

ROMANIAN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY FAIR –
RIUF 2005

EVALUATION REPORT

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

After the fair, the organizing team went through an evaluation process setting as its objectives to:

Understand and verify the impact that the fair and the process of organizing it had on its exhibitors, visitors, partners, the organizing team and the general public.

- i) Review the mechanisms, processes and procedures of the fair in order to evaluate their efficiency and their costs and, in doing so, to compile a set of recommendations for the next edition's organizing process.
- ii) Verify if and how the project reached its objectives set at the beginning; measure how the project deliverables measured with the expectations of the stakeholders (exhibitors, visitors, management, financial and media partners).
- iii) Clarify and improve the definition of the projects' goals, processes and outcomes for the management planning of the next edition.
- iv) Produce a document that can be used as a resource in the company's public communications, promotional and sales activities.
- v) Benchmark the project and its components to its industry peers in order to be able to decide what modifications need to be done for a better performance
- vi) Examine and describe the effective components of the project as best practices to be implemented in future projects
- vii) Assess and make recommendations regarding the priority of the tasks that need to be completed for achieving the larger goals of the project's stakeholders?

2. AUDIENCE FOR THE EVALUATION REPORT

The report will be made available to:

- i) Current and future exhibitors and visitors
- ii) Financial Partners
- iii) Media Partners
- iv) Other Partners and Supporters
- v) Management
- vi) Staff: employees and volunteers

The report is intended to help all of the above to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the fair as well as the costs and benefits of attending, to understand their role (if any) in the larger picture of the project and to evaluate the future opportunities that the fair may present to them.

3. BACKGROUND INFO ABOUT THE ORGANIZERS AND THE EVENT

The organizers of this fair are two young Romanian entrepreneurs, Alexandru Manaila-Maximean and Alexandru Ghita. The idea of a college fair was sparked by the immense interest shown by the students of *Mihai-Viteazul High School* in Bucharest during an SAT preparatory course, organized in the summer of 2004 by Mr. Manaila. Seeing this interest,

Mr. Manaila and Mr. Ghita developed a comprehensive plan to organize an international university fair in Bucharest.

Alexandru Manaila-Maximean (21) is a graduate of the Groton School – a prestigious boarding school in Massachusetts – and is currently a sophomore at Harvard University. During the past two years Alex was actively involved in offering counseling to Romanian students aspiring to study abroad, especially in the US. In 2003 Alex worked at a *Credit Mirabaud*, a private Swiss Bank in Geneva in the mutual funds structural analysis department. Alex has also participated in educational social projects for street children in Bacau, as a member of Leslie Hawke's organization *Gata, Dispus si Capabil*. Recently Alex has founded a distribution company for educational materials.

Alexandru Ghita (25) is a graduate of the *Academy of Economic Studies – the Dept of Economics in Foreign Languages*. During the past three years Alex has held financial management positions in two top Romanian private companies. Previously, Alex has worked as Project Manager and Regional Manager in two important Romanian NGOs. Currently, Alex is managing *Resurse Informationale* – the company that organized RIUF 2005, *StudentService* – an urban distribution company operating on niche markets, *AlpAccess* – an adventure tourism and rope access company. Starting with May 2005 Alex will be managing the Romanian branch of *BridgeEuropeConsulting Ltd*, a UK company that helps international universities with their recruiting and promotional activities in Eastern Europe. Alex is also a member of the board of directors of the *Romanian Association for Social Education* and is also vice-president of *Junior Chambers Romania – Bucharest LOM*, responsible for the business department.

4. PROJECT MOTIVATION - WHY A UNIVERSITY FAIR IN ROMANIA?

The *Romanian International University Fair's* goal was to facilitate the meeting of international educational services providers and Romanian students. In addition, financiers of educational programs, the embassies of the countries where the universities are located, and different organizations for students who support them in their efforts to apply to international educational programs were invited to participate.

In comparison with other nationalities, Romanians are underrepresented in the global academic community which is mostly due to the small number of applications put into international programs. The main cause of this phenomenon was the overwhelming lack of information in regards to the admissions process at foreign universities. In addition to limited internet access and modest financial resources, the biggest reason as to why Romanian students did not apply to study abroad was the lack of an organized medium to inform students about international educational opportunities. Until now, the vast majority of informational opportunities were limited to informal sessions held sporadically by a small number of current students and graduates who returned to Romania and to the information that was provided by educational organizations, such as the Fulbright Commission or the British Council.

The goal of the international university fair was to offer young Romanians access to relevant information and help them establish direct contact with the representatives of the universities. The event was designed to encourage a close interaction between universities and applicants and to facilitate the future application process.

5. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The fairs in the educational industry are generally into two categories: very general fairs – all types of exhibitors (primary schools, secondary schools, universities with undergraduate and graduate programs, MBA programs, language programs, editors of educational materials, various commercial companies etc) and very specific fairs (graduate

programs only or undergraduate programs only). Whereas the first may attract anywhere from 1,000 – X0,000 visitors, the former are usually attended by 3-600 visitors. Having this in mind, the organizers focused on attracting educational providers of undergraduate and graduate programs and set their initial target at more than 40 exhibitors and more than 2,500 visitors. This attendance would have allowed for:

- Exhibitors – to make contact with a relevant (large) number of interested visitors
- Visitors – to have access to a wide array of educational programs
- Sponsors – to reach with their message a large number of potential customers/be efficient in raising awareness of their brand within the targeted group

RIUF took place on 2nd of April 2005 at the exhibition hall of Sala Palatului in Bucharest and was open to the public between 10:00 AM and 6 PM. The event managed to attract more than 7,100 participants and 58 exhibitors of which 40 were international institutions and 18 were Romanian universities and companies, thus exceeding the expectations of all of the stakeholders of the project. The complete list of exhibitors is presented in the appendix to this presentation.

In addition to the regular exhibition, the organizers intended to facilitate at the event a series of learning opportunities for young people interested in studying abroad. As such, 14 workshops have been organized accommodating more than 2,000 participants. The speakers were young Romanian students and graduates of international educational programs as well as representatives of institutions such as the *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie*, the *British Council*, the *DAAD*, the *Fulbright Commission* and other partner institutions. The workshops featured presentations on a wide array of subjects including topics such as: International Academic Options, the Application Process, Financing Sources, Visa Issues and Work Opportunities etc. The workshops topics and the speakers are presented in the appendix to this presentation.

In an endeavor to discourage the Romanian brain drain, with the help of the DELTA Cultural Foundation (a fair partner), RIUF assembled a panel that included students and Romanian officials in an effort to try to find solutions to the problem. The debate attracted additional mass-media attention and was followed by a survey during the fair. The study (with more than 1000 respondents) answered why young Romanians want to leave (for study or work abroad), where they would go, on what terms they would come back and other similar questions. The report is available from the DELTA Cultural Foundation.

Learning from the experience of RIUF 2005 the future edition of the fair will have to:

- **Take place in a larger exhibition venue.** Although very large, the exhibition space of Sala Palatului and the workshops rooms seemed at some times to be insufficient for the large audience the fair attracted. This was due to the unanticipated vast interest of Romanian students in the fair.
- **Be open for at least 2 days**, as requested by tens of individuals that were not able to attend the fair on the specific day and by some of the universities representatives.
- **Increase the number of learning opportunities** (workshops, seminars, information sessions etc). A number of visitors came from 400-500 km to be able to attend some of the workshops. Many visitors spent the entire day at the fair going from workshop to workshop and discussing with the exhibitors.
- **Make sure the exhibitors are well prepared.** Although advised that the fair was going to attract some thousands of visitors, a number of exhibitors did not have enough brochures and promotional materials.

6. PROJECT RESOURCES

i) Staff

Most of the organizing work was performed solely by Alexandru Ghita and Alexandru Manaila. Three weeks before the fair day three volunteers from the *Association for Social Education* joined the organizing team assuming responsibilities in coordinating the PR and Logistics activities of RIUF. Twenty-five other volunteers (from the *Association for Social Education* and other organizations) helped with the fair logistics in the week before the fair and during the fair day.

ii) Financing

RIUF managed to attract an incredibly large number of international participants for its first edition. One of the most important reasons was the attractive low fee for the exhibitors. This would not have been possible without the generous support of the fair's sponsors, to whom we are very grateful:

Major Sponsors:

- Ernst & Young
- HVB Bank Romania

Sponsors:

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| ▪ Alcatel | ▪ Romtelecom |
| ▪ Cisco Networking Academy | ▪ S & T |
| ▪ Ericsson | ▪ Western Union |
| ▪ Lafarge | ▪ General Consulting |
| ▪ Raiffeisen Bank | |

Their support allowed the organizers to subsidize a free entrance for over 4,000 visitors. A small entrance fee (about 0.8 EUR) was charged only to those visitors that declined to register on the fair's website in advance.

iii) Partners

An important number of media partnerships were signed in order to assure a good media coverage of the event. The media partners published advertisements for the fair, covered the events in connection with the fair (the press conference, the brain-drain debate), featured stories about the fair and published interviews with the organizers. As a consequence of their effort more than 15,000 individuals visited the fair's website and more than 7,100 attended the fair. More details are available in the Media Coverage section. We would like to thank:

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| ▪ 9AM.ro | ▪ Evenimentul Zilei |
| ▪ Academia Catavencu | ▪ HR-Romania.ro |
| ▪ B-24-FUN | ▪ MyJob.ro |
| ▪ BizCity.ro | ▪ Radio Guerilla |
| ▪ BloomBiz.ro | ▪ Saatchi & Saatchi |
| ▪ Cariere | ▪ Wall-Street.ro |

We would also like to mention the support the fair has received from a range of other partners:

- The Public Managers Commission/The Commission for the Special Scholarship „Romanian Government”
- The DELTA Cultural Foundation
- Young Money Romania and Junior Achievement Romania

We would like to offer our gratitude to Ms. Mioara Mantale (governor of the Bucharest county) and Ms. Cristiana Copos for their moral and logistic support of RIUF.

7. BENEFICIARIES OF THE PROJECT

The fair attracted more than 7,100 participants and 58 exhibitors.

The following exhibitors staffed booths at the fair:

- 40 international institutions, of which 35 were universities and the other 5, were *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie*, *British Council*, *DAAD*, *Fulbright Commission* and the *Dutch Embassy*
- 7 Romanian universities
- Other Romanian institutions such as: a recruiting company, the *Romanian National Bureau of Foreign Scholarships*, the *Commission for the Special Scholarships of the Romanian Government*, one educational materials importer, *AIESEC*, 2 media partners and 4 sponsors

Visitors:

From the 4547 visitors that registered on the website, we were able to compile a visitors' profile. Out of this:

- 51% are undergraduate students interested in graduate studies
- 25.3% are high school students interested in undergraduate studies
- 2.7% are professors/teachers
- 1% are family/friends
- 17.7% are working professionals interested in graduate studies
- 35.7% are not from Bucharest
- 2093 have answered about their preference North America/Europe
 - 10.1% are interested only in programs from North America
 - 45.2% are interested only in programs from Europe
 - 44.6% are interested in programs from both North America and Europe

More data can be obtained from the analysis of the database of registered visitors.

8. MEDIA COVERAGE

The media campaign consisted of:

- A press release 10 days before the fair
- A press conference 8 days before the fair
- Advertorials in *Young Money* and *Cariere* magazines.
- Online advertorials on *BizCity.ro*, *BloomBiz.ro*, *WallStreet.ro*

- Advertisements in the *B-24-FUN* magazine and the *Cotidianul* and *Evenimentul Zilei* newspapers.
- Commercial spots on *Radio Guerilla*
- Online campaign on: www.9AM.ro (Banner, News), www.wall-street.ro (Banner, Insert newsletter, News), www.bloombiz.ro (Banner, Insert newsletter, News), www.referat.ro (Banner), www.hr-romania.ro (News), www.myjob.ro (Banner), www.bizcity.ro (Banner, Insert newsletter, News)
- Promotional messages on electronic groups such as: PR_ONG, JCIBucuresti, DEBRO, RBPA, Studenti-Marketing, Cyberneticon, Student_jurnalism, stud_ase, infoassp, stud_rei, earhitectura-grup, ion_mincu etc

The media clippings file is attached to this report.

Additional promotional means:

- 4 banners (6 X 1 meters) in the 3 central areas of Bucharest and in one student borough.
- 20,000 Flyers and posters distributed all over the country
- Insert in the newsletter of the British Council

The event was very well covered by the mass media, with more than 15 articles in the main Romanian publications both before and after the event: *Cotidianul*, *Cariere*, *Evenimentul Zilei*, *Jurnalul National*, *Capital*, *Adevarul*, *Cronica Romana*, *Ziua* and *Romania Libera*.

The fair was also covered by news websites and portals such as: Imagoo.ro, RevistaPresei.ro, TuFaciViitorul.ro, AvocatNet.ro, Markmedia.ro, TargurisiExpozitii.ro, Weblog.ro, Argumente.ro, Studentie.ro, Euractiv.ro, RGNPress.ro, Roumanie.com, RVS.ro, CugetLiber.ro, Unibuc.ro, ASE.ro, etc.

The following TV stations reported on the event :

- TVR 1 (Romanian National Television) - (insert with Alexandru Manaila and Alexandru Ghita in a educational talk-show)
- TVR 2 (1/2 hour live show with Alexandru Manaila)
- PROTV (reported in the news prior and after the event)
- Antena 1 (reported in the news after the event)
- PAX TV (made a documentary on the whole event)

9. METHODOLOGY

The Evaluation Report is based on data collected from:

- Data base of visitors' interest forms
- Media Clippings report
- Evaluations from partners, exhibitors and visitors during and after the event
- Project documentation: correspondence, press releases etc
- Direct observations of the staff

As we are working on improving the future fair please contact us with your suggestions, recommendations and feedback at office@riuf.ro. If you are interested in being an exhibitor at RIUF 2006 please let us know about your institution and its programs.

List of Appendices:

- A. Complete list of exhibitors
- B. Workshops at RIUF 2005
- C. Testimonials and personal reviews of our partners
- D. Interviews with visitors of the fair
- E. Media Clippings File