



BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY – PAST AND PRESENT

Babeş-Bolyai University is an academic public institution aiming to promote and sustain the development of specific cultural components within the local, regional, national and international community.

Located in Transylvania, a European province with a troubled history, the Cluj University is the crowning achievement of a long series of attempts to establish here a higher education institution.

Its history begins with the intention of the Prince John Sigismund to set up, in 1567, an academy of studies in Sebeş (Alba) followed by the initiative of Stephen Bathory to lay the foundations, following the establishment of universities in Bratislava, Buda and Târnovo, of a college in Cluj, in 1581, under the control of the Jesuits and having the Italian Antonio Possevino as its Rector. This college was later closed down, and the Protestants and the Unitarians set up other colleges; in 1692 Gabriel Bethlen established the Calvinist College in Alba Iulia, with theology, philosophy and language studies, this college being headed by the famous Alstedt. The Catholics took the initiative again and established an academy in Cluj in 1688, under the control of the Jesuits. In an effort at confessional reconciliation, in 1776, Empress Maria Theresa founded a university in German in Cluj. But this enterprise was not to survive long either, Joseph II replacing the university with the famous Piarist Highschool, where the teaching was done in Latin.

In the context of the 1848 changes, the issue of setting up a university in the national language was explicitly raised. The Romanians, the majority population in Transylvania, asked for a university in Romanian. As to the Hungarian leaders, the minister Eötvös suggested in 1868 the foundation in Cluj of a university in which the teaching was to be in Hungarian, Romanian and German, and a part of the Romanian elite supported the proposal. But, in 1872, the authorities established the University of Cluj exclusively in Hungarian, which caused the discontent of the Romanian majority. At the end of World War I, against the background of the Great Union, the Cluj University, just like the universities in Strasbourg and Bratislava, was taken over by the state authorities, becoming an institution of Greater Romania. On May 12, 1919, the Romanian University of Cluj was set up, whose courses were inaugurated on November 3, 1919, by Vasile Pârvan with a lecture entitled “The Duty of Our Life” King Ferdinand I solemnly inaugurated the university on February 1, 1920. The new university was placed by the king of Romania under the motto which once, imprinted in marble, stood at the entrance in the central building: “dedicated to truth, through justice - the only elements leading to agreement among the different peoples of the world, this site of great culture will be useful to the people and to humanity, honouring itself and honouring us through its scientific achievements”.

In 1940, as a result of the territorial revision imposed by Germany and Italy, the Romanian university was moved to Sibiu and Timișoara, and the Hungarian university was brought from Szeged to Cluj. After World War II, once the Vienna Dictate was abrogated, the Romanian university returned to Cluj and took the name of Babeş. In 1945 the Romanian authorities established in Cluj the Hungarian university named Bolyai. The two universities were reunited in 1956 under the name of Babeş-Bolyai University, where teaching was done in Romanian and Hungarian. Subsequently, under the Ceaușescu regime, studies in Hungarian were gradually reduced.

In December 1989, Babeş-Bolyai University saw a very active movement of young students and academic staff, with the purpose of recovering the professional and democratic tradition of the university and of reforming the institution. The starting point of the new dynamics of the university was represented by the proclamation “For a New University of Dacia Superior” and by the subsequent actions of many Romanian, Hungarian, German, Jewish academics, all seeking to re-establish the prevalence of professionalism in the university and to integrate it in the system of democratic values.

Innovation has always been of the essence of the academic and social mission of Babeş-Bolyai University. Numerous aspects concerning the improvement of higher education, as well as the continuous dialogue with the society and the professional life have been addressed through original, innovative and scientifically fundamented ideas. It is beyond any doubt that the active role that Babeş-Bolyai University has played in academic and social life has left an unmistakable mark. The multicultural structure, together with the 1995 Charter have set in Romania as well as Europe an example of stability, creativity and flexibility. The establishment of doctoral schools in order to further improve the quality of the scientific doctoral research, as well as create new grounds for meaningful international cooperation, represented a decisive step on part of Babeş-Bolyai University towards higher academic standards. The importance of this example has been recognized by most of the universities in Romania and has been acknowledged by legislative acts.

Babeş-Bolyai University has taken on a greater role in supporting the programs of modernization of society and in its relations with the economic players and the local government. The University provides specialized services to Romanian and foreign companies, chambers of trade and industry or different local government bodies. There is a strategic partnership with the City Hall of Cluj-Napoca and the University is involved, along with other institutions from several counties, in programmes concerning sustainable development and different other policies.

Starting with 2003 the Babeş-Bolyai University started a structural transformation of academic management, separating strategic and operational management. By creating the Academic Council, which elaborates the academic strategies and policies, and ensures the innovation and reform of the university, an important step forward was taken in academic reform in the perspective of the Bologna process. The Academic Council adopted regulations that were sanctioned by the University Senate in the most important compartments of academic life.

Undoubtedly, one of the most important traits of Babeş-Bolyai University's identity is its tendency towards integration in the European higher education area. Babeş-Bolyai University now has the widest international cooperation ever, showing its impressive international scope, and its tendency to become compatible with universities in Europe and throughout the world.

In 2003, Babeş-Bolyai University started preparations for applying the principles of the Bologna Declaration. Within each department and faculty, there was a debate concerning the reorganisation of studies according to the recommendations of the Bologna process, specialisations were established for the graduate, masters and doctoral levels, the duration of studies for each study form and the competences offered to students. The regulations adopted by the University Senate set up the calendar for the implementation of the Bologna process until 2005, and the principles which have to be the bases of ensuring quality for each department and faculty, as well as for the university. Babeş-Bolyai University is prepared to ensure the immediate use, starting from the 2005-2006 academic year, of the Bologna process.

Located in a geographical area characterized by the presence of diverse ethnic and religious groups, the University has adopted a policy of multiculturalism, its students and teaching staff being Romanian, as well as Hungarian, German and Roma.

The Academic Council draws up regulations, projects, academic policies, strategies for developing Babeş-Bolyai University; all projects relating to general university regulations, policies and strategies must have the approval of the Academic Council. Through the International Academic Board, the Academic Council ensures the specialised international assessment of the University's structure and functioning.

The executive power belongs to the Rector, assisted by six vice-rectors, a general chancellor, a general administrative director and the general secretariat. However, the supreme decision-making body is the University Senate formed of 115 persons (deans, deputy-deans, academic personalities, researchers, college directors, and students' representatives) who meet in periodical sessions and in permanent commissions in order to make decisions.

The University has 21 faculties and 19 extensions in various cities throughout Transylvania. Other academic facilities include cultural centres, language learning centres, a lifelong and distance learning centre, a botanical garden, numerous libraries and a sports park.

FIGURES

The development of Babeş-Bolyai University can be illustrated by a few synthetic data of its evolution:

- 1938 – 3094 students, 4 faculties, 115 members of the academic staff (4 honorary professors, 84 full-time professors, 29 associate professors, senior lecturers, assistants) and 245 lecturers and teaching assistants.
- 1971 – Babeş-Bolyai University reached the maximum figure of its post-war development, having 14438 students, 8 faculties, 36 specialisations and 648 members of the academic staff.
- 1989 – the number of students dropped to 4000, in 7 faculties with 19 specialisations under the supervision of 626 academic staff members.
- 1992 – Babeş-Bolyai University recreated the structure of specialisations it had during its period at maximum development. The number of students reached 12247 in 11 faculties and 35 specialisations, being assisted by 826 academic staff members.
- Since 1993, the most comprehensive and strong development in the history of the Cluj University was recorded. Our university is now the most diversified (in terms of specialisations) and the most complex higher education institution in Romania. The number of students increases year by year.
- 1999 – 31 997 students and 100 specialisations.
- 2002 – 41 000 students and 115 specialisations.
- 2004 – Babeş-Bolyai University reached the point of greatest development in its entire history: 46 750 students, 20 faculties, 117 specialisations.

The above-mentioned development is grounded many crucially important decisions and radically new initiatives regarding the organisation of studies, the development of scientific research, the extension of the community services offered, the modernising of the infrastructure, the creation of the modern communication network, the involvement of Babeş-Bolyai University in the democratisation and the transition of Romania. The decisions of transforming Babeş-Bolyai University into a prestigious university of Central and Eastern Europe (1994), its intellectual, civic, and moral commitment to

the democratisation of Romania and Euro-Atlantic integration (1993), the massive infrastructure investments (1996), its reorganisation according to a multilingual and multicultural profile (1995), its transformation into a relevant institution of the international system of universities (2000), the policy of confronting the conditions of globalisation with new initiatives (2003) are some of the crucially important decisions for the current profiling of Babeş-Bolyai University.

- 2007 – almost 52 000 students in 21 Faculties, 1 700 experienced teaching staff members. 15 of our 21 faculties provide both a Romanian and a Hungarian curriculum, and 9 of them provide both a Romanian and a German curriculum. There are also two faculties (the Faculty of Reformed Theology and the Faculty of Roman-Catholic Theology) which provide courses in Hungarian only. More precisely, our University proposes long and short-term academic studies for 105 specializations in Romanian, 52 in Hungarian, 13 in German and 4 in English. This multicultural structure is the same in the case of the post-graduate and the short-duration curricula offered by the University's network of 18 colleges located throughout Transylvania.

Due to its prestige and good management, at present the University is an active member of many international organizations among others: International Association of Universities, Magna Charta Observatory, The Alliance of Universities for Democracy, European Association for International Education and Santander Group.