

## West\_University\_of\_Timisoara

**West University of Timisoara (WUT)** is a public university in Timisoara, which is the second largest city in Romania (approximately 300,000 inhabitants). It is located in the western part of Romania, in Timis County, one of the most dynamic economies and most developed regions in Romania with a very low unemployment rate (2%). Founded in 1944 by Royal Decree of King Mihail I as a higher institute for education and transformed into a university in 1962, WUT looks back at almost 70 years of history.

The WUT charter as well as the university's institutional strategic plan 2012 ? 2016 and the self-evaluation report (SER) point towards the self understanding of WUT being a comprehensive university, with the overall mission of "advanced scientific research and education, generating and transferring knowledge to society" (SER 2012, p. 23), covering a wide range of scientific fields in research and teaching. This already gives some hints to the profile of WUT within the environment it is located: it is one out of four public universities in Timisoara, from which the other three are specialised universities (polytechnics, medicine, agriculture).

At present, the university has 11 faculties: arts and design; chemistry, biology and geography; law and administrative sciences; economics and business administration; physical education and sport; physics; letters, theology and history; mathematics and computation sciences; music; sociology, psychology and educational sciences; political sciences, philosophy and communication sciences. According to the self-evaluation report, WUT has been classified a "teaching and scientific research university". Its faculties offer 89 Bachelor programmes and 136 Master programmes, out of which 85% have been rated in the context of the national study programme evaluation exercise organised by ARACIS as "A" or "B".

Roughly 17,000 students are enrolled at WUT, out of which 67.5% are Bachelor students, 28.4% Master students and 4.5% enrolled in doctoral programmes (SER 2012). WUT currently employs 1 566 people, out of which 714 are academic staff, 441 vacant teaching positions and 411 non-academic staff (SER 2012, numbers from academic years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013).

For the last two years, WUT was undergoing and still is in the process of change, a result of the coming into force of the new Romanian Educational Law in 2011 and consequently, internal processes of the reorganisation of both organisational units as well as decision-making processes, responsibilities etc. Furthermore, a new rector was elected in 2012, which also led to several changes at the level of vice-rectors, faculties (deans and vice-deans) and heads of departments.

According to WUT, the university is facing the following challenges at the moment:

- Drastic decline in student numbers for enrolment, due to demographic changes, school dropout rates as well as a decrease of public funding for higher education in Romania, but also due to the competition for students at a European level: In the academic year 2008/2009, 23,931 students were enrolled at WUT, decreasing in the last four years by almost 30%, having now reached 16,983 students.
- Decrease in the university's budget: as a result of the decrease in student numbers the university's budget has decreased; due to the allocation of funds based on student numbers, but also due to decreases in the fund itself allocated per student. In addition to decreases in public funding, there have been reductions in extra income through tuition fees from self-paying students.
- There has been a slight reduction in the number of academic staff actually in post over the period 2008/2009 to 2011/2012 but there has been a significant reduction in the number of posts that were declared as vacant.
- At national level, it can be observed that there is a quite turbulent environment, with an ongoing process of change, both in terms of economic crisis, but also in relation to the implementation of the new educational law.
- Many transformations occurred during the last years in the university's internal structure: for example, the transformation of chairs into departments, the establishment of the administrative council, new support units in order to meet the new demands and challenges for WUT. In sum, at WUT level, the new

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structures introduced in 2011 and 2012 are not yet stabilised.

- WUT recruits a high proportion of its students from Timisoara and the surrounding region. In recent years it has faced increasing competition from its local universities, in part due to these universities establishing programmes in new areas which are in direct competition to WUT's programmes. This impacts the level of competition for state funding as well as for paying students.
- Another challenge stated by WUT is that of securing the next generation of academic staff within an unfavourable environment: How to get back good students after their studies abroad or finish their studies, for example for a future career as academic staff at WUT?

Based on the self-evaluation report as well as information given during the site visits, the team notes that the current management team is trying to promote interdisciplinarity both in teaching and research, which could be understood as an approach to shape the profile of a large, comprehensive university within an increasing context of competition. Concrete activities the team were told about are the introduction of elective subjects to be chosen from faculties other than where the student is enrolled (starting in winter 2013) or the setting-up of an Institute of Advanced Environmental Research, an interdisciplinary research centre (also planned to start in 2013).

As far as the team could observe from SER and the site visits, WUT has established many close relationships with companies and cultural institutions in Timisoara and Timis county. Here, the team observed that lots of efforts are being carried out in order to increase the number of collaborations with external stakeholders (be it for internships, study programme development, delivering services outside the university etc.), but also to develop new forms of collaboration with external stakeholders.

Concluding this introductory chapter on WUT in general, the team would like to mention that it observed both a very enthusiastic faculty and students at WUT as well as an open and friendly atmosphere which obviously contributes to the institution's profile.

### **See Also**

[West University Timisoara](#)