

The Rise for Academic Integrity in Romanian (Domestic) Economic Sciences

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1-Paragraph Summary.

In Romania, a vast majority of academic economists do not meet basic international criteria for research quality. At the same time, the national evaluation/ promotion standards used in this field are completely out of line, such that even academics of global acclaim, including Nobel Laureates, and the vast majority of John Bates Clark or Yrjö Jahnsson awardees, would not qualify for Economics professorships in Romanian universities. Given that the domestic criteria in place have been decided by individuals who themselves fail any international scientific standards, some of whom also violate academic ethic in other ways, and that those people have a direct or indirect influence over new criteria to be set in the future, this is very unlikely to change on its own. We inform on, deplore and condemn all this, asking the global community of academic economists' support for restoring sanity and decency to Economic Sciences in Romania, while calling on all domestic economists to rise for academic integrity and honor, for the proper recognition of scientific values.

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¹⁰ This version is preliminary, but contains already all the relevant statistics; any further updates will be merely cosmetic. The latest version is available at http://www.sebastianbuhai.com/papers/publications/the_rise.pdf.

(Metaphorical) Non-Technical Summary.

In a country where *Economics Nobel, John Bates Clark, and Yrjö Jahnsson awardees* would not pass the current minimal national criteria for qualification as professors in Economic Sciences,

In a country where over 99% of (the hundreds of) domestic full professors do not pass minimum international standards for tenure at any of the top 500 universities in any global Economic rankings,

In a country where over 99% of the “research output” of these domestic full professors in Economic Sciences is published in outlets completely irrelevant for any evaluation or promotion purposes outside Romania,

In a country where a very large chunk of *academic economists harbor extensive, multi-disciplinary talents, for, e.g., metallurgy, biology, chemistry, agronomy research*, materializing those through numerous but equally invisible/ prone to academic fraud outlets as those where their economics productions are published,

In a country which is, somehow, in the European Union, although when it comes to *research output quality in Economics is below such countries as Uganda, Nigeria, Trinidad-Tobago, Sri Lanka, Ghana, Cameroon,*

In a country where the current, *deeply irresponsible, evaluation/ promotion criteria in the Economics academe have been devised by people without any visible research output, disincentivizing any performance,*

In a country which uses officially the name of Romania, but its real, latent, name is known to be *Absurdistan,*

A small, but bold, fearless, and (as the legend goes) ferocious, academic resistance movement was born!

In folk tales and songs, they started to be referred to as “*the ERMASistas*”, after the acronym of a conference where they started meeting back in 2014, where research unheard of hitherto was disseminated and discussed freely, critically but constructively, collegially- *emboldening irreversibly the young and/or the ambitious,* and, importantly, *changing attitudes even in the cases where academic aptitudes still have to catch up,*

Then the movement grew, *the legend spread*; this is that new beginning, this is the ripe time for *The Rise,*

This is a call for all Romanian domestic academic economists to *stand up and fight for academic decency,*

This is a fight for your brains, and for your souls, this is a *fight for academic integrity and honor,*

This is *not a quick or costless fight, but you are not alone:* we shall fight along with you, in the first line,

This is a fight where *the entire international academic and research community in Economics will fully support you,* because you would be fighting for everything they have themselves fought for, since ever,

This is a fight where *your fellow academic colleagues active in Romania, from many other Sciences-- those that have been performing at international standards—will support you,* since they also went through this,

This is, finally, *that one fight worth fighting:* for yourselves, your current and future students, and for the current and all the future generations of people living in our country, academics or not, economists or not.

We shall overcome!

(Long) Abstract.

In Romania, a vast majority of academic economists do not meet basic international standards for research quality, while barriers to entry from outside have been at the same time enacted, by having in place domestic national criteria for evaluating scientific research that are completely out of touch with anything practiced in top 500 world-top universities, or in any other part of the civilized academe. Some of us already gave a preview of this parallel universe in Buhai, Litan and Silaghi (2015), where we showed that the current Romanian domestic criteria for evaluating scientific research and promoting academics within Economic Sciences are hallucinating, with consequences materialized in discouraging/ eliminating scientific value, and in the proliferation and promotion of scientific pseudo-science. Here, we extend and complement that earlier study, by showing that even the academics of global acclaim within the Economics profession, that is recent Nobel Laureates, John Bates Clark medal winners, or Yrjö Jahnsson awardees, would not qualify for Economics professorships in Romanian universities. When we consider the time those awardees first became full professors in their universities, one single individual passes current Romanian minimum qualification criteria for full professorship, Prof. Edmund Phelps; there are a few more who would minimally qualify at the time they received that award, but a majority of these world-top Economists could not pass even today.

While the above finding should be reason for alarm already, we then explore this tragi-comic Romanian academic farce in more detail, looking also at other dimensions and consequences of current “research publishing” within Economic Sciences in Romania; for instance, we stress the multidisciplinary vocation of many of our domestic colleagues, who count among their numerous publications research in metallurgical, biological, medical, chemical, agronomical, and many other-science outlets—all of the same quality as those Economics publications they produce. We continue by investigating more generally how the quality-weighted domestic Economics research compare to the rest of the world and find, to hopefully the great surprise of many readers, that Romania fares worse than Uganda, Nigeria, Trinidad-Tobago, Ghana, Sri Lanka, or Cameroon—in fact the African average is twice higher than Romania’s when using the ISI inCites ranking of world regions, based on the Category Normalized Citation Impact (CNCI). Very similar conclusions are obtained also by using the Scimago country rank, that uses the h-index, for either within Economics & related or the Business & related, categories. Romania proves to be an outrageous outlier in the European Union in terms of quality of the research produced within Economic Sciences, where almost everything published, in huge quantities, has no scientific quality and is not read or cited by anyone.

Given that the national criteria in place have been decided by individuals who themselves fail any international scientific standards, and that those people have a direct or indirect influence over any new criteria to be set in the future, this cycle is likely to perpetuate if not for an external intervention. We thus call on the international academic community to closely monitor the current dismal state of affairs, and any new developments- or lack of development- in the Economics academe in Romania, at the same time encouraging our colleagues inside Romania to stand up and fight for academic integrity, dignity, and honor. We also bring attention to some important concrete developments in the very near future (as of now, tomorrow, the 5th of December), involving the current national Committee for Economic Sciences (CNATDCU-ECON); that meeting and debate might, and hopefully will, help with the current situation even if marginally, by changing the current national criteria in place. It would be just an *epsilon* step, but still a step forward, that would interrupt the regression until now, accelerated recently. We end with reasons for hope: at the ERMAS conferences, which some of us initiated, and elsewhere, we have met many Romanian domestic economists, of different ages, institutions, research interests, who are capable, ambitious and motivated, despite the hell they are forced to work in; it is for them and with them that we will stand up and demand academic integrity.

Introduction.

The importance of science in society, the relevance of basic scientific research for a country's economy, for its growth rate, as well as the *sine qua non* symbiosis between research and teaching at top universities, has been advocated for, at great length, by many others, starting centuries ago and until today; to give just a couple of famous references, see Von Humboldt (1810), Bush (1945), Nelson (1959); see also the recent book by Mokyr (2016) and his zillion further references¹¹. The reason we nevertheless start with this is that some in Romania—including “academics”—appear to have serious problems grasping why we need research at all, why just “teaching” whatever crosses your mind in universities is not advisable, and why top quality research is essential for society. We avoid discussing such basics and urge them to do their homework first¹².

In this essay we are concerned with the explicit and implicit *disincentives against scientific performance*, provided by the current Romanian system of evaluating and promoting researchers in Economic Sciences. In a previous study, Buhai, Litan and Silaghi (2015)¹³, some of us have provided evidence that the existent national minimum criteria (CNATDCU) for evaluating scientific research and promoting academics in Economic Sciences in Romania, created *a hallucinating, parallel universe, to both academic excellence and academic decency*, according to international standards. Among our conclusions there, we showed that none of the Romanian economists active as researchers within the world top academe (including full professors or tenured academics at world top 10 or top 100 university departments or research institutes in Economics) would be able to pass even the minimum domestic criteria for full professorship positions and many of them would not pass even the analogue criteria for associate professorships in Romania, as all those are absolutely irrelevant or contrary to any international standards, to academic good-practice; while, at the same time there is virtually no visible published research within Romania whatsoever, with 99% of the huge amount of “publications” of domestic full professors appearing in outlets unheard of (gaming the system on large scale), with over 25% of those being journals which were suppressed, temporarily or permanently, from ISI JCR for various violations of publishing/review ethic and other forms of academic fraud-- see Teodorescu and Andrei (2014) for concrete examples, and further references listed by Buhai, Litan and Silaghi (2015).

It comes then to our utmost surprise that, even though everybody inside the country seemed aware and quite worried about those conclusions, and that *now, as you read these lines*, a national committee is to decide on new criteria, that there is still a strong, explicit or implicit opposition to change anything, that is, to adopt even some *epsilon* changes that will remediate at least partly the damage that has been done already¹⁴. Therefore we extend and complement our previous analysis with this brief descriptive note, where we take as sample the very top of the top in the Economics discipline, as understood by our profession globally, thus Nobel Prize Laureates in Economic Sciences, John Bates Clark medal winners, and respectively Yrjö Jahnsson awardees, and check whether they might fulfill the current minimum Romanian national criteria for Professorship in Economics, again *finding that their vast majority does not*. While this looks like the best

¹¹ For a study in presentation format that addresses *per se, inter alia*, the (relative) importance of research vs. teaching vs other activities within our larger context here of *evaluating academics (and especially Economists and academics at university Economic departments/ Business Schools) in an international perspective*, see Garleanu (2016).

¹² As will become however clear in this article, *most* academic economists in Romania appear to *practice* something consistent with such beliefs, i.e., publishing nothing that can be called scientific research by international standards.

¹³ For some of the main conclusions of that previous study, see English abstract:

http://www.sebastianbuhai.com/papers/publications/English_Raport_Criterii_Evaluare_Stiinte_Economice_Romania_6Dec2015.pdf or presentation slides http://www.sebastianbuhai.com/Buhai_PlenaryERMAS2016_1August2016.pdf

¹⁴ This CNATDCU-ECON national committee, composed of Romanian academic economists, is set to meet, for its final, decisive meeting on the 5th of December 2016. One of us is a member of that committee.

comic farce one could come up with, it is beyond tragic for our Economist colleagues in Romania, and even more so for future generations of academic economists in that country. We then explore in more detail how we got to this state of affairs, who are the ones responsible, as well as other dimensions and consequences. Finally, we suggest what is to be done, and warn the domestic actors in charge that the entire international community will be from now on monitoring any new steps... or lack of steps. We *strongly* urge for wisdom.

Who needs Econ Nobels, John Bates Clark, and Yrjö Jahnsson awardees in Romania?

Below, we present a brief analysis of how well do Econ Nobel Laureates¹⁵, John Bates Clark medal winners¹⁶ and Yrjö Jahnsson awardees¹⁷ perform against the Romanian domestic criteria for professorship. We sampled 44 Nobel prize winners from 1994 up to now, 17 John Bates Clark winners from 1991 up to now, and all the 18 Yrjö Jahnsson prize winners from 1993 up to now. For everyone, we consulted his/ her official CV, we searched on ISI WoS for ISI-indexed articles, and we searched Google books in order to find their books, as well as various other web sources in order to find any further missing pieces of information.

Table 1 below presents the analysis performed on the 44 Nobel prize winners from 1994 until now. We found that every Nobel prize winner in this sample published plenty of articles of the highest quality, mainly in top 10-15 journals of the ISI economics category. Importantly, *more than 95% of their articles are within the core ISI categories for economics and business*, i.e. economics, business, business and finance, management. Thus, for all of them, the first Romanian national professor requirement to have published 4 ISI indexed articles is fulfilled, at every moment of their career that we consider: when they became full professors, when they were awarded the Nobel or today (alternatively, till the time of death).

But the situation stays different when we look at their record of published books. The domestic Romanian national minimum criteria for Economics professors currently ask for a minimum of 3 books, on top of their 4 ISI articles mentioned earlier– and excluding teaching materials. As of December 2016, 15 of our Nobelists have not yet published 3 books, thus they do not qualify even today for Romanian professorships.

Many Nobel winners became famous after the award, and started to write books only then. Therefore, we also searched how many books they published before the moment when they got the Award. We found that 19 of them had not published three books up to the moment of being awarded the Nobel, hence out with them: at the moment of becoming Nobel Laureates they would not have qualified for professors in Romania!

Finally, since we talk about criteria for full professorships, we also looked at how many books our sampled individuals had at the moment they became full professors themselves, typically at world-top universities in US or Europe. If we do that, we only find one single Nobel prize winner who had by then 3 books and would have been eligible to apply for a professor in Romania: many congratulations, Professor Edmund Phelps! However, don't just jump for joy yet if you thought you might after all hire an Economist with a Nobel in Romania, as these are *minimum requirements for qualification*: with the current rules that do not assign any weight to quality, there are and will always be Romanian candidates with many more articles and books, in many more scientific fields, and thus, likely, our lone qualified Nobelist would be beaten easily by others.

¹⁵ http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/economic-sciences/laureates/

¹⁶ <https://www.aeaweb.org/about-aea/honors-awards/bates-clark>

¹⁷ https://www.eeassoc.org/doc/upload/List_of_Past_Winners20150316092045.pdf

Table 1. 44 Nobel prize winners against Romanian domestic criteria (CNATDCU) for full professorship

	Surname	Name	year of Nobel award	year became full prof.	fulfills the Romanian prof. criteria in dec 2016	fulfills the Romanian prof. criteria in the year of the award	fulfills the Romanian prof. criteria when becoming profesor
1	Hart	Oliver	2016	1981	NO	NO	NO
2	Holmstrom	Bengt	2016	1983	NO	NO	NO
3	Deaton	Angus	2015	1976	YES	YES	NO
4	Tirole	Jean	2014	1984	YES	YES	NO
5	Fama	Eugene F	2013	1968	NO	NO	NO
6	Hansen	Lars Peter	2013	1984	YES	YES	NO
7	Shiller	Robert J	2013	1982	YES	YES	NO
8	Roth	Alvin E	2012	1979	YES	YES	NO
9	Shapley	Lloyd S	2012	1981	NO	NO	NO
10	Sargent	Thomas	2011	1976	YES	YES	NO
11	Sims	Christopher	2011	1974	NO	NO	NO
12	Diamond	Peter A	2010	1970	YES	YES	NO
13	Mortensen	Dale T	2010	1975	NO	NO	NO
14	Pisarides	Christopher	2010	1986	YES	YES	NO
15	Ostrom	Elinor	2009	1974	YES	YES	NO
16	Williamson	Oliver	2009	1968	YES	YES	NO
17	Krugman	Paul	2008	1984	YES	YES	NO
18	Maskin	Eric	2007	1981	YES	YES	NO
19	Hurwicz	Leonid	2007	1951	NO	NO	NO
20	Myerson	Roger B	2007	1982	NO	NO	NO
21	Phelps	Edmund	2006	1971	YES	YES	YES
22	Aumann	Robert J	2005	1968	YES	YES	NO
23	Schelling	Thomas	2005	1958	YES	YES	NO
24	Kydland	Finn	2004	1982	NO	NO	NO
25	Prescott	Edward	2004	1974	NO	NO	NO
26	Engle	Robert F	2003	1977	YES	YES	NO
27	Granger	Clive	2003	1966	YES	YES	NO
28	Kahneman	Daniel	2002	1978	YES	YES	NO
29	Smith	Vernon	2002	1961	YES	YES	NO
30	Akerlof	George A	2001	1977	YES	NO	NO
31	Spence	Michael	2001	1975	YES	NO	NO
32	Stiglitz	Joseph	2001	1970	YES	YES	NO
33	Heckman	James	2000	1977	YES	NO	NO
34	McFadden	Daniel	2000	1968	YES	YES	NO
35	Mundell	Robert	1999	1966	YES	YES	NO
36	Sen	Amartya	1998	1956	YES	YES	NO
37	Merton	Robert C	1997	1963	YES	YES	NO

38	Scholes	Myron	1997	1983	NO	NO	NO
39	Mirrlees	James	1996	1968	NO	NO	NO
40	Vickrey	William	1996	1958	NO	NO	NO
41	Lucas	Robert	1995	1970	YES	YES	NO
42	Harsanyi	John	1994	1964	NO	NO	NO
43	Nash	John	1994		NO	NO	NO
44	Selten	Reinhard	1994	1967	YES	NO	NO

We then performed similar analyses as above, for a sample of 17 John Bates Clark winners from 1991 and up to now. Table 2 below presents these results.

Table 2: John Bates Clark awardees against Romanian minimum national criteria for full professorship.

	Surname	Name	year of award	year became full prof.	fulfills the Romanian prof. criteria in dec 2016	fulfills the Romanian prof. criteria at the year of award	fulfills the Romanian prof. criteria at the year of prof.
1	Sannikov	Yuliy	2016	2008	NO	NO	NO
2	Fryer	Roland	2015	2007	NO	NO	NO
3	Gentzkow	Mathew	2014	2009	NO	NO	NO
4	Chetty	Raj	2013	2008	NO	NO	NO
5	Finkelstein	Amy	2012	2008	NO	NO	NO
6	Levin	Jonathan	2011	2008	NO	NO	NO
7	Duflo	Esther	2010	2004	YES	YES	NO
8	Saez	Emmanuel	2009	2005	NO	NO	NO
9	Athey	Susan	2007	2004	NO	NO	NO
10	Acemoglu	Daron	2005	2000	YES	NO	NO
11	Levitt	Steven	2003	1999	YES	NO	NO
12	Rabin	Mathew	2001	1999	NO	NO	NO
13	Shleifer	Andrei	1999	1989	YES	NO	NO
14	Murphy	Kevin M.	1997	1989	NO	NO	NO
15	Card	David	1995	1983	YES	NO	NO
16	Summers	Lawrence	1993	1983	YES	YES	NO
17	Krugman	Paul	1991	1984	YES	YES	NO

We notice that the US young(er) economists are, understandably, very keen to publish in top journals in the economics category and they otherwise spent very little time in publishing books: and who can blame them, this is what many of us believe Economics research should be about. Only 7 of them would qualify for the Romanian domestic criteria now, in December 2016, and only 3 of them (including the now Nobel prize Laureated Paul Krugman) would qualify against the same criteria at the moment of their John Bates Clark medal award. None of them would qualify for the Romanian professorship at the moment when they became full professors in top US universities. No, that is simply not good enough for Romanian universities: sorry!

We finally performed the same analyses as in the two tables above for all 18 Yrjö Jahnsson prize winners, the European analogue of the John Bates Clark, from 1993 up to now. The Yrjö Jahnsson prize is dedicated for European economists younger than 45, who made a contribution significant to Economics within Europe. Table 3 below presents the results.

Table 3. Yrjö Jahnsson awardees against the Romanian minimum national criteria for full professorship.

	Surname	Name	year of award	Year became full prof	fulfills the Romanian prof. criteria in dec 2016	fulfills the Romanian prof. criteria at the year of award	fulfills the Romanian prof. criteria at the year of prof.
1	Koszegi	Botond	2015	2010	NO	NO	NO
2	Piketty	Thomas	2013	2000	YES	YES	NO
3	Rey	Helene	2013	2006	NO	NO	NO
4	Falk	Armin	2011	2003	NO	NO	NO
5	van Reenen	John	2009	2003	NO	NO	NO
6	Zilibotti	Fabrizio	2009	1999	NO	NO	NO
7	Saint-Paul	Gilles	2007	1997	YES	YES	NO
8	Besley	Timothy	2005	1995	YES	NO	NO
9	Gali	Jordi	2005	1999	YES	NO	NO
10	Dewatripont	Mathias	2003	1994	YES	NO	NO
11	Aghion	Philippe	2001	1996	YES	NO	NO
12	Tabellini	Guido	2001	1990	YES	YES	NO
13	Kiyotaki	Nobuhiro	1999	1997	NO	NO	NO
14	Moore	John	1999	1990	NO	NO	NO
15	Persson	Torsten	1997	1987	YES	NO	NO
16	Blundell	Richard	1995	1984	YES	NO	NO
17	Laffont	Jean-Jaques	1993	1980	YES	NO	NO
18	Tirole	Jean	1993	1984	YES	YES	NO

As previously found in the case of Nobel prize winners and Bates Clark medal awardees, also the young European economists who won the Yrjö Jahnsson award publish an awful lot of articles, all in the very top journals, with the same strong focus on the core ISI categories for economics and business, and virtually no interest for other journals, or, needless to say, other sciences! In general, Europeans do publish more books than USA faculty members, thus, we find that 11 out of 18 European prize winners would qualify now, many years after their award, to apply for the Romanian professorships. But at the moment of their award, only 4 of them would fulfill the Romanian minimum professorship criteria, while at the moment they got the professorship absolutely none of them would qualify. Once again, what are we talking about, top Europeans and top European universities, they are not even close to the standards we demand back home, in Romania!

All in all, out of a total of 79 world ‘top of the top’ economists, Romania would consider only one of them (Edmund Phelps) for the professorship exactly at the moment he also reached full professorship in world-top universities, but this candidate would be likely to lose to the Romanian candidates who would have much more articles and books, and display much higher multidisciplinary vocation. But we come to that below.

What are some of the (multi-disciplinary) talents of internal Romanian academic economists?

a. The one-of-a-kind multidisciplinary vocation of Romanian domestic economists

In Buhai, Litan and Silaghi (2015) and Silaghi (2016), some of us analyzed the scientific output of several samples of Romanian economists. Here we look at one particular dimension in more detail: their multidisciplinary vocation. The table below shows the percentage of the ISI-indexed documents published by those economists in journals belonging to the core categories of their supposed field of evaluation:¹⁸

Table 4. Percentage of ISI-indexed documents in journals belonging to core categories

Sample	Sample size	Total number ISI articles reported by the sample	Number of ISI articles in journals belonging to core categories	% ISI articles in journals belonging to core categories
Romanian candidates to professorship, 2013-2015	67	407	233	57%
Members of the new CNATDCU ¹⁹	25	178	146	82%
Romanian candidates to habilitation in economics and business domains, 2013-2015 ²⁰	49	436	295	67%
Romanian candidates to habilitation, approved by the new committee on the CNATDCU meeting, on Nov 14, 2016	7	37	13	35%

We note that a wide-accepted practice of domestic Romanian economists is to publish about 40% of their research in journals belonging to other scientific fields, such as metallurgy, textiles, medicine, philosophy, chemistry, agronomy, etc. Even the members of the novel national Economics Commission (CNATDCU), that is supposed to decide these days on the new criteria for evaluating research and establishing promotion procedures of academics (to replace the criteria we extensively analyzed and analyze also in here), which is way above, as a scientific-wise average, than the former analogue Commission from which we inherited the current *status quo*, report no less than 18% of their articles in other sciences-- thus having a clear incentive from the start to argue for “multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity” of the Romanian Economics and Business field. By comparison, world-top economists awarded with Nobel, John Bates Clark or Yrjö

¹⁸ We considered as core categories the following: economics, business, business and finance, management.

Supplementary, we considered valid the following categories: statistics and probability and computer science, but only for people evaluated within the Statistics, Cybernetics and Business Informatics evaluation domains.

¹⁹ Data collected as of sept 15, 2016

²⁰ Data collected as of sept 15, 2016

Jahnsson medals *publish more than 95% of their research in outlets strictly belonging to their research field*. That does not come as a surprise to us: long gone are the times of Pico della Mirandola-types, and nowadays it is hard to acquire/ maintain expertise even in a narrow scientific subfield, not to mention several Sciences!

We did find tragicomic multidisciplinary examples (we really had *l'embarras du choix* choosing among them, an aspiring comedian will do well to get inspired from here). For example, one successful candidate²¹ with habilitation approved this very month in the domain of "Management", reports 6 ISI-indexed articles, none of them published in management or business journals. In fact 2 of them, published in "Industria textila"²² and "Indian Journal of surgery"²³, deal with the topic of *abdominal hernia*, and another deals with *philosophy*²⁴. This same candidate published 9 articles in the (in)famous "Metalurgia International"²⁵, which were simply erased from her CV before the habilitation contest; this candidate is, in fact, so versatile that she can address topics in medicine, philosophy, agriculture, metallurgy, all of them complementing, at the same time, her teaching in the human resource management area. We can only congratulate her lucky students!

One well-established rule of thumb in Romanian universities in the Economics and Business field appears to be the following: if one needs to publish ISI-indexed articles in order to get professorships or habilitation, s/he searches for a journal happy to do accommodate an article, regardless the scientific field, the prestige, or the monetary costs to publish in that outlet. If such a journal is thrown out by ISI (as with *Metalurgia International*, or *Metalurgija* from Croatia), they move on to search other journals happy to get money and questionable research from anyone. This situation can, logically, only be possible with the knowledge and tacit or active complicity of all responsible deciding factors from Romanian business and economics faculties, among them the leaders of the universities that accept to endorse such degrees and diplomas, the members of the evaluation juries who are selected to close eyes to any evaluation of the scientific content, and only count how many articles were published by candidates, and the national CNATDCU Commission for Economics who then approves these titles by, guess, majority voting. And this goes on perpetually.

b. The summit of scientific achievement in domestic Romanian academic Economics is always filtered via by the very Principles of Research of domestic Romanian Economic Sciences

There is not much to add here, you only need to [read this masterpiece](#), published in the Romanian domestic economic journal "Amfiteatru Economic" (at some point removed from ISI JCR for over 70% self-citation rates). Tom Lehrer back in 1967 [offered an alternative \(antidote?\) to it](#). Everyone, pick your favourite!

How does quality-weighted domestic Economics research compare to the rest of the world?

Table 5 below represents an extract from the ISI inCites ranking of world regions, based on the *Category Normalized Citation Impact*. According to Thomson Reuters²⁶, "The Category Normalized Citation Impact (CNCI) of a document is calculated by dividing the actual count of citing items by the expected citation rate for documents with the same document type, year of publication and subject area. When a document is

²¹ http://doctorat.ase.ro/nica_elvira consulted on Dec 2, 2016

²² http://www.revistaindustriatextila.ro/images/2015/Textila_nr_2_2015_web.pdf

²³ <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12262-015-1238-3>

²⁴ <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00131857.2015.1091283>

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3eeeGvWr-8> perfectly describes the practices of that journal, once-upon-a-time a strong favourite of many Romanian Economists, and not only Economists

²⁶ <http://ipsience-help.thomsonreuters.com/inCites2Live/indicatorsGroup/aboutHandbook/usingCitationIndicatorsWisely/normalizedCitationImpact.html>

assigned to more than one subject area an average of the ratios of the actual to expected citations is used. The CNCI of a set of documents, for example the collected works of an individual, institution or country, is the average of the CNCI values for all the documents in the set". Hence, CNCI indicates the relative impact of the documents in a set, compared with all the ISI WoS documents with the same type, year of publication and subject area, being one measure for the quality of the research output.

We queried such ISI inCites for a ranking including all regions of the world, based only on article and review documents, assigned in the core ISI categories for economics and business (i.e. economics, business, business & finance, management), listing only regions that have published at least 100 such documents indexed in ISI WoS. Romania is listed on the 175 position out of 182 retrieved results, with a CNCI score of 0.39, which represents a merely 37% of the world CNCI, being ranked below countries like Uganda, Lebanon, Iran, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Cameroon, Egypt, Pakistan, Venezuela or Jamaica. *The African average of 0.69 is almost twice the one of Romania.* You could and should perhaps be surprised to hear that Romania is a member of the European Union, which is otherwise doing quite well and is on an uptrend in Economics research quality, on average, see for instance the conclusions by Blundell et al (2016). We cannot, of course, blame Blundell et al (2016) for not having noticed this outrageous European outlier in terms of Economics research output, as its relevant research production in Economics is truly... invisible.

Table 5. World regions' ranking according to ISI inCites, based on CNCI (query date: Nov 27, 2016)

Region / country	Rank	Web of science documents	Category normalized citation impact
World	na	700288	1.05
Massachusetts, USA	1	35952	2.36
New Hampshire, USA	2	2169	2.06
Illinois, USA	3	23430	1.98
USA	19	299676	1.48
Hong Kong	24	9767	1.39
Canada	37	37105	1.28
OECD countries	55	586031	1.20
UK	65	87339	1.14
UE-15 countries	75	227891	1.06
France	76	23666	1.04
UE-25 countries	78	238161	1.04
EU-28 countries	84	240260	1.03
Uganda	90	137	1.01
Asia Pacific countries	109	102682	0.95
Lebanon	111	295	0.94
Iran	113	1166	0.94
Bangladesh	122	122	0.87
Sri Lanka	138	179	0.73
Cameroon	139	127	0.71
Egypt	140	438	0.71
Africa countries	146	7817	0.69
Pakistan	159	857	0.61
Venezuela	171	293	0.48
Jamaica	173	124	0.42
Romania	175	1740	0.39

We performed similar queries in the Scimago country rank for two subject areas: *Business, Management and Accounting* and *Economics, Econometrics and Finance*. Scimago ranks the countries according with the h-index of all documents in Scopus, assigned to their subject areas. The two tables below present the results.

Table 6. Country rank for subject area Business, management and accounting, according to Scimago²⁷

Country	Rank	Number of documents	h-index
USA	1	203383	485
UK	2	63678	237
Canada	3	24529	204
Saudi Arabia	35	1413	43
Iran	41	3183	39
Egypt	43	1305	36
Lebanon	45	464	33
Kuwait	48	454	28
Viet nam	51	440	27
Kenya	55	413	24
Nigeria	56	1270	24
Ghana	60	400	22
Pakistan	61	1341	22
Oman	64	336	21
Trinidad and Tobago	65	163	21
Sri Lanka	68	333	19
Romania	70	4559	19

Table 7. Country rank for subject area Economics, econometrics and finance, according to Scimago²⁸

Country	Rank	Number of documents	h-index
USA	1	146539	430
UK	2	46838	224
Canada	3	19347	162
Malaysia	34	4857	44
Ethiopia	41	365	36
Kenya	43	551	35
Iran	46	1455	33
Pakistan	51	1099	27
Bangladesh	52	458	26
Egypt	55	391	25
Nigeria	56	1578	25
Lebanon	59	294	24
Viet nam	60	384	24
Ghana	61	414	23
Kuwait	66	208	21
Uganda	67	160	21
Romania	68	1877	20

²⁷ <http://scimagojr.com/countryrank.php?area=1400&order=h&ord=desc> retrieved Dec 2, 2016

²⁸ <http://scimagojr.com/countryrank.php?order=h&ord=desc&area=2000> retrieved Dec 2, 2016

We note that Romania publishes *a number* of scientific documents comparable with countries of our size, but *the impact of those articles in terms of citations*, and thus eventual academic, and beyond-academic impact, is extremely low. Then, one solution of the problem appears straightforward to anyone: *stop asking for raw quantity, as in the current minimal criteria, and impose an objective qualitative threshold* (such as a minimum Article Influence Score (AIS)- see also Abbring et al (2014) for why AIS, though imperfect, is the best scientometric indicator to be used in that regard). All this was known way before, and many universities outside Romania, e.g., in continental EU, UK, USA, etc, and, in fact, entire countries for their public system, implemented such things, see also Buhai, Litan and Silaghi (2015) and their many references and links.

So how on earth did Romania get itself in this mess?

The late Romanian mathematician and polymath Solomon Marcus wrote something that was used as motto by Buhai, Litan and Silaghi (2015): “... *the vital problem for the Romanian culture, for the Romanian science: the still very large number of those who, working in research, lack the courage, the capacity, or the will to enter the global game of competition for value*”. While that rings true in many respects, probably in all the respects, it only indirectly, implicitly tackles what we believe to be gist of the problem: more critical is that the system **refuses to allow** our ambitious domestic Romanian colleagues to enter the global game of competition for value, while perpetrating a vicious circle in which pseudo-scientific values can easily get access to the positions of higher influence in the Economics academe (such as full professorships, other tenured positions), or to academic administrative or decision-making positions²⁹. At the same time, barriers to entry from outside are raised both explicitly and implicitly: as we have shown in here, the relevant decision makers did not shy away from setting such obnoxious criteria that stop even *Nobel Laureates in Economic Sciences, or John Bates Clark or Yrjö Jahnsson awardees, from even qualifying to apply for full professorships in Romania*. This is something nobody who knows what scientific research is about should take lying down, hence we deplore and condemn this dismal state of affairs, while at the same time calling on all our Economist colleagues in Romania to stand up for what entails global academic dignity, integrity, and honor. We cannot fight this fight *instead of them*, but we can, and will, fight it *together with them*.

But how did we get to these absurd--bordering on insanity-- evaluation and promotion criteria to start with? The problem with irrelevant or simply disincentivizing evaluation/ promotion criteria is older in Romania, it was at some point a problem for all or many sciences, and many authors have been writing about these starting more than a decade ago, see for instance Buhai (2004), David (2006), Florian (2006), Florian and Florian (2006), and further references listed in Buhai, Litan and Silaghi (2015). But some progress in this regard was also registered over time, for instance with criteria better aligned with international ones, for instance during the Romanian Education & Research Ministry tenure of Daniel Funeriu (things were far from the international norms for Economic Sciences even then, though). Things went however downhill since then, and especially so recently. How is that possible? The answer will become more clear once you

²⁹ At the same time, since these academics are the ones responsible for rules for awarding doctoral degrees and Romanian “habilitation” titles in Economic Sciences, the problem is exacerbated. For instance, the number of PhD degrees in Economics and Business (and Social Sciences, generally) awarded recently sky-rocketed, way above the demand for them, see, for instance, Corlan (2016). The quality of both PhD and habilitation theses, accordingly, went downhill. In addition, this is related to the internationally-mediatized Romanian scandals concerning plagiarism of PhD theses (including by convicts, who can reduce their sentences [for each “scientific article” they write while serving term](#)), where PhD degrees in Economics (plus Law and some other Social Sciences) have again a very prominent role.

understand who are the individuals that issued the previous criteria. In the former CNATDCU-ECON³⁰ we find all the administrative leaders of important economics and business faculties in Romania. None of them has ever approached any academic journal that will ring a bell for you, those who do *publish*, thus obviously not in any journal listed in CNRS³¹, UK Academic Journals Guide³², Tilburg³³, Tinbergen³⁴, German Handelsblatt-VWL-Ranking³⁵ or VHB-Jourqual³⁶ lists (all these lists are also referred to/ discussed in the legends/ references of Buhai, Litan and Silaghi (2015) and/or Silaghi (2016)). If you were to compute, just for illustration, their publication points to see how to they compare to the minimum requirement for a so-called “Tinbergen Institute Research Fellow”³⁷ (for our purpose: an informal, absolute minimum, to get nowadays tenure at any of the 3 Dutch universities comprising the Tinbergen Institute: Erasmus University Rotterdam, University of Amsterdam, and the VU University Amsterdam) you get *0.00 points* (no typo: really no positive decimals) for all those deans, rectors and vice-rectors in that Committee, with just one exception-- one individual who has an *epsilon* of 0.29 TI Research Fellow points (2.5 points are the absolute minimum of publication points required for admission as TI Research Fellow, next to other requirements concerning citations, and of course affiliation with one of those Dutch universities). As some of us showed in Buhai, Litan and Silaghi (2015), this might not be however a surprise, since all *70 full domestic professors* from that study sample were **together* gathering less than 2 (two) norms* in terms of publication points as Tinbergen Institute Research Fellows, with, again for all these 70 observations together, 1 (one) single article in any journals listed in the Tilburg University’s larger Economics journal list (comprising no less than 70 journals); while most top Romanian economists (such as ERMAS conference Scientific Committee members) working outside Romania meet easily that criteria *several times*, often with just one or two of their publications. Furthermore, many members of the former CNATDCU-ECON committee failed and continue to fail even now to comply with the 4 ISI-indexed articles requirement that they requested as rule for the whole country, with some of them being further listed also as known offenders on the RePEc plagiarism list³⁸, or, as having been permanently condemned for various acts of corruption³⁹, or as being currently criminally investigated⁴⁰, etc, which normally would all mean the end of any academic life, and especially so of any high-administrative academic function—anywhere in the universe where academic integrity is valued.

Now, nobody demands that everybody perform at the Tinbergen Institute Research Fellowship-level or similar to be an academic economist in Romania yet, today. However, when the lack of academic aptitude is meeting the lack of a basic attitude of what any academic should entail, that is when all evil inside Pandora’s academic box breaks loose. We note that *this is not true for everyone, and some of those people have changed their attitudes, sometimes after coming in the audience of the ERMAS conferences, or de facto helping, a lot, with their organization--* see Buhai et al (2013) for the document initiating that conference series, which has been since its first edition in 2014 going stronger and stronger, with an upcoming 4th

³⁰ http://www.cnatdcu.ro/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Anexa_OM-4205_modificare-comisii_MOf.pdf

³¹ <https://www.gate.cnrs.fr/spip.php?article1002&lang=en>

³² <https://charteredabs.org/academic-journal-guide-2015/>

³³ <https://econtop.uvt.nl/>

³⁴ <http://www.tinbergen.nl/research-groups-researchers/tinbergen-fellow-requirements/>

³⁵ <http://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/konjunktur/vwl-ranking/>

³⁶ <http://vhbonline.org/en/service/jourqual/vhb-jourqual-3/>

³⁷ <http://www.tinbergen.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Fellowship-Requirements-and-Charter-2012-2016.pdf>

³⁸ <https://plagiarism.repec.org/offenders.html>

³⁹ <http://www.evz.ro/fostul-rector-al-universitatii-ovidiu-constantina-danut-epure-condamnat-la-inchisoare-pentru-luare-de-mita-cu-suspendare.html>

⁴⁰ <http://alba24.ro/perchezitii-dna-in-alba-iulia-procurorii-vizeaza-fosta-conducere-a-universitatii-pentru-fapte-de-coruptie-321657.html>

edition having again world-top keynotes and anticipating world-top scientific presentations, to Cluj, in July 2017⁴¹. But, at the same time, several of those directly responsible for the current state of affairs, holding even now positions of utmost influence within the Romanian academe, have not moved a single inch from their prior convictions and practices. We strongly believe that this *status quo* is far from beneficial, with already high current costs, but yet enormous costs to come, for the vast majority of stakeholders--be it future generations of Romanian academic economists, Romanian economic students, the Romanian society at large; and, by immediate extension, the European and worldwide, Economic Sciences and the general academe.

What to do about all this?

If we sounded pessimistic so far in this article, it does not mean that there are no rays of hope: on the contrary. First, we were deeply impressed with the ambition, motivation and quality of many young and not-so-young domestic economists who got papers accepted at the ERMAS conference editions and gave insightful presentation, which no doubt will turn into good publications. Second, we also talked with many domestic economists who were not participating at ERMAS as presenters, but as part of the audience, and/or taking those intensive courses offered in parallel with the conference, and again we noticed that flame in their eyes and their hearts, which convinces us that we have world-class academic material right there, in Romania. It is for these domestic colleagues that we want you to fight along with us, and together with them: it was and still is extremely difficult for them, and they have often, if not always, been discouraged, intimidated, let down, asked to do things that they always knew were parallel to scientific research in order to pass various evaluations or to promote within the Romanian economics academe. We cannot let this destruction of scientific *esprit* to continue. These people are the very hope of an entire's country scientific field: they are not located in one particular university or institute, they are scattered around, they all hope for a change. And that change is *sine qua non* also for all the future generations that will come after them.

But what can one do concretely, now? One of us is a member of the national CNATDCU-ECON committee final meeting tomorrow, the 5th of December, to decide on these new national criteria, and has already come out publicly against all sort of pressures on this committee, see Silaghi (2016)—unfortunately only in Romanian. The proposed (approved by a majority of that committee) changes are here⁴², they are minimal, and they are unfortunately just a compromise: still shameful compared to any decent criteria abroad. But at least they represent an epsilon step ahead from the insanity before, in that at least people who published in at least two journals with an (epsilon) positive Article Influence Score would be able to minimally qualify now for Professorships; even with this low bar, many of those that decide the criteria in place, and the vast majority of those holding now full professorship positions, would fail. So allow anyone already in the system to catch up in a given time interval, but make sure to implement these new national rules that raise, even if just a tad, the bar. Ideally in that debate tomorrow people in that Committee would come to their senses, and surprise all of us positively, by listening to many of the proposals for amendments and improvements that they received from the Romanian economic diaspora, including from some of us, authors of this text. Reduce the number of allowed “scientific domains” in which these people can publish—we hope to have convinced you that this is not practiced anywhere else, and that is strongly detrimental. Raise a tad more those AIS

⁴¹ See <http://www.econacademia.net/ermas2017.html> or <http://www.econacademia.net/conferinta.html> (and solely in English, but less structured format-wise, here: <http://www.econacademia.net/english.html>)

⁴²

https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/Comisia%2027%20_Stiinte%20economice%20si%20Administrarea%20Afacerilor.pdf

minimum scores required for full professorships: an assistant professor in any top university in Europe needs several articles with AIS scores above 2.0 usually, and higher in the top US universities. It would be much better to think mid- and long-term, not just a day, one week, or one year ahead. You all (should) know that.

Most importantly, stand up for academic integrity and honor, every day from now on. We stand with you.

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- The study above has also been presented (in English) in [a plenary session](#) of the ERMAS 2016 conference: http://www.sebastianbuhai.com/Buhai_PlenaryERMAS2016_1August2016.pdf.
- The study originally written in Romanian is directly accessible at http://www.sebastianbuhai.com/papers/publications/Raport_Criterii_Evaluare_Stiinte_Economice_Romania_6Dec2015.pdf or, in blog format at <http://blog.econacademia.net/2015/12/demotivarea-performantei-cazul-criteriilor-nationale-de-evaluare-a-cercetarii-in-stiintele-economice-din-romania/> or, as chapter of the David, D et al (2015): “G3A Think Tank Report on Romanian science”, published in December 2015 in the *Romanian Journal of Science Policy and Scientometrics*, at <http://rpss.inoe.ro/articles/231/file>. It also had some media coverage/ follow-ups, in the national press or national television, see for instance the links gathered here <http://blog.sebastianbuhai.com/2016/08/despre-universuri-paralele-evaluarea-performantei-cercetare-economica/> or [here](#) or [here](#) (all these are in Romanian, however).

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