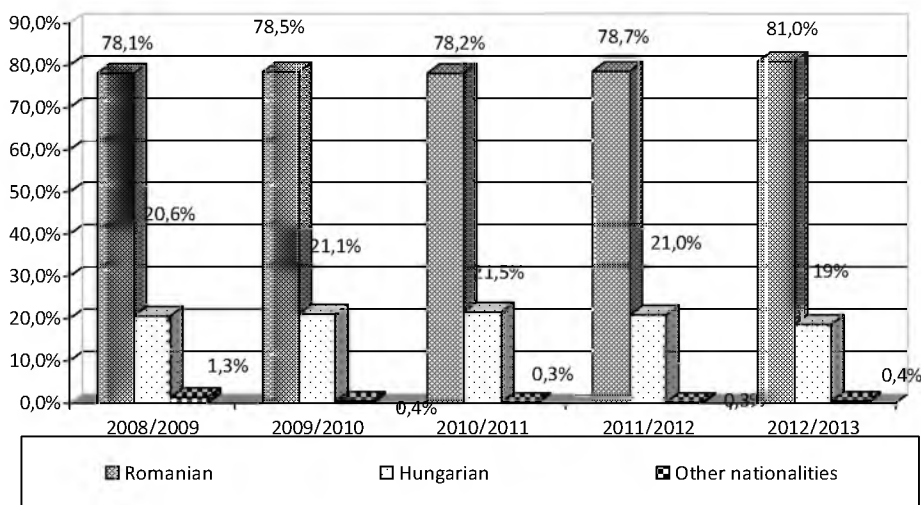


Figure 6. The area of origin of the foreign students from the University of Oradea during the 2012-2013 academic year

Most of the foreign students, especially those who are from Africa or Asia, have attended the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy.

¹ <https://uniweb.uoradea.ro> (visited in 06.04.2012, 10.10.2013)

Between 2008-2012, the national structure of the students was as follows: 70% of students in undergraduate programs were of Romanian nationality, over 20% Hungarians and 1% of other nationalities.



* Other

nationalities: Roma, German, Ukrainian, Slovak, Serbian, Italian, Turkish, etc..

Figure 6. The evolution in the number of students registered for the undergraduate programs, University of Oradea, by nationality, between 2008-2012 (Source: Bihor Statistics County)

The number of graduates of the University of Oradea as well as the number of students depended partially on the number of places established annually and on the economic situation. The academic year 2009-2010 has registered the highest number of graduates since both the students belonging to the "old system" (four or five years) and the first students belonging to the Bologna system completed their studies at the same time.

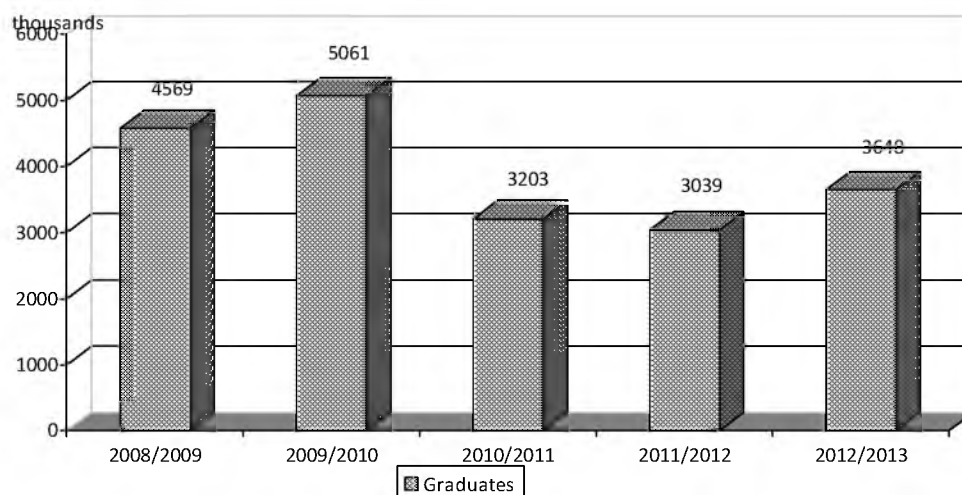


Figure 7. Evolution in the number of graduates from undergraduate programs, University of Oradea, between 2008-2012 (Data source: Statistics Bihor County)

Once graduated, certain students have settled permanently or temporarily in different areas of the Crișana area with different purposes: further studies, finding a job, creating a family, etc.

CONCLUSIONS

The University of Oradea is among the most modern universities in Romania. Its involvement in the local and regional development is an important mission. This goal can be achieved on the one hand by providing access to knowledge and on the other by training specialists in various fields. Its presence in the Crișana area offered people the chance to study in their native place. Over 40% of students come from Oradea, followed by students from other cities and towns from the Bihor County and from other counties. The area of attraction is not limited as it has expanded far beyond the country's borders. Most students come from European countries but also from Asian, African and American countries. The significant number of students that apply each year demonstrates the prestige of this university both at a national and international level.

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