

UK – Romania  
Transnational education report

---

Authors

Cristina Ramona Fiț, Irina Geantă, Daniela Alexe-Coteț

2023



# Contents

<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introductory note</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1. Research aims and methodology</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2. Transnational education: From definition to policy framework</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 Approaches to various definition of the TNE	12
2.2 Context for TNE development	13
2.3 National Policies Framework in Romania	13
2.4 Status quo of TNE RO–UK	15
<b>3. Perceptions and interest of TNE in Romania</b>	<b>22</b>
3.1 General information about the interviews	22
3.2 Perception of transnational education	23
3.3 Types of international collaboration	24
The case of the American European Education (AEE) from Brasov	27
Long term TNE collaboration: The case of Timisoara	29
3.4 Interest in furthering TNE collaborations	30
3.5 Opportunities and challenges in developing RO–UK TNE partnerships	32
Creating a full international learning experience at home The British Law Centre at University of Bucharest	34
<b>4. Perceptions and interest of TNE in Romania</b>	<b>37</b>
4.1 What roles can the British Council play to better support TNE collaborations?	38
4.2 Other institutions that could play a role in raising awareness for TNE opportunities	39
<b>5. Recommendations for better TNE collaboration</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>6. Bibliography</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Annex 1 - Questions for the semi-structured interviews</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Annex 2 - UK transnational educational programmes available in Romania – May 2023</b>	<b>51</b>

# Executive summary

This research report was conducted by the Centre for Educational Policies (CPEdu) for the British Council between February and April 2023. The authors used a mixed method approach, including desk research and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. Structured interviews were carried out with representatives of higher education institutions in Romania involved in transnational education (TNE), with European countries and national experts.

The British Council defines UK TNE as UK qualifications delivered outside of the UK. However, after reviewing several TNE definitions, the authors agreed upon using the following elements referring to TNE in the present report: *Erasmus+ student and staff mobility, joint or double degree programmes, courses or micro-credentials, student degree mobility, partnerships and research collaborations with UK universities.*

With fewer than 1,000 students per year on UK university courses, Romania is not currently among the countries where UK institutions conduct intensive TNE. However, recently adopted Romanian legislation clearly favours the internationalisation of education, the development of partnerships with universities outside the country and the improvement of study recognition processes. An openness to the development of joint degree programmes, use of micro-credentials, online education and research collaborations are among the national political priorities that also reflect academic staff perspectives on future HE development. All of this indicates that Romania is an increasingly interesting market for the UK sector to explore regarding TNE.

The data included in the report also suggest that the Romanian higher education landscape has matured when it comes to internationalisation. A positive trend in the evolution of international students, the development of study programmes in foreign languages at almost all Romanian universities, and the proliferation of double-degree programmes, especially at master level, are clear examples of this.

## Main conclusions

In order to analyse the status quo of TNE in Romania, the authors conducted a series of interviews with representatives of universities and Romanian experts at national and international level. The universities were selected to reflect the diversity of Romanian universities from the geographical perspective, form of organisation (public/private), size and typology (for example, medical, technical, comprehensive).

The main conclusions are:

- While there were differences in how respondents understood and perceived the term 'TNE', a few common descriptors emerged: **mobility, joint degree, double degree, international collaboration, international experience for students and staff.**
- All universities have international collaborations but most universities have already put in place **double or multiple degree study programmes**, aiming towards joint degrees when legislation allows.
- Regarding the institutional strategies to develop **study programmes taught in English**, at least two perspectives are seen among universities: firstly, quantitative development (more programmes in English in all fields of study/faculties) and, secondly, developing programmes in certain competitive study domains.
- In terms of collaborations with universities in the UK, the most common forms are **student and staff mobility** and **research partnerships.**
- Even if both the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit have caused a **negative impact on multiple UK-Romania academic collaborations** (reduced funding opportunities being the most frequently mentioned), they also provide a great context for TNE development.
- All respondents confirmed that there is interest from Romanian universities in developing TNE collaborations with UK institutions due to **the quality of education, positive public perception and prestige and provision of courses in the English language.**
- Top areas where there is greater interest in developing international partnerships:
  - **Technical universities** are interested in all engineering study domains
  - **Comprehensive, socio-humanities and economics** universities focus on computer science, health and life sciences, business and economics
  - **Agronomic universities** focus on bioengineering, bioeconomy, environmental protection such as climate change and food crises.

- Regarding types of future collaborations, university representatives argued for joint and double degree programmes as the most-wanted activities. The extended list also includes mobilities, research and innovation projects, teacher training programmes, micro-credentials and online courses. There is some reluctance to develop joint campuses or to offer programmes completely organised by other universities outside the country.
- Common perceptions regarding TNE development opportunities (among the most frequently mentioned):
  - **Favourable public perception** when it comes to UK institutions, these being considered by most respondents as prestigious and providing high quality study programmes
  - **The socio-economic context:** Romania is a dynamic country, with economic growth, but lagging on indicators related to human capital
  - **New law on higher education** favouring internationalisation, with better and more flexible regulations (at least for developing joint, double or multiple study programmes, micro-credentials, simplified recognition procedures)
  - **Great interest of Romanian youngsters** in obtaining qualifications offered by UK institutions, together with the rising fees and higher cost of living in the UK (advantage for TNE)
  - The development of **digital education and digital transformation, including technologies and virtual mobilities**
  - UK institutions can develop (interdisciplinary) study programmes in areas where Romania is still in the early stages (big data, emerging technologies, AI, future skills).
- Common perceptions regarding challenges in TNE development (among the most frequently mentioned):
  - **Legislation** (Brexit made a number of existing regulations non-applicable)
  - **Recognition of studies** poses additional challenges
  - **Quality assurance** – ARACIS (the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance) provisions for accreditation and assessment are rather strict, inflexible and bureaucratic
  - The high level of fees required by UK institutions
  - **Lack of adequate financial support**
  - **Lack of English language skills.**

## The future of TNE: Recommendations for improving TNE

The British Council is a well-known organisation in Romania. All of those interviewed had participated in at least one event organised by the British Council or had heard about the institution and most of them have or have had personal or institutional collaborations in the past. All respondents consider that the British Council could play a role in raising awareness for TNE opportunities between Romanian and UK institutions.

More specifically, respondents' recommendations for the British Council centred around:

- **Bridging gaps** by facilitating interaction between universities in the form of **peer learning activities, online or face-to-face events, workshops, webinars** or **training** and English skills courses and assessment for students, academic and administrative staff
- **Raising awareness of TNE opportunities** by establishing collaborations with Romanian universities and organising joint activities and events among others
- **Undertaking different approaches to raising awareness** by initiating discussions with the Ministry of Education or carrying out actions to facilitate legislation for better collaborations between Romania and the UK
- **Other potential roles mentioned by a smaller number of respondents**, for example acting as a hub for knowledge, transfer of best practices, facilitating communication, getting involved at the secondary education level, participation in national conferences on higher education and internationalisation.

Other institutions that play or could play a role in promoting TNE opportunities between Romanian and UK universities include UEFISCDI (the executive unit responsible for finance of higher education, research and development within the Ministry of Education), ANPCDEFP (the National Agency for Community Programmes in the Fields of Education and Vocational Training), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the National Council of Rectors (CNR) as an umbrella for Romanian universities, the British Embassy in Romania, student organisations, the Ministry of Education and chambers of commerce.

Lastly, recommendations were formulated to improve the future of TNE, of which the most relevant are:

#### **At the international policy level**

- The reintegration of UK institutions into European collaboration schemes (Erasmus+, Horizon), while also supporting mobilities via the Turing Scheme
- Providing targeted financial resources for research and higher education that can be jointly accessed by Romanian and UK institutions.

#### **At the national level**

- Dialogue facilitation by targeted institutions and dedicated joint events to promote collaboration opportunities
- Support in addressing the status of UK institutions post-Brexit and study opportunities for students
- Support in improving the language skills of students and staff, also by developing in-campus language centres, thus further encouraging mobilities and research projects
- Improving the recognition of degrees obtained from UK universities.

#### **For Romanian and UK universities**

- Enhancing the expertise of Romanian universities by collaborating with their UK counterparts to develop study programmes and research partnerships, including in terms of institutional management
- Taking advantage of the favourable public perception of UK institutions, together with the lower costs of programme administration and living in Romania, to establish joint or double degree study programmes providing UK knowledge and excellence for students as an international experience at home.



# Introductory note

The present study was developed by the Centre for Educational Policies (CPEdu) for the British Council.

The study explores the perception of decision-makers from Romanian universities and experts on Romania–UK transnational education (TNE), regarding challenges and obstacles to developing TNE and perceptions of UK universities more broadly, post-Brexit. Further research is needed to verify the validity of these preliminary findings. The main results related to TNE between Romania and UK are summarised below.

# 1. Research aims and methodology

The research aimed to provide an overview on the status of collaborations between Romanian and UK universities, to identify types of collaborations with UK institutions that are of interest and to better understand how to overcome existing challenges and develop long-term partnerships post-Brexit.

The study also aimed to find out how the British Council (or other institutions) could provide support to higher education institutions; what activities could be undertaken to raise awareness among students, academic staff and university leadership for TNE opportunities between Romanian and UK institutions and to set the stage for furthering TNE partnerships.

The research was conducted between February and April 2023. The present study used a mixed approach, including desk research and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. Structured interviews were carried out with 16 representatives of higher education institutions in Romania involved in TNE with European countries and with national experts.

The desk research points out different approaches to the TNE definition used internationally, while briefly presenting the context for its development in Romania and the UK. It also provides a short review of the internationalisation of higher education in Romania, focusing on key elements, such as:

- Review and analysis of legislative aspects, with an emphasis on specific provisions related to TNE (recognition, quality assurance, diplomas)
- Reflections on potential changes and impact of the forthcoming laws on education are addressed, where possible
- Review of existing studies, analyses and recommendations for Romanian universities, with an emphasis on the status quo of Romanian universities and TNE (a specific focus on TNE elements is highlighted, when identified)
- The status quo of TNE activities between Romania and the UK, based on available data
- Quantitative data on student and staff mobility for Romania and the UK.

The quantitative analysis was developed using information and data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, UK), UEFISCDI <sup>1</sup>, Erasmus+ National Agency in Romania and other institutions.

<sup>1</sup> The Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI) Romania.

The qualitative component of the research included semi-structured interviews with key people in internationalisation of higher education. The team conducted 16 interviews with key people identified, based on a pre-defined profile.

The respondents' profiles took into account affiliation, role in their institution (respondents with an important role in the internationalisation of higher education, the development of strategic partnerships or with in-depth experience in this field) as well as the profile of the respective institutions, which were selected based on their track record of internationalisation of higher education and the development of strategic partnerships in this field.

The interviews were conducted online, based on standardised questions. The responses were anonymised, analysed and interpreted in a structured manner.

The resulting analysis provides details on the perception of TNE in Romania, opportunities, challenges and possible recommendations, including directions, areas and institutions for future UK–Romania collaborations. Not least, the interviews were meant to raise awareness of TNE partnerships, find details about market knowledge, unique selling points (USPs) for Romania, and areas of interest.

The semi-structured interviews with university representatives were designed to include questions related to (but not exclusively):

- A short overview of the current status of collaboration with UK universities (at national or university level)
- Types of collaborations with UK institutions for which there is an interest (including topics and types of courses)
- Interest in developing or furthering TNE collaboration with UK institutions
- Main perceived challenges and obstacles in developing Romanian-UK TNE partnerships
- The potential role of the British Council (or other institutions) in raising awareness among students, teachers and university leadership for TNE opportunities between Romanian and UK institutions
- Other promotional activities (at national or institutional level) to raise awareness and set the stage for furthering TNE partnerships between Romania and UK.

*The research approach bears some methodological limitations: the small sample of respondents, as well as the impossibility to cover all universities in terms of geographical position and type, due to time constraints.*

## 2. Transnational education: From definition to policy framework

The current context would appear ideally suited to the development of TNE. Digital transformation, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the increased costs of education and the proliferation of online education have significantly reduced study mobility. For example, in Romania, the number of Erasmus mobilities has decreased from 10,000 students before the pandemic to between 3,000 and 4,000 today. These numbers are increasing again, but there is no doubt that the context of digitalisation, the consequences of the pandemic and Brexit will change educational approaches at all levels.

### 2.1. Approaches to the definitions of TNE

At international level, several prestigious organisations and experts have aimed to define TNE, but perhaps the most relevant definition belongs to Jane Knight:

- '[TNE] refers to the movement of higher education providers and programmes across national borders, allowing students to study foreign programmes without having to leave their home country' (DAAD, 2015)
- 'the mobility of an education programme or higher education institution (HEI)/ provider between countries' (Knight, 2015).

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in the UK defines TNE as 'the delivery of higher education level awards by recognised UK degree-awarding bodies in a country, or to students, other than where the awarding provider is based.' This definition is based on the one promoted by UNESCO and the Council of Europe from 2001: 'all types of higher education study programmes, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based'. The British Council itself refers to UK TNE as 'UK qualifications delivered outside of the UK'.

Among the benefits of TNE on national higher education systems, a British Council Report identifies: contribution to widening access to higher education, especially in less-developed countries; increased overall participation rates; increasing participation of vulnerable groups in good-quality educational programmes, capacity building for domestic higher education or decelerating brain drain.

*Note: For the present report and during the interviews, TNE included: Erasmus+ student and staff mobility, joint or double degree programmes, courses or micro-credentials, student degree mobility, and partnerships and research collaborations with UK universities.*

## 2.2. Context for TNE development

According to the Universities UK International Report, the UK universities offer TNE in 228 countries. Almost half of the students involved in TNE are in Asia, followed by the European Union (15.8 per cent) and the Middle East (13.8 per cent), Africa (11.1 per cent) and North America (5.3 per cent). Romania was not in the top ten EU countries hosting the most TNE students in 2020–2021, where leading countries were Greece, Germany and Cyprus.

In a report published by the British Council, an overall TNE country score is presented based on collected data: ‘the scores are ranked on a scale from 0 to 1, depending on how many criteria are met. The composite score is made up of 12 criteria grouped in three categories: countries’ rules on inbound and outbound programme and provider mobility, quality assurance of programme and provider mobility and recognition of foreign qualifications acquired through TNE. In this context, Romania was awarded with 0.96 points on a scale from 0 to 1 regarding the overall TNE score. All EU countries assessed score over 0.6 but Bulgaria (1.0), Romania (0.96) and Hungary (0.96) top the list. They are also among the highest scorers across the 57 countries evaluated globally.’

## 2.3. National policy framework in Romania

### Overall policy framework

The current policy framework is strongly in support of the internationalisation of higher education, with new higher education legislation under parliamentary debate at the time of the report. The new provisions include internationalisation as a separate legislative chapter, while promoting a National Programme for the Internationalisation of Universities – ‘Study in Romania’. In terms of relevance for TNE, the forthcoming legislation project includes:

- Supporting the development of joint and integrated study programmes
- Development and recognition of micro-credentials
- Financial incentives to enhance internationalisation
- Supporting international partnerships
- Regulation of joint, double or multiple degrees study programmes.

Better internationalisation of higher education is also a strategic objective in the ‘Educated Romania’ national initiative – the policy process coordinated by the Presidential Administration to establish new national legislation. Specific measures include increasing the number of international collaborations, setting up joint degree programmes and developing mechanisms for the automatic recognition of studies.

At the same time, in a series of strategic projects implemented at the national level, Romania has addressed the issue of internationalisation by promoting measures to support universities in this process, including: the development of the StudyinRomania portal, practical guides, policy documents, reports, analyses, promotional mechanisms (such as promotional video, a mobile app for the StudyinRomania brand, and the StudyinRomania Journey Virtual Reality app) and supporting the development of institutional internationalisation strategies.

## Recognition of foreign qualifications acquired through TNE

Diplomas obtained in Romania, in study programmes provided by UK universities, follow the same recognition procedures as diplomas obtained abroad. Post-Brexit, the academic and professional recognition of studies in UK institutions falls under the provisions and procedures applicable to non-EU countries, therefore the recognition process is undertaken at Ministry of Education level, in line with the Lisbon Convention recommendations (Ministry of Education, 2023). For EU countries, the recognition process is carried out directly at university level.

## Quality assurance of study programmes and higher education providers

Until 2021, the legislation would not allow for the Ministry of Education to issue joint or double diplomas (obtained in a joint degree programme). However, recent legislative changes now allow institutions from another country to establish and deliver double degree study programmes at bachelor, master and doctoral level, in partnership with accredited Romanian higher education institutions.

Thus, according to law 1/2011, ‘study documents issued upon completion of integrated study programmes are recognised by law by the Romanian state’.

The integrated study programme is defined as a ‘group of curricular units of teaching,

learning, research, practical application and assessment, planned to lead to a university qualification certified by a diploma and a diploma supplement. The curriculum for this type of programme is jointly developed and organised by several higher education institutions in the European Higher Education Area and leads to a joint degree or to double/multiple degrees’ (government decision no. 22/1.04.2021).

In the newly proposed higher education legislation, integrated study programmes ‘are jointly developed higher education programmes, implemented and fully recognised by two or more higher education institutions in the European Higher Education Area.

Joint programmes can be established for all cycles, namely, bachelor, master or PhD level or even for a short cycle. Joint programmes can be national (i.e., when all the universities involved are from the same country) or transnational/international (i.e., when at least two different countries are represented among the higher education institutions involved)' (Higher Education law project, 2023).

ARACIS is responsible for the assessment and accreditation of the joint degree programmes based on the standards and methodologies established at European level through the European approach.

## 2.4. Status quo of Romania–UK TNE

### Overview of the internationalisation of higher education in Romania

Data from UEFISCDI policy briefs show that international students represented six per cent of the total number of students enrolled in state universities in Romania in 2020, of which approximately 53 per cent of students were from the Republic of Moldova. There is a positive trend in the evolution of international students, with an increase of 11.2 per cent between the academic years 2017/2018 and 2019/2020. International students came from 127 countries and most of them studied in programmes in French (67.5 per cent) and English (27.7 per cent).

The UK was part of the top ten EU/EEA countries of origin for incoming students in 2020. Compared to the academic year 2017/2018, there was a significant decrease of 33 per cent in the number of UK students (UEFISCDI, 2021).

An article published in 2022 shows that 43 of the 47 public universities had study programmes in foreign languages (English, French, German, Hungarian), with a total of 627 study programmes (English, French, German, Hungarian). Of these, 252 were at bachelor level and 375 at master level. The programmes in foreign languages are mainly conducted in English (63 per cent), Hungarian (21 per cent), French (10 per cent) and German (6 per cent) (Fit et al, 2022).

Data show that 30 per cent of Romanian universities have double degree programmes (a total of 82 programmes), most at master level and a large number provided by universities in Bucharest. It should be noted that 67 per cent of double degree programmes are developed by two universities: a technical university in Bucharest and a comprehensive university in Cluj-Napoca (Fit et al, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> The term refers to joint degree programmes

## Romanian students studying in the UK

According to HESA statistics, first year enrolments of EU students in the UK dropped by 53 per cent post-Brexit, from 66,680 in 2020/21 to 31,400 students in the academic year 2021/22<sup>3</sup>. When looking at enrolments of students coming to Romania, their number has decreased by 83 per cent post-Brexit, much more than the average decrease in the total number of EU students.

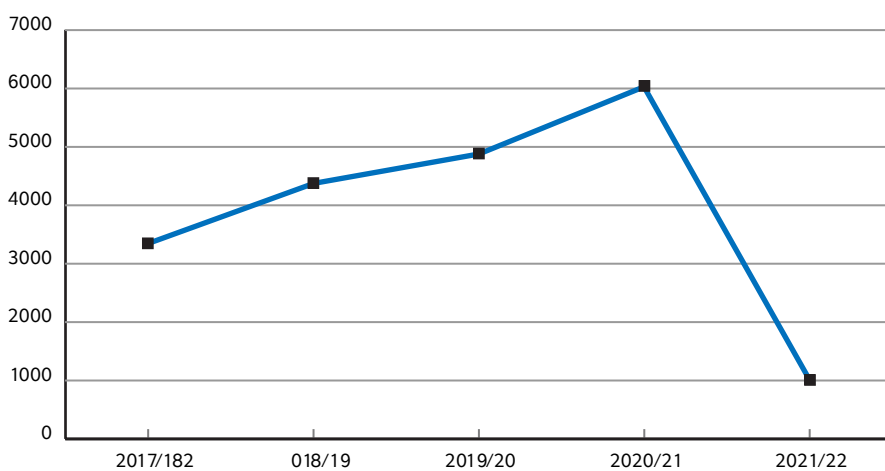
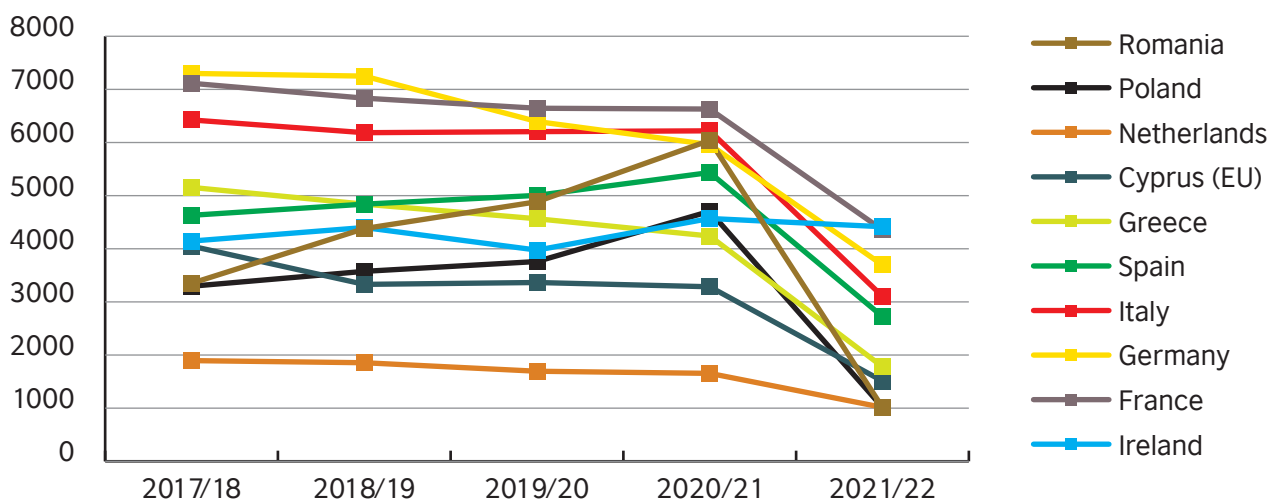


Figure 1. First year enrolments of students coming from Romania to UK.

Data source: HESA, <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/sb265/figure-11>

Romania is in the top ten EU countries for incoming students in the UK, but has seen the greatest decrease of all EU countries in the number of its students coming to the UK since 2020.

Figure 2. Top ten EU countries of residence (excluding the UK) in 2020/21 for HE student enrolments, by country of HE provider and first year marker. Data source: HESA, <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/sb265/figure-11>



<sup>3</sup> Data source link: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/insight/19-01-2023/figure-A>



## Trends in Romania-UK student and teaching staff mobility

Although the European definition of TNE narrows it down to ‘the mobility of an education programme or higher education institution (HEI)/provider between countries’ (Knight, 2006), in this case, presenting student and staff mobility data can show different trends in Romania-UK collaboration, top universities that collaborate closely with UK institutions and top study domains of interest. Given the fact that most mobility partnerships are based on an individual professional collaboration between teaching staff or graduates, the data is even more relevant.

For this report, we analysed statistical data obtained from ANPCDEFP for the academic years 2018/2019 and 2019/2020. Given that the analysed years were before and during the Covid-19 pandemic, the decreasing trend is largely affected by this and by Brexit.

A clear decrease in the number of both incoming and outgoing student mobilities can be observed post-Brexit. Data analysed shows a clear decrease, fact confirmed by respondents as well. When looking at the academic year post-Covid-19, data show that both incoming and outgoing student mobilities from 2019/2020 decreased (by 52 per cent for outgoing mobilities and by 63 per cent for incoming mobilities) compared to the previous academic year (Table 1).

*Table 1 Outgoing and incoming mobilities (all types: SMS, SMP, STA, STT) RO-UK.  
Data source: ANPCDEFP <sup>4</sup>*

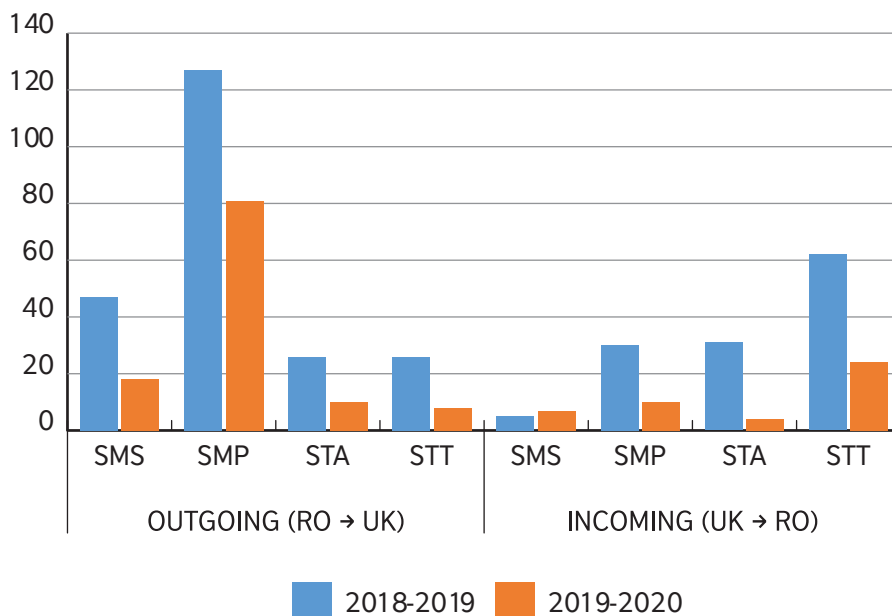
	2018-2019	2019-2020	Variation
Outgoing mobilities (all types)	226	117	-51.80%
Incoming mobilities (all types)	128	45	-63%

<sup>4</sup> ANPCDEFP - The National Agency for Community Programs in the Field of Education and Vocational Training - the agency that manages the Erasmus + program in Romania and other European financial instruments.

When looking at the variation for the different types of mobility (Figure 3), the largest number of mobile people is recorded in the case of outgoing: SMP mobility (student mobility for placement), which had a higher number of participants in the pre-pandemic academic year than the participants in the rest of the categories. Regarding people from the UK who come to Romania, a greater interest can be observed in the case of teacher training mobility.

At the same time, between two successive academic years, the largest decrease can be observed for teaching assignments (-77 per cent) and for both outgoing and incoming mobilities (-52 per cent).

Figure 3. Variation between types of mobility <sup>5</sup>. Data source: ANPCDEFP



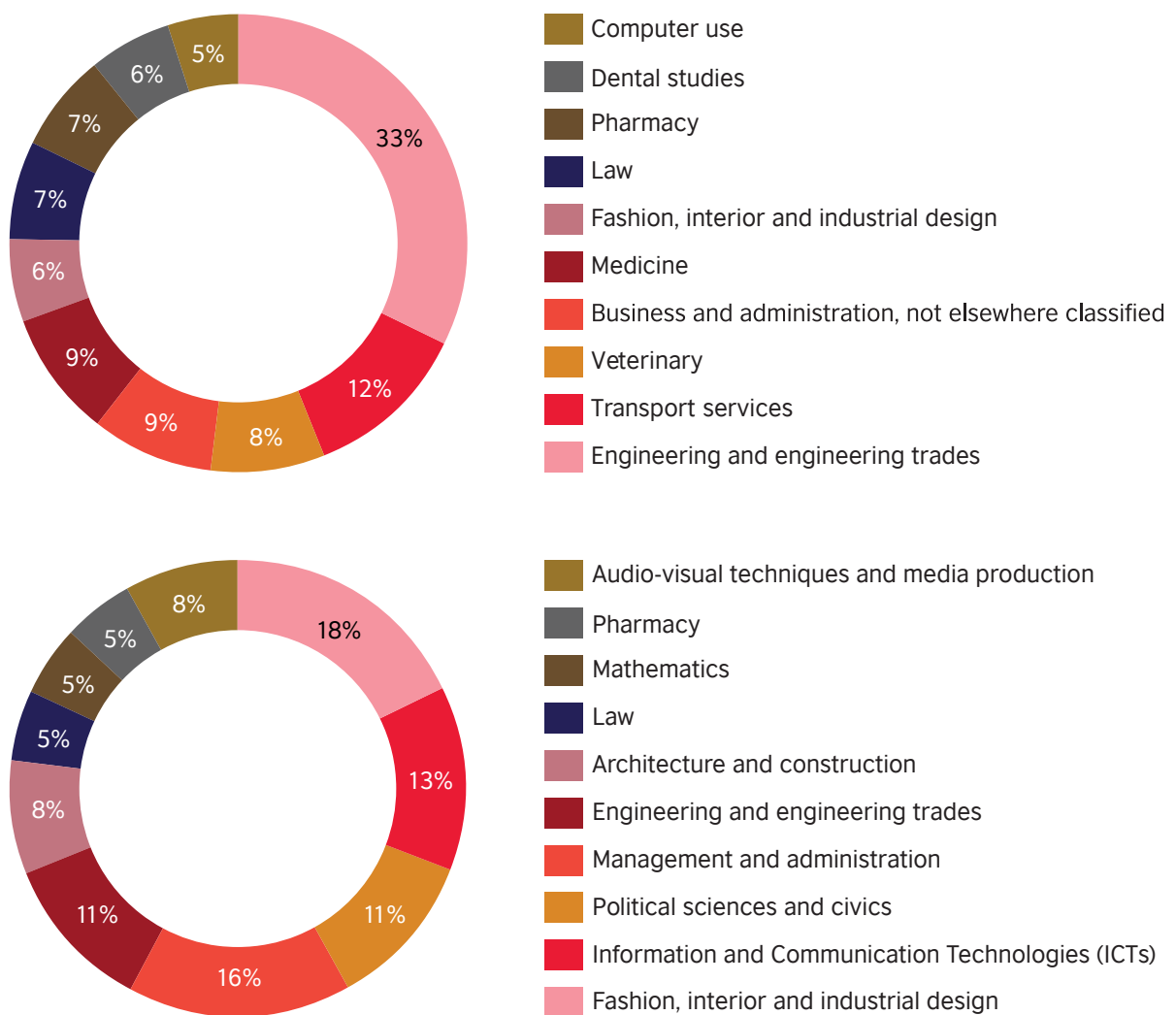
<sup>5</sup> SMS – Student Mobility for Study; SMP – Student Mobility for Placement; STA – Staff Mobility for Teaching; STT – Staff Mobility for Training.

## The most attractive study domains

By far the most attractive study domain for Romanian students going to UK is engineering, with transport services a distant second, followed by veterinary medicine, business administration and medicine. This indicator is relevant in identifying potential study programmes to be delivered in Romania by UK institutions in the future, as it demonstrates an increased interest in certain educational areas.

Incoming UK students (all type of mobilities) were mostly interested in fashion, interior and industrial design, ICT and political and social sciences.

Figure 4 . Top ten study domains by number of outgoing/incoming students in study or placement, 2018/2020.  
Data source: ANPCDEFP



At the opposite end, the study domains that attracted the fewest mobilities for outgoing mobilities (Romanian students going to UK) were mechanics and metallurgy, music and performing arts and therapy and rehabilitation. For incoming mobilities (UK students coming to Romania), they were social and behavioural sciences, building and civil engineering, travel, tourism and leisure.

### Top Romanian universities that have developed Ro–UK partnerships in mobility projects

Regarding the top Romanian universities that send students and staff to UK institutions, Constanta Maritime University is number one, due especially to the large number of students who practise on ships operating under the UK flag. Among the

first universities with mobility partnerships are University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Sciences and Technology of Târgu Mureş; Transilvania University of Braşov; and the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Cluj-Napoca.

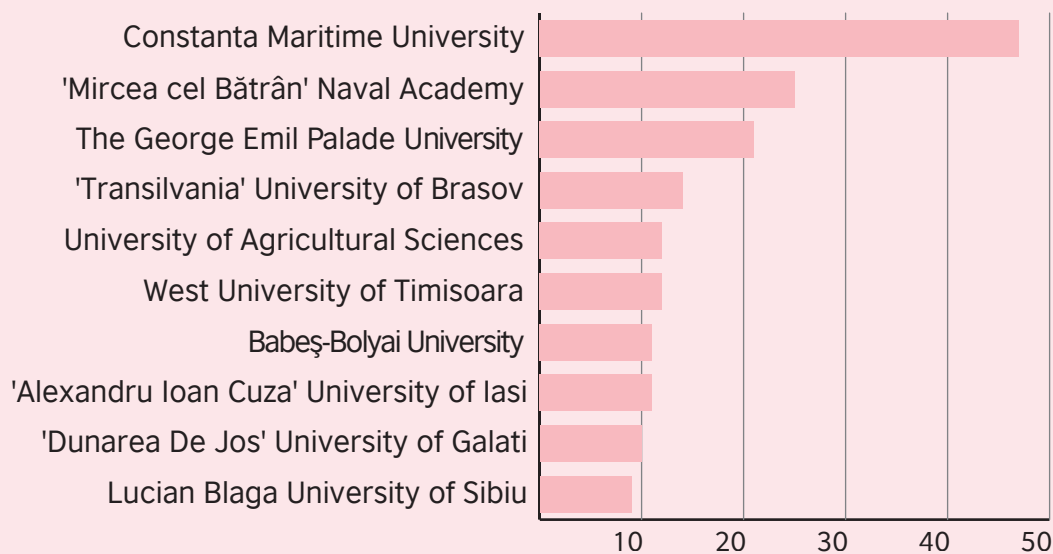


Figure 5. Top ten Romanian universities that sent students to the UK, 2018-2020. Data Source: ANPC-DEFP

The number of UK incoming students is significantly lower than the number of Romanian students studying in the UK. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic and the Brexit effect reduced this number by half for the academic year 2019/2020. However,

there are some UK universities that already have consolidated partnerships with Romanian institutions, the most relevant ones being University College London, University of Edinburgh, University of Manchester and Coventry University.

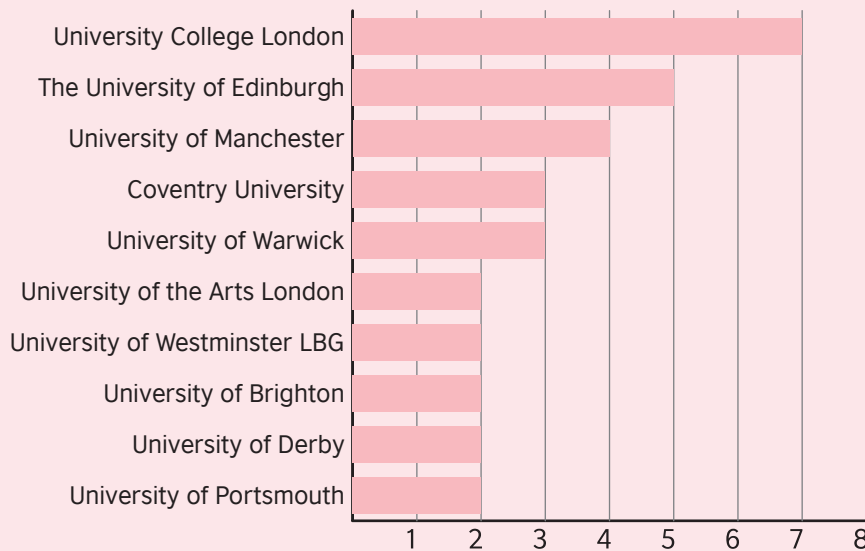


Figure 6. Top ten UK universities that sent students to Romania, 2018-2020.  
Data source: ANPCDEFP

Compared with other countries, the number of incoming students and staff from the UK is rather low; the UK is not in the top ten. Most incoming staff mobilities come from Poland, France, Turkey, Italy, Bulgaria or Germany (UEFISCDI, 2021).

When it comes to outgoing staff mobilities, the UK is not at the top of the list either, top countries being Italy, Spain, France, Turkey, Bulgaria, Poland, Greece, Portugal and Germany (UEFISCDI, 2021).

## 3. Perceptions and interest in TNE in Romania

### 3.1. General information about the interviews

The list of people interviewed by the research team for this study included:

- Two national-level experts with a role in the internationalisation of higher education. The institutions they represent deal with the Erasmus+ programme at national level, promote policies to increase the internationalisation of higher education, develop research and studies in the field, administrate different mechanisms to promote Romanian higher education abroad, and collaborate closely with Romanian universities to help develop the internationalisation of higher education policies.
- 11 representatives of public and private universities from the western region (3), Bucharest–Ilfov region (6), north-west region (1) and south-east region (1). Selected universities covered most types of universities: five socio-humanities and economics, four technical, one comprehensive and one agronomic. It is worth mentioning that seven universities are part of the European University Initiative (EUI), each one as part of a different European alliance. In three of these EUI alliances, a UK university is also a member.
- One student representative with an important role in educational policies at the European level and formerly involved in a national association of students.
- One representative from a Romanian private company that has an academic programme in partnership with universities from the UK.
- One representative from an NGO that delivers educational programmes from UK universities in Romania.
- 73 per cent (11) of those interviewed have more than ten years' experience in higher education and most of them have the same expertise in internationalisation of higher education. Three have more than five years' experience in higher education and internationalisation and one has less than five years' experience in the company. All of them are in high-level positions such as being vice-rectors for international relations, research or innovation; senate leadership; department directors; international relations officers; and coordinators of European alliances (in the European Universities Initiative). For most of them their work relates to internationalisation of higher education or academic management.

## 3.2. Perception of transnational education

In order to have an in-depth conversation about transnational education, the respondents were asked to define and describe the term ‘transnational education (TNE)’. The definitions they provided varied extensively, perhaps due to their different roles and expertise. The definition and understanding of the term are different in Romanian versus the UK, as seen from the interviews, and this was also pointed out by some of the experts.

TNE was often perceived as an international learning experience that can take place anywhere, including at home, if the courses provided are developed by national and international institutions. Through TNE, students and staff have access to a learning experience outside their country of origin (virtually or physically), including exposure to different learning environments and cultures. Other key elements mentioned included:

- Different forms of collaboration and international mobilities
- University branches opened in another country
- Joint programmes in two or more countries, with mobility periods abroad and / or international staff teaching in the country of origin, for students and / or staff, resulting in double or joint diplomas.
- Going beyond the more classic approaches in describing TNE, TNE was also perceived as a tool for soft diplomacy.

While there were differences in understanding and perception of the term, a few common descriptors emerged: **mobility, joint degree, double degree, international collaboration, international experience for students and staff**. Notably, there are clear differences between the respondents’ TNE understanding and the definitions used in other British Council reports. For example, according to a report published by Universities UK International in partnership with the British Council in 2022, TNE includes, but is not limited to: ‘overseas campuses, distance learning, online provision, joint and dual degree programmes, double awards, fly-in faculty, and mixed models traditionally referred to as blended learning’.

### 3.3. Types of international collaboration

To better understand the level of internationalisation of Romanian universities and the potential for collaboration, the analysis mapped types of existing collaborations, as well as areas of interest. All those interviewed noted that their institutions had at least some form of international collaborations developed – either more recent ones or based on long-term relationships. Most universities have already put in place double or multiple degree study programmes, aiming towards joint degrees, when adequate legislation becomes available. Usually, the double degree programmes are at master level and are in line with the university profile – for example, engineering programmes for technical universities, or foreign language, international business or computer science programmes for comprehensive universities.

Given the participation in European alliances, some institutions are considering also developing and implementing micro-credentials, taking into account trends and approaches at European level and future legislation.

When it comes to student degree mobility, many respondents noted having incoming degree students, ranging from European countries (Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Germany) to African countries (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria) to Asian countries (India and Bangladesh). The countries of origin mentioned in the interviews are in line with the analyses performed at national level in recent years based on national data on

internationalisation of higher education. When it comes to student and staff mobility exchanges, similar countries stand out in terms of increased collaboration, whether talking about incoming or outgoing mobilities. For Europe, again, we see France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Portugal and, more recently, the Netherlands. When looking beyond the continent, students and academic staff originate from more diverse destinations, ranging from Asia to South America.

All institutions analysed provide study programmes taught in English. The trends differ though – some institutions focus on providing at least one study programme in English per faculty (more frequently for master level), while others target specific study programmes that are highly attractive for international students. Some respondents highlighted institutional flexibility when developing the curricula to better accommodate international students' needs.

While the level of internationalisation varies regarding the teaching and learning dimension, respondents particularly highlighted increased collaboration regarding overall research partnerships. These vary greatly in number and in the countries involved, as well as in the percentage of active partnerships from the total. Many of them seem to start based on personal relationships that further extend at institutional level and usually (but not exclusively) take place in similar domains.



## Unique selling points (USPs) for better collaborations

Perceptions are important when developing new partnerships. Identifying and highlighting the USPs for individual Romanian universities can make a difference when reaching out to set up new relationships. The interviews addressed this issue, aiming to see how respondents could anchor their university in the diverse international higher education landscape. A few common aspects were identified, but there were also more targeted responses based on university specifics. USPs mentioned most often included study programmes in foreign languages and internationally-recognised diplomas; a low level of fees; targeted services for international students (priority accommodation, orientation); being part of European University Initiative alliances; a focus on providing study programmes in cutting-edge domains; affiliation to specific, prestigious European / international alliances (other than EUI); and experience in digital innovation and transformation and state of the art endowment – usually for technical universities.

Adequately defining and promoting institutional USPs can help when setting up new partnerships with universities of interest at various levels.

## Collaboration with UK institutions

To gain a broader understanding of internationalisation activities, the research focused on past and current collaborations with institutions from the UK. The respondents were asked to provide details on the abovementioned types of activities undertaken, with an emphasis on Romanian–UK partnerships. The responses received highlighted different degrees of interactions. Some universities mentioned past collaborations in various forms: student and staff mobilities, research projects, summer schools or even double degree programmes. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit or lack of financing (through Erasmus+) brought these partnerships to a halt.

There are, however, Romanian universities which have successfully developed and maintained collaborations with institutions from the UK post-Brexit. To support student mobility post-Brexit, a few Romanian universities currently receive UK students via the Turing scheme <sup>6</sup> - the UK government's programme to provide funding for international opportunities in education across the world, similar to Erasmus+ programme, but focused on outward mobility of UK students.

One university mentioned that their collaboration with a UK higher education institution is complemented by a collaboration between the two cities where the institutions are located. Other institutions developed partnerships with universities from the Russell Group <sup>7</sup> in their areas of interest, albeit at departmental level and not always active.

Collaborations in the form of study programmes offered by UK universities with Romanian partners, bilateral or research partnerships have been developed with some UK institutions, such as University of Essex, University of Durham, University College London, The University of Sheffield, University of Brighton, University of Edinburgh, Nottingham Trent University, University of Warwick, University of Glasgow and London School of Economics and Political Science. The last three are part of a narrow category including those UK institutions currently still part of the European University Initiative alliances. These have also developed bilateral partnerships and study programmes with their Romanian partners, supporting student and staff mobilities.

<sup>6</sup> UK funding mechanism implemented in the absence of Erasmus support that finances international partnerships - <https://www.turing-scheme.org.uk/>

<sup>7</sup> The Russell Group represents 24 leading UK universities. For more details, please see: <https://russellgroup.ac.uk/>.

## The case of American European Education (AEE) in Brasov

In terms of achieving TNE goals, American European Education represents an interesting educational model.

AEE is an NGO founded in Brasov in 2012 that includes three schools: American Hotel Academy, TASTE Culinary Business Academy and Digital Hub Academy. Through a partnership facilitated by the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality, AEE offers vocational study programmes (levels 4, 5 and 6) of some UK universities such as Manchester Metropolitan University. For level 6 study programmes, the student can choose to complete their study experience with some more courses at the university in the UK and obtain a bachelor's degree.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, a student cohort normally had 100-120 students per year. After the pandemic, the number decreased to approximately 60 students, but the trend is once again upwards.

The study programmes offered by AEE are three or four years long and those of professional level 6 offer 120 study credits and are addressed to high school graduates with a baccalaureate diploma and at least an intermediate level of English. Because all courses are taught in English, the language is a challenge for increasing the number of Romanian students. For this reason, AEE provides intensive modules to improve the level of English and these are completed by students before enrolling in the professional study programme – for beginner level – or in modules for first- or second-year students.

Study fees are low compared to the fees paid by Romanian students in the UK but can be considered high compared to other study fees in Romania. However, AEE representatives consider that they put a great emphasis on the quality of the educational process and the specialised practice included in the programme. Since the programme is closely related to the industry, students benefit from paid internships in Romania and/or abroad.

UK institutions offering study programmes through a Romanian NGO and not a public institution can have many advantages. Flexibility, reduced bureaucratic procedures and links with the private sector are notable opportunities.

The case of AEE brings up a series of challenges to achieving success: in-depth knowledge of the English language, especially in the case of professional programmes that address certain categories of students; the high tuition fees required in a country where education is usually free; and the legal and fiscal form of organising the educational activity, which involves a lot of bureaucracy.

On the other hand, we have identified elements that can be considered keys to the success of TNE implementation: the applicability of the curriculum and the share of specialised practical activities significantly increases the attractiveness of the educational programme, access to qualifications offered by educational institutions in the UK (especially in the post-Brexit context), and the international educational environment (including foreign teachers).

*For more information check <https://aeegroup.org/>*

## The impact of Brexit on collaborations between Romanian and UK universities

Brexit was an important disruptor for the collaboration of UK universities with the rest of the world, for several reasons, including the temporary and pending exclusion from European funding – both for student and staff mobilities under Erasmus+ programme and research under Horizon Europe – and lack of predictability in higher education policies. While collaborations with Romanian universities were not extensive before, both the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit caused further ripples.

The national policy experts interviewed stated that Brexit brought an extra set of challenges and felt that, to remain relevant in Europe, UK institutions will have to intensify their collaboration with EU countries, with Romania being a valuable potential market in this sense. Regarding the Erasmus+ programme, although UK institutions are no longer officially eligible for funding, they can still take part, with Romanian universities being allowed to redirect 20 per cent of their Erasmus+ funding towards any non-EU university, UK ones included. UK institutions can even become partners in strategic partnership projects if the application clearly highlights their essential added value. More than ten partnerships between UK and Romanian institutions are still currently active under the Erasmus+ programme.

Most university respondents had similar perceptions of the impact of Brexit for future Romanian–UK collaborations. The lack of access to European funding was seen as the greatest challenge and was most frequently mentioned. A second major impediment was the increased level of fees at UK institutions, combined with a level of uncertainty in terms of student mobility provisions. However, most respondents agreed that **there is still great interest from Romanian institutions to establish partnerships – whether for research, study programmes or mobilities – with their UK counterparts.** Tailored approaches may be necessary to address the current challenges, whether more specific or of perception. These may include dedicated funding to support bilateral partnerships and mobilities, collaboration in niche areas (e.g. biotechnologies), establishing Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) courses or improving understanding from the UK side of opportunities that Romanian universities bring to the table.

## Long-term TNE collaboration: the case of Timisoara

The transnational inter-institutional cooperation between the West University of Timisoara (RO) and Nottingham Trent University (UK) is based on a different form of collaboration beyond its main academic dimension, namely the cooperation between the cities of Timisoara (RO) and Nottingham (UK). The starting point for both city and institutional collaboration dates back to 2009 and numerous times the joint initiatives of the two universities have been supported by the two cities' local administrations, focusing on a holistic approach to international cooperation and its benefits for students. For example, in 2019, a group of over 60 students and staff from NTU visited WUT and Timisoara as part of an NTU project titled European Creative and Smart Cities Challenge. The visit to West University of Timisoara was dedicated to a multi-disciplinary academic programme coupled with on-site visits to economic and artistic institutions. The City Hall in Timisoara also contributed to the content of programmes offered to the students through site visits to various public institutions, ensuring free public transportation for the group and city tours. Thus, the participants benefited from a diverse and complex programme both at the university and in the city.

Aside from exceptional actions such as the previously mentioned one, beginning in 2009, WUT and NTU have constantly focused on maintaining a flow of incoming and outgoing mobile international students and staff between the two universities through the Erasmus+ programme. This has been possible due to a flexible and trust-oriented approach which has been developed during a long-lasting inter-institutional collaboration. Examples include support for Romanians, meant to balance the difference between costs of living in Romania and the United Kingdom or fee waivers for British students participating in various summer schools organized by WUT.

In 2022, another layer was added - students from NTU participated through the Turing programme at a summer school organised by WUT. The partnership between the two institutions uses Turing funds for common educational activities such as intensive summer schools. Exchanges have decreased in numbers in recent years due to various reasons (Brexit, Covid-19), but both cities and universities remain connected and are currently focusing on exploring additional avenues for cooperation. As a recognition of the good partnership between these two universities, in 2019, NTU proposed WUT for an EAIE award and received the recognition 'highly commended institution' for Excellence in Internationalisation. 'WUT made leaps forward in its national context by creating a curriculum that is impressive and by implementing internationalisation activities that are commendable'.

### 3.4. Interest in furthering TNE collaborations

All respondents confirmed that, according to their knowledge, there is interest from Romanian universities in developing TNE collaborations with UK institutions due to the quality of education, positive perception, prestige or language and consider that the interest in collaborating with UK universities could increase, post-Brexit.

Although the respondents are aware of the benefits these collaborations could bring to their institution (increased quality of education or prestige, for example) there are also challenges or barriers related to high study fees compared to those of Romanian universities and in light of students' income, as well as some doubt about the language skills of both students and staff. University representatives mentioned several times that students are very interested in existing or possible collaborations with UK universities.

#### Study domains

According to Erasmus+ programme data, study domains that Romanian universities and students were most interested in before and are after Brexit are engineering, transport services, veterinary science, business administration, medicine (general medicine, pharmacy and dental studies), fashion, interior and industrial design and law. The interviews revealed that most of the universities seem interested in areas related to their study domains.

**Technical universities** are interested in all engineering study domains (civil engineering, electronics and electrical engineering, telecommunications, construction of road vehicles, medical engineering, transports and naval engineering). **Comprehensive, socio-humanities and economics** universities focus on computer science, health and life sciences, arts (such as industrial design – industrial and fashion), business, economics and public management. In political sciences, European public administration and public policies are seen as priorities, but also public relations, communication and media were mentioned high on the list of preferences. For more applied fields, there is interest in sustainable development and social sciences (such as international business and marketing). For the **life sciences or agronomic universities**, bioengineering, bioeconomy, environmental protection, such as climate change, and food crises are part of the top study domains of interest.

National experts perceive that for the humanities field, social science study domains such as psychology and law, together with business administration and entrepreneurship, are considered high priority.

## Type of activities

Respondents expressed their interest in a diverse type of activities such as joint or double degree programmes and collaborations via the Erasmus+ programme for student and teaching mobility, collaborations on research and innovation, and developing projects within the European Universities Alliances, mostly with universities from the UK. Universities raised the importance of ‘job shadowing for academic staff’ in areas related to research and innovation, training related to project writing and how to attract funding. Some mentioned that before starting joint degrees, a first collaboration could be on developing micro-credentials. Branch campuses are seen by most universities more as an activity that creates competition with classic university activities, therefore double or multiple degree programmes are seen as a more appropriate method to attract students. One university from the south-east region also mentioned that they are interested in developing a study programme in cyber-security, with more expressing interest in hosting the British Council exams centres to help build English language skills not only for their students, academic and administrative staff but also for the whole city and community.

National level experts mentioned that both the UK university’s brand and financial considerations are important elements and felt that developing future MBA programmes in Romania is an advantageous approach to combine the high quality of UK teaching with the lower costs for Romania.

*‘It is complicated for UK universities to come to Romania and carry out their activities here [...] it is a difference of perception. In Romania, education is a public good [...] and the operating costs of a programme are high compared to the fees that can be charged here.’*

From the Romanian universities’ point of view, ‘the most powerful type of collaboration is double diploma programmes with one semester in Romania and one in UK’. Micro-credentials and online courses in collaboration with Romanian universities could be one of the options for the UK institutions to offer courses, together with MBAs.

Regarding the **type of institutions** that would be **most appealing for collaborations**, respondents from two of the comprehensive universities admitted that ‘collaboration with universities with similar typologies is no longer necessarily or seen as relevant’, meaning there is interest in collaboration with all types of higher education institutions. However, numerous respondents aimed for collaboration in similar domains, but noted their interest in a trans-disciplinary approach. Respondents also expressed their interest in collaborating with both public and private universities and that ‘perception on collaboration with private HEIs after joining the European Alliances has changed for the better’.

To find out more on the potential for collaboration opportunities and the means to explore them, all universities confirmed they are interested in hosting and also attending face-to-face or online events focused on TNE opportunities. Some of the respondents recollected having organised these types of events in collaboration with the British Council in the past and stated that the British Council has a good reputation among students and academics.

### 3.5. Opportunities and challenges in developing Romania–UK TNE partnerships

The interviews highlighted **opportunities** to build more and better collaborations between Romanian and UK institutions.

There is a favourable **public perception** when it comes to UK institutions, these being considered by most respondents as prestigious and providing high quality study programmes. On the other side, Romania can become a good place for UK institutions to access and establish TNE collaborations, being a dynamic country, with economic growth, but lagging on indicators related to human capital.

At national level, the new law on higher education brings a more flexible legal framework, which includes provisions encouraging collaborations with European institutions in general, and with UK institutions in areas such as developing joint, double or multiple study programmes, micro-credentials and simplified recognition procedures, among others.

Together with numerous challenges, Brexit also created opportunities for developing partnerships with Romanian universities. While the interest in obtaining a qualification offered by UK institutions is still very high among Romanian students, the rising fees and higher cost of living in the UK may prevent them from applying. Thus, setting up joint study programmes designed by Romanian and UK institutions provided in Romania (internationalisation at home) would be an effective way to offer a desired diploma with lower costs. The institutional costs of running such programmes would also be lower.

The participation of Romanian universities in international fairs and conferences, possibly under the StudyinRomania umbrella, can also act as a platform for establishing direct contact with UK institutions. Similar networking events can be organised by other institutions as well, thus facilitating initial interaction and setting the scene for future partnerships. Alumni can also contribute to this endeavour.



Digital education and digital transformation, including technologies and virtual mobilities, can constitute a starting point for collaborations between Romanian and UK institutions, since both countries have taken important steps in this direction and have aligned themselves with European and international trends.

Not least, at institutional level, institutional autonomy and visionary leadership can lead to reaching out and developing partnerships, as some success stories in this report show. The targeted financial support received by Romanian universities for their internationalisation activities (such as participation in European alliances) can act as an incentive to reach out and establish additional collaborations, especially with proper facilitation.

The respondents provided their perspective on some of the advantages and opportunities for developing TNE between UK and Romanian institutions.

Building on their extensive expertise, UK institutions can develop (interdisciplinary) study programmes in areas where Romania is still in the early stages, such as big data, emerging technologies, AI and future skills, thus providing attractive study opportunities for Romanian students.

Romanian universities can benefit from collaboration in design of their study programmes and internal processes, better educational management and expanding collaborations beyond the EU, thus becoming more competitive in the international landscape. Students would also acquire better language and transversal skills, would benefit from research and mobility opportunities, access to better learning and teaching methods and an overall higher quality student experience.

## Creating a full international learning experience at home The British Law Centre at the University of Bucharest

**The British Law Centres (BLC)** were established in 1992 as a joint venture between the University of Cambridge and the University of Warsaw. They are currently run by a dedicated educational charity (Juris Angliae Scientia), based at the University of Cambridge's law faculty, with numerous BLCs throughout the Central and Eastern Europe region including Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. The BLCs offer legal education and training to law students and legal professionals.

The Diploma in English Law and Legal Skills (DELLS) is a comprehensive one-year programme designed for law students and legal professionals who wish to gain a deeper understanding of the English legal system and the common law tradition. It combines online learning with face-to-face sessions, which take place in Romania at the University of Bucharest over a period of eight months and during the weekends between November-June. The programme is partly delivered by qualified English lawyers and legal educators (visiting professors), complemented by more than 100 hours of pre-recorded lectures and covering a wide range of subjects including contract law, tort law, property law and criminal law. The programme also provides training in legal skills, such as legal writing, legal research and oral advocacy, as well as optional voluntary activities such as simulated trials.

Upon completion of the programme, students receive a Diploma in English Law and Legal Skills from the British Law Centre, which is recognised by the legal profession in both Romania and the United Kingdom. The programme can provide a valuable credential for those seeking to advance their legal careers or to pursue further legal education in the UK or other common law jurisdictions. Furthermore, students are provided with the experience of studying at an English university, while still benefiting from lower fees and living expenses than in the UK.

More information is available here: <https://drept.unibuc.ro/British-Law-Center-Inscrieripentru-anul-universitar-2021-2022-s1131-ro.htm>

Developing more and better partnerships between Romanian and UK institutions is hampered by several obstacles or challenges. During the interviews, certain issues were mentioned by almost all respondents, with differing levels of detail. In the case of currently ongoing partnerships with UK institutions, these challenges have been addressed either by using alternative mobility schemes (Turing Scheme) or continuing collaborations despite the post-Brexit unknown.

**Legislation** was perceived as a major obstacle. In Romania, Brexit made several existing regulations non-applicable and this placed additional pressure on existing collaborations. However, the upcoming law on higher education includes dedicated provisions for double and joint degree programmes and benefits for students to increase attractiveness, while maintaining competitive fees for students.

**Recognition of studies** poses additional challenges.

In terms of **quality assurance**, ARACIS provisions for accreditation and assessment are rather strict, inflexible and bureaucratic, requiring, for example, the same title of courses under double degree programmes as the Romanian study programmes, or a large percentage of tenured professors for new study programmes.

The high level of **fees** required by UK institutions is not perceived as bringing sufficient added value for graduates when they enter the labour market. Additionally, the living costs in the UK are high for Romanian students. Thus, UK institutions could take a different approach and provide courses and study programmes in Romania, which may be more attractive for Romanian students who are still interested in benefiting from an international experience but with lower educational and living costs.

**Lack of adequate financial support** was also a significant barrier. Following Brexit, no more European funding opportunities have been available for UK institutions. This, together with a lack of predictability and clear information on future collaboration opportunities, resulted in less student and staff mobility and fewer research partnerships, mostly affecting Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe programmes. While UK institutions support international student mobilities via the Turing Scheme, there is sometimes a mismatch and extra challenge in compensating for or aligning it to other funding schemes – to balance mobilities with Romanian institutions, for example.

**Lack of English language skills** was perceived as an obstacle only for some of the respondents. It should be noted that language skills were analysed both for academic staff and students, with different perceptions on the issue. For academic staff, half of the interviewees considered their level of English adequate and not a factor in furthering collaboration with UK institutions. However, the other half of the respondents viewed staff language skills as a potential obstacle, especially for more specialised subjects or for teachers past a certain age, who may have more reluctance towards teaching in English. When it comes to students, the perception was similarly divided. Half of the respondents did not consider this to be an obstacle, using high enrolment rates in English language programmes as an argument, while the other half indicated insufficient English knowledge as a potential obstacle to enrolment when applying for mobilities or for overall completion of studies.

When it comes to **lack of awareness of international opportunities**, whether among students or academic staff, the perception of respondents varied significantly. While some noted that there seems to be a lack of sufficient information on mobility opportunities among students and an occasional reluctance among staff, others did not perceive this element as an obstacle for mobility or collaboration, highlighting availability and ease of access of information.

While the abovementioned factors were the most visible throughout interviews, some other challenges should be noted:

- Less student trust in online programmes, which are perceived as being of high cost and bringing insufficient added value in terms of access to the labour market and adequate employment
- A different approach to education for Romanian and UK institutions: in Romania, state higher education is perceived as higher quality than private, while in the UK institutions have a more market-oriented approach towards education
- Competition between public and private Romanian institutions to attract international students, which is directly linked to a decrease in overall student population
- Lack of institutions to facilitate dialogue and guarantee trust between Romanian and UK institutions; this is closely related to the lack of well-established, long-term partnerships for institutions in the two countries.

A new law on higher education (law no. 199/2023) was adopted by the Romanian parliament and entered into force on 2 September 2023. The law contains a series of dedicated provisions to align the Romanian higher education system to current European and international challenges and trends, meaning that a large number of the challenges or obstacles mentioned throughout the interviews should be addressed by the new piece of legislation.

Respondents were questioned about the potential impact of planned legislation on future collaborations between Romanian and UK higher education institutions. Most of them acknowledged the expected added value for internationalisation: developing joint, double and multiple degree programmes, implementing micro-credentials and enhancing recognition of qualifications for labour market access, even for non-EU citizens. On the other hand, the responsibility for overall quality education remains on the shoulders of university's autonomy.

## 4. Supporting TNE collaborations. The role of the British Council

All of those interviewed had participated in at least one event organised by the British Council or had heard about the institution and most of them have or have had personal or institutional collaborations with the British Council in the past.

National experts agreed that the British Council could be a connector between Romanian and UK universities, facilitating initial contacts and supporting mobilities via the Turing Scheme. Some respondents also perceived the British Council as a possible promotor of placement mobility or internship programmes and could help improve English language skills at HEIs. Another role could be in the policy area by developing research, studies and analyses together with dedicated events on topics of interest.

All respondents consider that the British Council could play a role in raising awareness for TNE opportunities between Romanian and UK institutions, with varied perception in terms of the current role undertaken by the British Council. Some see the organisation as actively engaged, while others noted that the organisation has become less visible, with mostly an online presence.

The British Council could bridge the gaps between Romanian and UK HEIs, could *'open doors'* and *'become an engine in facilitating interaction with UK universities'*. Moreover, the British Council can play an active role in supporting collaboration between institutions and organising joint events such as a *'Science Education Gala'* or facilitating online interactions between institutions from the two countries. Not least, it could raise awareness among UK institutions and in terms of TNE opportunities to students and to teacher and university leadership.

## 4.1. What roles can the British Council play to better support TNE collaborations?

### 1. Bridging gaps by facilitating interaction between universities in the form of:

- **Peer learning activities** to find out more about potential needs and opportunities and promote existing good practices of collaboration
- **Online or face to face events** organised on specific topics, aiming to match study and research interests between Romanian and UK higher education institutions or to introduce the Romanian universities to their UK counterparts, which could play an important role in building trust and incentivising institutional collaborations. Some events could be with representatives of the Romanian Ministry of Education, to put in place specific incentives or policies for institutions
- **Workshops** on different themes of interest, such as ways to collaborate with UK institutions, financing opportunities or management in UK universities to promote the UK educational model and good practice examples
- **Webinars** on topics of interest, with speakers invited by the British Council
- **Training** and English skills courses and assessment for students, academic and administrative staff.

### 2. Raising awareness of TNE opportunities

The British Council could have a potential role in raising awareness about TNE opportunities among students, academic staff and university leadership. The easiest way to achieve this would be by establishing collaborations with Romanian universities and organising joint activities and events addressing topics such as ‘what is transnational education?’, types of opportunities or funding sources. At the same time, the British Council could start promoting and raising awareness directly among high school students and young people who take courses or come into contact with the British Council.

The British Council could have a role in promoting and increasing the degree of awareness regarding TNE by creating partnerships and collaborations at the level of specialisations (or faculty), for example with Foreign Languages Departments. ‘BC [British Council] should interact directly with the management of universities in Romania, to set up partnerships and facilitate interaction with universities in the UK’. It is important to mention that this role is not seen as a primary one and could be explored especially when the university already has solid partnerships with UK universities.

Almost all those interviewed (both national experts and university representatives) believe that the British Council can also undertake different approaches to raising awareness, by initiating discussions with the Ministry of Education, carrying out actions to facilitate legislation for better collaborations between Romania and the UK, support partnerships between institutions, develop various projects or studies and organise, and

attend conferences, including on internationalisation of higher education. The institution could act as ‘a driver that opens doors’. At the same time, it could carry out training or workshops for various fields of interest together with Romanian and UK universities and could have actions at the national level. It could focus its efforts on soft power tools, similarly to other institutions such as the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie.

### **Other activities**

Some HEI representatives mentioned other activities or ideas described below. The British Council is a network and could become a hub for knowledge and transfer of best practice on how transnational education collaborations work. Through diplomatic channels, key opinion leaders (guests) and academics could be brought to Romania for events. At the same time, the British Council is seen as a communication facilitator, especially for developing possible partnerships with the UK or promotion of international competitions among students. One HEI representative mentioned that the British Council could also get involved at the secondary education level where it could have an increased role in promoting and growing the brand through the type of activities it does. To reach Romanian universities, the British Council should participate in national conferences on higher education and internationalisation (for example at those organised by UEFISCDI, ANPCDEFP, the Ministry of Education or universities). An essential role that the British Council could fill would be in promoting Romanian universities among UK universities to highlight the existing potential and opportunities for collaboration with Romanian universities.

## **4.2 Other institutions that could play a role in raising awareness of TNE opportunities**

Regarding other institutions that play or could play a role in promoting TNE opportunities between Romanian and UK universities, as well as carrying out actions at the national level, respondents mentioned: UEFISCDI, ANPCDEFP, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) as a facilitator because of Brexit, the National Council of Rectors (CNR) as an umbrella for Romanian universities, the UK embassy, student organisations, the Ministry of Education, chambers of commerce, companies with UK shareholders for practical facilitation, the Romanian Cultural Institute, the Agency for Loans and Scholarships (ACBS) or the Universities UK International (UUKi).

Through their specific activities, UEFISCDI is already involved in developing analyses and recommendations in the field of higher education, providing evidence-based policies for the Ministry of Education. ARACIS is involved through its work and ANPCDEFP plays an important role by coordinating the Erasmus+ programme.

‘Student organisations could put in place touring activities in high schools, universities, CNR could get involved in both the promotion side and at the level of public policies’, was stated by one respondent.

Private companies can also have a role in supporting collaborations by facilitating internships and stimulating the entrepreneurial spirit. They can act as an expert pool, bringing invited speakers to courses. Collaboration with the private sector could lead to the development of study programmes in line with labour market trends.

Not least, the diplomatic missions could play a role in TNE, as the Romanian Cultural Institute was mentioned as an institution that could organise cultural events to bring communities together and advocate for closer ties between institutions in the two countries.

## Other promotional activities

Among the activities that could be carried out, the following were the most frequently mentioned: training on targeted themes (such as on how to develop partnerships with UK universities), workshops, study visits to UK universities, fairs with an emphasis on UK education and promotion of opportunities to study and work in the UK and conferences with the private sector to enable contact and partnerships.

At the same time, activities to promote good practice examples in education (such as collaborations between UK universities and other countries) were mentioned, together with raising awareness about the Turing Scheme. Also discussed was the possibility of setting up summer schools, talks, debates, lectures, round tables and conferences encouraging student participation; workshops with facilitators brought by the British Council to better develop participants’ awareness; and events to raise awareness on trends in both the UK and



Romania. All these were perceived as opportunities to interact with partners from the UK.

Facilitation of a partnership between ARACIS and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in UK was also considered relevant and potentially useful.

Direct contact with UK institutions in order to develop double or joint study programmes was also perceived as important and for this purpose the British Council is seen as a partnership mediator or facilitator. Among other effective tools for building partnerships, respondents mentioned bilateral and reciprocal visits between universities ('facilitating face-to-face interactions is important to increase trust'), matching events and contact seminars ('perhaps in partnership with ANPCDEF which has regular meetings with representatives from the International Relations Department in universities'). Events such as Open Edu week, webinars, and participation of British Council representatives in national events were also mentioned.

As for promoting the internationalisation of higher education, UEFISCDI was mentioned as a vector that should continue its activity. At the same time, the importance of more intensive use of social media channels was pointed out. The relevance was noted of the involvement of students' federations together with alumni, key opinion leaders and graduates for the provision of testimonials.

## 5. Recommendations for better TNE collaboration

The last part of the interviews focused on the respondents' recommendations for better TNE collaborations between UK and Romanian institutions.

### Recommendations at the international level

- Reintegration of UK institutions into European collaboration schemes (Erasmus+, Horizon), while also supporting mobilities via the Turing Scheme
- Provide targeted financial resources for research and higher education that can be jointly accessed by Romanian and UK institutions, similar to EEA grants; this could include, for example more funding for joint and double degree programmes, research, or short-term mobilities including staff mobilities.

### Recommendations at the national level (policy level, national institutions)

- Dialogue facilitation by targeted institutions (British Council, embassies and diplomatic missions) and dedicated joint events to promote collaboration opportunities, including on targeted areas of interest
- Support in addressing the status of UK institutions post-Brexit and study opportunities for students, potentially facilitated by British Council
- Support from British Council in improving language skills of students and staff, also by developing in-campus language centres, thus further encouraging mobilities and research projects
- English language preparation or courses targeting specific study domains provided by the British Council
- Revise the provisions related to hiring academic staff, thus enabling universities to have autonomy in adequately paying high-level teachers from the UK
- Introduce a higher coefficient of public funding for joint degree study programmes, to incentivise universities to develop more such programmes
- Improve overall recognition procedures (automatic recognition, digitalisation of processes, using blockchain or similar technologies for diploma recognition)
- Improve the recognition of degrees obtained from universities in the UK
- Specific regulations for the short cycle in higher education that would promote a better connection with the labour market
- Make use of all the potential of vocational education at all levels
- Greater flexibility in quality assurance procedures, especially for newly established study programmes.

## Recommendations for Romanian and UK universities

- Enhance the expertise of Romanian universities by collaborating with their UK counterparts to develop study programmes and research partnerships, including in terms of institutional management
- Take advantage of the favourable public perceptions of UK institutions, together with the lower costs of programme administration and living in Romania, to establish joint or double degree study programmes providing UK knowledge and excellence for students as an international experience at home
- Analyse mobility trends and develop study programmes with a focus on domains with particular interest from students (the study domains most sought after via outgoing mobilities of Romanian students)
- A paradigm shift and renewed focus are needed on short term or intensive collaborations (such as summer schools, shorter study and placement mobilities)
- Take advantage of the provisions targeting internationalisation in the new law on higher education to develop new partnerships between UK and Romanian institutions.

## 6. Bibliography

American European Education, accessed in March 2023.

<https://aeegroup.org/>

ANPCDEFP, data made available in March 2023.

Fiț, CR, Panțir, CA, Cheregi, BF, 'Romanian Universities: The Use of Educational Marketing to Strengthen Internationalisation of Higher Education'. In: Curaj, A., Salmi, J, Hâj, CM (eds) Higher Education in Romania: Overcoming Challenges and Embracing Opportunities. Springer, Cham, 2022.

Government emergency decision no. 75/2005 on ensuring the quality of education amended by Government decision no. 22/1.04.2021.

Higher Education Statistics Agency, data accessed in March 2023.

<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/sb265/figure-11>

Ilieva, J, Tsiligiris, V, Killingley, P, Brandenburg, U, Local impact of transnational education: a pilot study in selected European Union countries, British Council, 2021.

Ilieva, J, The shape of global higher education: Eastern and southern Europe, British Council, 2020.

Knight, J, Transnational Education data collection systems: Awareness, analysis, action, DAAD, 2015.

Knight, J, 'Transnational Education Remodelled: Toward a Common TNE Framework and Definitions', in Journal of Studies in International Education 20(1), 2015.

Ministry of Education, Higher Education Law project, 2023.

Ministry of Education, accessed in March 2023.

<https://cnred.edu.ro/en/higher-education>

Ministry of Education, accessed in March 2023.

<https://cnred.edu.ro/en/BREXIT-and-the-recognition-of-diplomas-professional-qualifications-for-British-citizens>

Presidential Administration, Report of the 'Educated Romania' project, 2021.

The National Law of Education no 1/2011.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), accessed in March 2023.

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/international/transnational-education>

UEFISCDI, Nr.1, Haj, C, Popa, N, Fit, CR, Geanta, I, Marin, A, Deaconu, M, Olah, R, 'Policy brief – The internationalization of higher education in Romania, Academic mobilities (incoming and outgoing evolutions 2014/2015 – 2018/2019)', UEFISCDI – Centrul de Politici Publice, ANPCDEFP - Agenția Națională pentru Programe Comunitare în Domeniul Educației și Formării Profesionale, ISSN: 2810 – 2304; ISSN-L: 2810 – 2304, 2021.

UEFISCDI, nr.4, 2021, Haj, C, Fit C, Geanta, I, Marin, A, Deaconu, M, Olah, R, 'Policy Brief – The internationalization of Higher Education – Analysis of statistical data on the internationalization of education in state higher education institutions from Romania – developments 2017/2018 – 2019/2020', UEFISCDI – Center for internationalization of higher education, 2021, ISSN: 2810 – 2274; ISSN-L: 2810 – 2274, 2021.

Universities UK International, The scale of UK higher education transnational education 2020–21: Trend analysis and regional highlights, 2022.

<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/sites/default/files/field/downloads/2022-11/UUKi%20Scale%20of%20UK%20HE%20TNE%202020-21%20updated.pdf>

# Annex 1.

## Questions for the semi-structured interviews

### Colour code:

**Red** – questions all interviewees **Black** – questions only for university representatives

### A. General information about the interviewees

1. Name
2. Institution
3. Position
4. Experience in higher education  
(internationalisation of HE within the institution)
  - a. 1–5 years
  - b. Between 5–10 years
  - c. More than 10 years

### B. Perception of TNE

5. What is 'transnational education (TNE)'? What does TNE mean in your opinion? Response:  
(Open question = OQ)
6. Does your institution have TNE collaborations/internationalisation activities with international universities? YES/NO (Closed question = CQ)
  - 6.1 If YES, what type of TNE/internationalisation activities does your university have?
    - a. Joint or double degree programmes. If yes, please provide some examples of countries, institutions/study domains (if possible).
    - b. Study programmes offered by international universities with Romanian partners (your institution). If yes, please provide some examples of countries, institutions/study domains (if possible).
    - c. Courses/micro-credentials. If yes, please provide some examples.
    - d. Student degree mobility (if there are international students). If yes, please name the top 3–5 countries of origin (if possible).
    - e. Study programmes taught in English. If yes, please provide examples of 3–5 study domains.
    - f. Student and staff mobility exchanges. If yes, please name the top 3–5 countries of origin (if possible).
    - g. International partnerships. If yes, what would you estimate the percentage of active partnerships to be?
    - h. Research project collaborations. If yes, please provide examples of three main areas of collaboration (if possible).
    - i. Other (please provide examples)
  - 6.2 If NO, why do you think this happens? (Open question = OQ)

7. Your institution:

- a. Currently has TNE collaborations with UK universities
- b. Had TNE collaborations with UK universities in the past?

7.1 What type of TNE/internationalisation activities does your university have with UK universities?

- a. Joint or double degree programmes **If yes, please provide some examples of institutions/study domains (if possible).**
- b. Study programmes offered by UK universities with Romanian partners (your institution). **If yes, please give examples of university and study domain.**
- c. Courses/micro-credentials. **If yes, please provide some examples.**
- d. Student degree mobility (if there are UK students). **If yes, please provide some details on number of students and study domains.**
- e. Student and staff mobility exchanges
- f. International partnerships. **If yes, what would you estimate the ratio of active partnerships to be?**
- g. Research collaborations. **If yes, please provide examples of three main areas of collaboration (if possible).**
- h. Other (please give examples)

7.2 Joint or double degree programmes If yes, please provide some examples of institutions/study domains (if possible).

8. Which are in your opinion the main USPs of your institution? How can these be used to develop more/better international collaborations?
9. How do you see collaborations with UK universities as partners post-Brexit?  
(Open question = CQ)
10. Are you aware of any models of collaboration that work or do not work in terms of TNE?  
(Open question = CQ)

### C. Interest in developing/furthering TNE collaboration with UK institutions

11. To your knowledge, is there any interest from Romanian universities in developing TNE collaborations with UK institutions? YES/NO
12. To your knowledge, is there any interest from your university in developing TNE collaborations with UK institutions? YES/NO
  - 12.1 If yes, what type of activities is your university interested in? E.g. courses, double/joint degree, micro-credentials, branch campus, research.
13. Which are the main areas/topics or study domains where there could be interest?
14. With what type of institution would you be most interested in collaborating? Public vs private, comprehensive, medical, agronomic, technical, science socio-humanities and economics, architecture, arts and sports.
15. Would you be interested in hosting/attending face-to-face or online events focused on TNE opportunities? YES/NO

### D. Challenges and Obstacles

16. What do you think are the main challenges and obstacles in developing Romanian-UK TNE partnerships in general and with your institution? (Open question = OQ)
  - a. Legislation or regulations (please provide some examples)
  - b. Study programmes/courses fees/taxes
  - c. Lack of awareness of existing and potential opportunities for academics
  - d. Lack of awareness of existing and potential opportunities for students
  - e. English language skills of academic staff
  - f. English language skills of students
  - g. Other (please provide some examples)
17. Is there any legislation or bureaucracy aspect that hinders the TNE?
18. What is the likely impact of any planned or proposed legislation on TNE?

### D. Opportunities

19. What do you think are the opportunities (at national and institutional level) that could help in building TNE collaborations with UK institutions? (Open question = OQ)



20. In your opinion, what would be the main advantages and opportunities (for your university/ for Romanian HEIs) for developing TNE with UK institutions?  
(Open question = OQ)

21. Is there any legislation that helps building TNE?

**F. Potential role of British Council (or other institutions)** in raising awareness among students, teachers and university leadership for TNE opportunities between Romanian and UK institutions. st in developing/furthering TNE collaboration with UK institutions

22. Have you ever worked or been in contact with the British Council? YES/NO.

22.1 If yes, could you please give any examples of how you know the British Council or how you got in contact?

23. In your opinion, could the British Council play a potential role in raising awareness for TNE opportunities between Romanian and UK institutions? YES/NO

23.1 If yes, how would you see this potential role played by the British Council? What could the British Council do? Any ideas/recommendations? What do you think the British Council's potential role could be in raising awareness among students, teachers and university leadership for TNE opportunities between Romanian and UK institutions?  
(Open question = OQ)

- a. Facilitating online or face-to-face connections between institutions
- b. Raising awareness of TNE opportunities to students, teachers, university leadership
- c. Lobbying
- d. Other (please give examples).

24. Are there any other institutions that could play a role in raising awareness for TNE opportunities between Romanian and UK institutions? YES/NO.

24.1 If yes, please give examples.

25. What could these institutions do? What could be their potential role?

**G. Other promotional activities (at national or institutional level)**

26. In your opinion what promotional activities (at national or institutional level) could be done to raise awareness and set the stage for furthering TNE partnerships between Romania and UK?

26.1 Which institutions could undertake these activities?

**H. Recommendations**

27. Do you have any recommendations for the national/international level in order to further TNE partnerships between Romania and UK?

28. How about for the institutional level? Any recommendations in order to further TNE partnerships?

29. Anything else that you would like to add?

## Annex 2.

### UK transnational educational programmes available in Romania – May 2023

#### Undergraduate programmes

Institutions	Programme	Details
Abertay University (UK) Bucharest International School of Management (RO)	Business Management Digital Marketing and Business Management Accounting and Finance with Business Analytics	Three-year accredited undergraduate programmes; diploma issued by Abertay University <a href="https://bism.ro/undergraduate/about/">https://bism.ro/undergraduate/about/</a>
Coventry University (UK) European Nursing Academy – ENA Regina Maria Health Network (RO)	Nursing (Generalist Medical Assistant)	Three-year undergraduate programme with the specialisation of Generalist Medical Assistant (75 per cent of the time dedicated to learning is practical); diploma issued by Coventry University <a href="https://nursing-academy.eu/">https://nursing-academy.eu/</a>
Manchester Metropolitan University (UK) American Hotel Academy (Braşov, RO)	International Hotel Business Management	Three-year undergraduate programme; Bachelor of Arts degree issued by Manchester Metropolitan University <a href="https://aharomania.ro/concept-2/">https://aharomania.ro/concept-2/</a>
Romanian-American University (RO) University of York (UK) and City College (the European Campus of University of York) <i>Partnership launched on 16 May 2023.</i>	Marketing	Dual degrees at undergraduate and graduate levels. The partnership consists of one bachelor programme in Marketing and two master programmes, one in Digital Marketing and the other in International Business. Graduates will receive two degrees, one from UY and one from RAU and the student intake will start in 2024 for the bachelor programme. <a href="https://www.rau.ro/york-partnership/?lang=en">https://www.rau.ro/york-partnership/?lang=en</a>

## Postgraduate programmes

Institutions	Programme	Details
Manchester Metropolitan University (UK) American Hotel Academy (Braşov, RO)	International Tourism and Hospitality Business Management	Two-year postgraduate programme; MSc degree issued by Manchester Metropolitan University  <a href="https://aharomania.ro/master-concept/">https://aharomania.ro/master-concept/</a>
Transilvania Executive Education (RO)  validated by University of Buckingham (UK)	Executive MBA	Programme offered in Cluj-Napoca, co-designed with the University of Buckingham and TEE business community. Degree from the University of Buckingham.  <a href="https://teecluj.ro/en/executive-mba/why-to-choose-tee-executive-mba.html">https://teecluj.ro/en/executive-mba/why-to-choose-tee-executive-mba.html</a>
CITY College – University of York Europe Campus  University of Strasbourg (FR)	Pan-European Executive MBA	Dual degree programme leading to MBA degrees from the University of York and the University of Strasbourg.  Accredited by Association of MBAs (AMBA), Chartered Management Institute (CMI).  Graduates may also obtain the Level 7 Executive Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership of CMI, as well as the AMBA Certificate from the Association of MBAs.  <a href="https://www.york.citycollege.eu/frontend/articles.php?cid=7&amp;t=study-with-us">https://www.york.citycollege.eu/frontend/articles.php?cid=7&amp;t=study-with-us</a>
Henley Business School – University of Reading (UK)  ENVISIA (RO)	Postgraduate Board Practice and Directorship Programme (PGCert BPD)	Postgraduate qualification programme for practising board members, with academic accreditation recognised within the EU, offered by ENVISIA in partnership with the triple-accredited Henley Business School. Programme launched in partnership with London Stock Exchange.  <a href="https://www.envisia.eu/en#home">https://www.envisia.eu/en#home</a>
Romanian-American University (RO)  University of York (UK) and City College (the European Campus of University of York)  <i>Partnership launched on 16 May 2023.</i>	Digital Marketing  International Business	Graduates will receive two degrees, one from University of York and one from the Romanian-American University, and the student intake will start in October 2023 for master programmes.  <a href="https://www.rau.ro/york-partnership/?lang=en">https://www.rau.ro/york-partnership/?lang=en</a>

## Professional Courses and Diplomas

Institutions	Programme	Details
University of Suffolk (UK) Transilvania Executive Education (RO)	Strategy for the Digital Economy	Three-month executive course validated by University of Suffolk and delivered by Transilvania Executive Education in Cluj-Napoca. Diploma offered by University of Suffolk.  <a href="https://teecluj.ro/en/tee-short-courses.htmlv">https://teecluj.ro/en/tee-short-courses.htmlv</a>
University of Suffolk (UK) Școala pentru Oameni Responsibili - SPOR (RO)	Talent Academy Programme	Foundation programme and micro-MBA for HR professionals delivered by Professor Andrew Taylor. Participants are granted an international Talent Management certification issued by the University of Suffolk.  <a href="https://scoalaspor.ro/programe/talent-academy-foundation/">https://scoalaspor.ro/programe/talent-academy-foundation/</a>
British Law Centre (UK) University of Bucharest (RO)	Diploma in English Law and Legal Skills	One-year Diploma in English Law and Legal Skills provided by British Law Centre, a joint venture between the law faculties of the University of Cambridge and the University of Warsaw.  <a href="https://www.britishlawcentre.co.uk/bucharest/">https://www.britishlawcentre.co.uk/bucharest/</a>