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Postdoctoral Studies in Ethics and Health Policies

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When the end is the beginning of the road...

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The analysis provided by the National Strategy for Research, Development and Innovation 2007 - 2013 indicated serious weaknesses in the Romanian research, development and innovation system, and it emphasized the gap compared to the global trends in science and technology due to the chronic underfunding and to the domain restructuring; the analysis also emphasized the reduction in the number of performant researchers and the increase of average age because of the low attractiveness of the field, derived from the low-wages, low quality infrastructure, lack of an evaluation system meant to encourage and reward real performance and excellence and lack of clear and transparent criteria for career advancement¹.

The project "Postdoctoral Studies in Ethics and Health Policies" (POSDRU/89/1.5/S/61879, co-financed from the European Social Fund, the Operational Sectorial Program for Development of the Human Resources 2007-2013, Priority Axis 1 "Education and training in support for growth and development of knowledge based society", Key Area of Intervention - 1.5 "Doctoral and postdoctoral programmes for supporting the research), launched in 2010 by "Grigore T. Popa" University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Iași in partnership with "Al. I. Cuza" University of Iași and "Iuliu Hațieganu" University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Cluj aimed primarily at addressing the aforementioned deficiencies.

The project focused on the postdoctoral research component, given that in Romania there is no sufficient and consistent support for continuing the work of PhD graduate researchers in their fields of interest. The premise was that providing academic and financial opportunities to PhD researchers could redress our country's current

¹ Romanian Government. Ministry of Education and Research. National Authority for Scientific Research. The National Research, Development and Innovation Strategy 2007-2013. Available at <http://uefiscdi.gov.ro/userfiles/file/ROST/1188314177strategia%20ro.pdf>

situation in research and innovation . The project aimed at creating a suitable environment to promote excellence in research, following the national and European strategy for research, development and innovation. It also aimed at covering the fragmentation between academic research, health policies development - rarely based on scientific evidence - and the public debate on health policies.

This was possible by bringing together researchers from various fields, decision-makers in the healthcare system and civic organizations involved in the public debate on health policies. Thus the premises of a top research center were created, focusing on the real needs in the health care system as perceived by decision-makers and by the public opinion.

In this project, 40 postdoctoral researchers from various domains-medicine, law, philosophy, sociology, psychology, theology, conducted multidisciplinary research on topics of interest in the field of health policies in Romania: lifestyle and health behavior of people with chronic diseases; the ethics of governance in health services for people with substance abuse; ethical perspectives and determinants of the access of vulnerable groups and persons to health services; ethics and efficiency in resource allocation in the healthcare systems; ethical and socio-economic implications of migration of doctors from Romania; transplantation of organs from deceased donors- ethical perspectives and psycho- moral, socio-cultural, medical, juridical influences; interdisciplinary study of the bio-psycho-socio-cultural factors that impact on the dignity of dying patients.

The research, conducted over three years, was finalized with the publication of many scientific papers in national and international journals, three monographs and three studies on topics of great interest to the Romanian healthcare system: organ transplantation, vulnerability and patient autonomy.

In this project a research center of excellence affiliated to the "Grigore T.Popa" University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Iași - the Center for Ethics and Health Policies- was created, and a research network at national and international level on issues of ethics and health policy by supporting the cooperation between universities and other research centers. Last, but not least, the project enabled the creation of a homogeneous group of enthusiasts and dedicated postdoctoral researchers, all of them guaranteeing that the end of this project is actually a promising start...