

TWO DECADES OF GEOGRAPHICAL HIGHER EDUCATION IN BAIA MARE (1998-2018)

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ABSTRACT. – **Two Decades of Geographical Higher Education in Baia Mare (1998-2018).** This paper aims to emphasize the history of the geographical tertiary education system in the Baia Mare Municipality (1998-2018), looking into „*the transformations*” of the Geography specialisation, specifically the evolution of enrolled students and graduates, the annual staff dynamics, as well as a synthesis of its educational and scientific achievements, ending with a presentation of its infrastructure. The 1998-1999 academic year corresponds with the accreditation of the first two specialisations of the Baia Mare Branch, one of them being **History-Geography**, long-term studies (4 years) in Romanian, part of the **Faculty of Human-Christian Sciences**, from „*Vasile Goldiș*” **University Arad**. The purpose of said specialisation was to provide competent teachers for the schools of Maramureș and the surrounding counties, preparing seven series of graduates (25 in 2002 and 40 in 2008), a total number of 601 students, reaching its peak (126) in 2004-2005. The fall of 2005 is the first significant moment in the history of Baia Mare Geography, as the **Faculty of Natural Sciences** was established and the History-Geography specialisation was transformed into **the Geography Section**, short-term day studies (3 years). It did not last long however, having only one series of graduates (12 in 2008 of a total of 18 enrolled students in 2005-2006). A year later, a new change occurred, when a new specialisation was established, named **Geography of Tourism**, still operating to this day. In its 12 years of existence, it was first part of the **Faculty of Nature Sciences, Engineering and Informatics** (2011), **Biology, Ecology and Geography Department**, then part of the **Faculty of Economic Sciences, Informatics and Engineering**, without its own department. It is currently part of the Engineering and Informatics Department. Of the total **1,770 students**, who studied one of the three geographical specialisations during 1998-2018, the number of graduates (between 2002-2018) was **447** (25.2%), **256** studying Geography of Tourism (57.2%), **179** History-Geography (40%) and **12** Geography (2.8%). In terms of length, long-term studies (History-Geography) holds 44.8% (793 students) of the 1,770 students, while short-term studies (Geography, Geography of Tourism) reaches 55.2% (977 students, 43 at Geography and 934 at Geography of Tourism). The second major

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component that the paper aims to present is the educational and scientific staff, by carefully presenting the achievements for each member of „Vasile Goldiș” University of Arad.

Keywords: *private tertiary education, History-Geography, Geography, Geography of Tourism, Baia Mare*

1. INTRODUCTION

The new social and political situation of Romania after 1990 created favourable premises for the rebirth of an old desiderate of the Arad intellectual elite, to recreate an academic institutional system of learning.

Thus, on the 12th of March 1990, a memo was drafted, demanding the creation of a private tertiary education establishment in Arad, which came to be known as “**Vasile Goldiș University**”. The signatories were **Aurel Ardelean** and **Alexandru Roz**, professors at “*Moise Nicoară*” High School in Arad, who sent their document to the *Provisional National Union Council*, as well as to the President of Romania, Ion Iliescu. A group of intellectuals backed this effort as well, with a massive support from the high school community of Arad, who longed for an academic environment that could bolster their creative potential (M. Grec, 2015).

On the 26th of April 1990, a contract was signed, stipulating the establishment of an association in Arad, named “**Vasile Goldiș Western University**”, whose aim was to create medical, judicial and other types of professionals. This date is now considered the foundation of the university. The beginnings of this institution were difficult times, partly due to a lack of proper legislation regarding private education. The festivities took place on the 15th of October 1990, when the university hosted only two faculties (**Law** and **Marketing, Management and Information Science**). The following years saw the introduction of four more: **Faculty of Dentistry** and **College of Technical Dentistry** (1991); **General Medicine** (1993); **Physical Education and Sports** (1993), **Human-Christian Sciences** and **the Pedagogical University College** (1994). The continuous efforts to enlarge the educational offer, as well as the push towards the improvement of scientific activities, led to the creation of the first two branches in 1997, one in **Satu Mare** while the other in **Baia Mare**. Their study programmes were provided under the guidance of the profile faculties of „Vasile Goldiș” Western University of Arad.

The new branch in Baia Mare did not have its own headquarters that could host any educational activities (lecture halls, laboratories, etc). For that reason, it was hosted by „Gheorghe Șincai” National College of Baia Mare, for the first two years of its existence, and was only later moved to a building owned by the Maramureș County Centre of Planning, where it still operates to this day. Another important aspect is that its first two specializations were certified by the *National Academic Evaluation and Accreditation Council*, during the 1998-1999 academic year (***History-Geography*** and ***Journalism-English Language and Literature***), part of the ***Human-Christian Sciences Faculty*** (4 years of study).

2. EVOLUTION OF GEOGRAPHICAL SPECIALIZATIONS

Taking into account the need for primary and secondary learning personnel in Maramureș and the adjacent counties, the ***History-Geography chair*** was created, with four years of study, eventually forming seven classes, with admissions in 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004. Its first graduation took place in 2002, followed by 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008. The History-Geography chair of Baia Mare branch had a relatively small group of teachers and instructors, the Geography classes being prepared by associate professors from Cluj-Napoca.

The plan of the first year of studies included five subjects for History (World History, Ancient History of Romania, Historiography, History of Ancient Religions, Paleography) and four subjects for Geography (General Geography, Meteorology-Climatology, Hydrology-Oceanography, Cartography-Topography).

For the second year of studies, the plan contained the following: Universal Middle History, Middle History of Romania, History of Byzantium, General Prehistory, Ancillary Historical Sciences, and Archeology; four subjects for Physical Geography (General Geology, Geomorphology, Biogeography, Pedogeography), then two Human Geography subjects (Settlement and Population Geography, Political and Social Geography), and one Regional Geography subject (Geography of Continents - Europe).

The third year of studies comprised the following courses and seminars: Modern History, Modern History of Romania, History of the Church, Geology of Romania, Environmental Geography, Physical Geography of Romania, Economic Geography, Geography of Continents (Africa, North America and Latin America) and Geoinformatics.

Fourth year students attended the following: Contemporary Universal History, Contemporary History of Romania, History of the Orthodox Church and of Christian Spirituality, Geographical Theory and Methodology, Geography of Tourism, Regional Geography of Romania, Geographical Space Organisation.

Table 1. Number of students attending History-Geography, Faculty of Humanist-Christian Studies, Baia Mare Branch, 1998-2005

University year	Specialisation	First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Total
1998-1999	History-Geography	36	-	-	-	36
1998-2000	History-Geography	21	27	-	-	48
2000-2001	History-Geography	30	23	26	-	79
2001-2002	History-Geography	24	31	22	25	102
2002-2003	History-Geography	34	23	30	22	109
2003-2004	History-Geography	18	29	25	29	101
2004-2005	History-Geography	59	14	29	24	126
Total		222	147	132	100	601

Besides the previously mentioned subjects, there are some ancillary ones such as: School Psychology (first year), Pedagogy (second year), Methods of Teaching History and Geography (third year), Sociology of Education (third year), Applied Informatics, Logic and Axiological Education (first year). Furthermore, until the third year of studies, the curricula included foreign languages as well, such as French and English, and a series of “special languages”, like Latin and Old Slavic.

Being a specialisation focused on preparing primary and secondary school teachers, it also included pedagogical apprenticeship, for History, from the third year of studies onwards, and for Geography, during the fourth year. Likewise, as other specialisations across the country, for each year of study there were two weeks of summer schooling (one for History and one for Geography), with different subjects, organised by the coordinator *Iosif Covaci*.

Due to constant requests, the board decided to introduce a full-time, long-term History-Geography specialisation in Baia Mare, for the 2004-2005 school year, which comprised of a total of 21 students in its first year. These students were supervised and taught by the professors from the History-Geography Department of Baia Mare, and by others from other centers. The penury of professors, among others, caused the dissolution of the specialisation, which only had one generation of graduates (16), in 2007-2008.

Table 2. The evolution of the number of enrolled students and graduates of the History-Geography specialisation, Baia Mare Branch, 1998-2008

Specialisation	Enrolled students							Graduates						
	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
History-Geography	36	21	30	24	34	18	59	25	19	28	22	29	16	40

The 2005-2006 academic year was a major turning point in the evolution of geographical specialisations, as after the implementation of the *Bologna Convention*, “Vasile Goldiș” University of Arad introduced a new, complex and integrative structure named **Faculty of Natural Sciences**. Consequently, the History-Geography Department was replaced by the autonomous **Geography** (180 transferable credits), providing solely the first cycle of short term studies (3 years). At the same time, the aims of the university were changed from mostly educational to practical-applicative, providing a solid base for high interest fields of study such as: environmental protection, water management, tourism resources and land cartography. Following this change, the second, third and fourth years of the History-Geography specialisation were transferred to the **Faculty of Human, Political and Administrative Studies**. The specialisation was terminated in 2008, after seven generations of graduates (25 in 2002 and 40 in 2008).

Several other changes arose in the contents of the curricula, with new added subjects such as: Physical and Human Geography, Photogrammetry (alongside Cartography and Topography), Regional Geography, Geographical Toponymy, Geographical Landscape (first year of study); Urban and Rural Geography, Global Changes of the Environment, Topoclimatology, Human Geography of Romania, GIS and Remote Sensing, Methods and Techniques of Geographical Data Processing (second year); Geography of Hazards and Risks, Applied Geography, Ecotourism, Territorial Systems and Planning, Water Management and Quality, Territorial Organisation and Planning (third year). During this period, “Vasile Goldiș” University of Arad hired *professor Ioan Mac* (after he retired from the Faculty of Geography belonging to “Babeș-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca), thus becoming an associate professor and Vice-Rector (2005-2008). He has brought a continuous stream of new teachers since 2003, three of them being PhD applicants under his guidance. The new department was unfortunately discontinued, having only one group of 12 graduates in 2008 (out of total of 18 enrolled students for the 2005-2006 school year).

Table 3. The evolution of the number of enrolled students and graduates of the Geography and Geography of Tourism, Baia Mare Branch, 2005-2014

Specialisation	Enrolled students							Graduates						
	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Geography	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	-	-	-	-	-
Geography of Tourism	-	50	45	30	40	33	40	-	37	35	25	30	25	32

The close connections with the Faculty of Geography belonging to „Babeş-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca, corroborated with changes that took place, the fewer years of study, as well as the ever increasing number of enrolled students, created a new change in the specialisation structure. The most important one is the creation of the department of **Geography of Tourism** in 2006-2007, in Baia Mare.

The curriculum of this department, first year of studies, included the following mandatory courses: General Geography, Regional Geography of Romania, General Geography of Tourism, Tourism Potential of Earth’s Topography, Hydroclimatic Potential and its Tourism Capitalization, Commercial Law and Legislation in Tourism, Statistics, Tourism and Tourism Enterprise Economics, Finances and Credits, Culture and Civilization.

Table 4. Evolution of enrolled students and graduates of Tourism Geography, Baia Mare Branch, 2012-2018

Specialisation	Enrolled students						Graduates			
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Geography of Tourism	33	31	25	22	17	19	27	14	18	13 ¹

For the second year students, the data for the 2007-2008 academic year shows a two-part plan, one composed of *mandatory courses* (Tourism Geography in Romania, International Tourism, Tourism Research, Ecotourism and Sustainable Development, GIS and Digital Cartography, Analysis Methods and Techniques in Tourism Geography, Architecture in Tourism, Tourism Marketing, Tourism Services, Touristic Management). The second one comprised *optional courses* (Ethnography and Toponymy, Tourism in the EU).

The study plan for the third year (2008-2009) had the following *mandatory disciplines*: Tourist Regions, Tourism Planning, Geography of Tourist Flows, Rural Tourism, Tourism and the Environment, Communication and Image in Tourism, Bookkeeping in Tourism, Creation and Merchandising of Tourism Products, Management of Development Projects, Current Tourism Practices; *optional courses* included Territorial Models, Tourism Policies and Strategies, and Natural Protected Areas and their Tourism Capitalization.

¹ Approximate number of graduates, as the current study was submitted before the final examinations.

Table 5. Number of students between 2005 and 2018, Geography specialisation, „Vasile Goldiș” Western University of Arad, Baia Mare Branch

Academic year	Specialisation	First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Total
Long term studies						
2005-2006	History-Geography	-	47	14	29	90
2006-2007	History-Geography	-	-	44	14	58
2007-2008	History-Geography	-	-	-	44	44
Short term studies						
2005-2006	Geography	18	-	-	-	18
2006-2007	Geography	-	12	-	-	12
2007-2008	Geography	-	-	13	-	13
2006-2007	Geography of Tourism	50	-	-	-	50
2007-2008	Geography of Tourism	45	37	-	-	82
2008-2009	Geography of Tourism	30	38	36	-	104
2009-2010	Geography of Tourism	40	27	38	-	105
2010-2011	Geography of Tourism	33	35	25	-	93
2011-2012	Geography of Tourism	40	31	32	-	103
2012-2013	Geography of Tourism	33	35	29	-	97
2013-2014	Geography of Tourism	31	23	33	-	87
2014-2015	Geography of Tourism	25	19	27	-	71
2015-2016	Geography of Tourism	22	17	15	-	54
2016-2017	Geography of Tourism	17	12	17	-	46
2017-2018	Geography of Tourism	19	11	12	-	42
Total		403	344	335	87	1169

Following the Government’s Decision no. 966/29 September 2011 and the Decision of “Vasile Goldiș” Western University of Arad Board nr. 105/06 October 2011, the Faculty of Natural Sciences, the Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Informatics were merged, thus creating a new entity, *The Faculty of Natural Sciences, Engineering and Informatics*, with three departments. Geography of Tourism was included in the *Biology, Ecology and Geography Department*. Four years later, during the 2015-2016 academic year, as some study programmes were sidelined or terminated, a new decision was made, this time to unite it with *the Faculty of Economic Sciences*. The newly formed structure was *the Faculty of Economic Sciences, Informatics and Engineering*. Geography, no longer an individual department, was included in *Engineering and Informatics*.

During its 12 years, the *Tourism Geography Specialisation* (2006-2018), alongside the already mentioned courses, had other, more diverse classes, including: Biogeography, Geography of Soils, Population Geography, World Economic Geography, Cultural Geography, Political Geography, Rural Geography and Rural Tourism, Organisation and Management of Touristic Enterprises, Balneology, Guiding Techniques, Policies in Tourism and Sustainable Development, Organisation of Tourism Space, Geography of Services, as well as a practical course for writing theses.

During all this period, there were also a series of rotations of all the courses for all three years of study. Of course, the students also had the possibility to study one international language (choosing either French or English). Moreover, they had a mandatory practical course (12 days), as well as a week-long field trip. Student numbers reached a peak during the 2007-2008 school year, when, from a total of 139 students, 59% were attending Geography of Tourism - first and second years, 31.6% History-Geography, fourth year, and 9.4% Geography, third year. The evolution of the number of Geography graduates was therefore erratic, registering significant increases alongside decreases during periods of institutional change. Moreover, new problems emerged in 2011-2012, like massive reductions in secondary school graduates, and a decrease in baccalaureate graduates, in particular, which caused further decline.

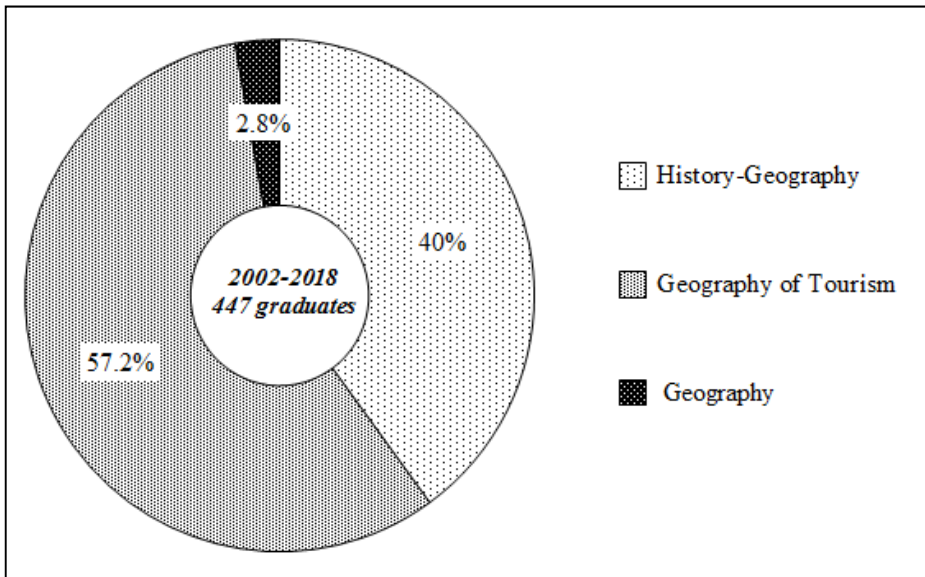


Fig. 1. Distribution of graduates from the three geographical specialisations between 2002 and 2018.

3. EDUCATIONAL STAFF IN THE FIELD OF GEOGRAPHY

The university staff working at the Geography Department of the Baia Mare Branch was a small one, composed mostly of visiting professors, who had been working at the Faculty of Geography in Cluj-Napoca. Thus, in 1998-1999, when *History-Geography* was established, the faculty comprised **six tutors**: *prof. Ioan Mac, PhD* (1998-2008)², *assoc. prof. Victor Buz, PhD* (1998-2005), *assoc. prof. Dănuț Petrea, PhD* (1998-2004), *assoc. prof. Florin Dumescu, PhD*, the only one holding tenure at that time (1998-present), *lecturer Iosif Covaci* (1998-2004) and *research assistant Nicolaie Hodor* (1998-2002).

In the next couple of years, the staff grew by three educators, all from Cluj-Napoca: *prof. Nicolae Raboca, PhD* (1999-2011), *prof. Virgil Gârbacea, PhD* (1999-2008) and *research assistant Vasile Zotic* (2000-2003).

Since 2002 the process of hiring new personnel has continued, mostly for determinate periods of time, either due to the fact that many were in different stages of their doctoral studies or taught in secondary or primary schools. These were the following: *research assistant Vasile Cureleac, PhD* (2002-2003), *lecturer Ileana Vasilescu* (2003-2011), *lect. Cornel Faur* (2003-present), tenure since 2016, *lect. Dan Ioan Bogdan* (2005-present), tenure since 2009, *lect. Iulius Eduard Keller* (2005-2006), *lect. Radu Spânu, PhD* (2006-2008), *lect. Oana Antonia Pop, PhD* (2010-2011) and *research assistant Daniel Nicușor Sanislai* (2010-present), tenure since 2011 and promoted to lecturer in 2016. Other visiting professors include *Octavian Mândruț, PhD* (2011-present) and *Constantin Vert, PhD* (2012-present) from Timișoara, as well as two tenure holders since 2014, one from București, *lect. Paul Răzvan Șerban, PhD* (2013-present), and one from Cluj-Napoca, *lect. George-Bogdan Tofan, PhD* (2014-present).

As one can see in this brief presentation, the *Geography of Tourism* specialisation has currently **six tenured instructors**, one of them teaching geographical sciences to economic specialisations (*prof. Florin Dumescu, PhD*), and **two visiting**, the overseer being *lect. Cornel Faur, PhD*.

4. COMPENDIUM OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND STUDIES

Since the geographical university research and studies of Baia Mare developed mostly with the help of the staff from the Faculty of Geography in Cluj-Napoca, we will try to present several aspects regarding the educational

² Within parantheses, the period spent as faculty member at “Vasile Goldiș” Western University of Arad, Baia Mare Branch.

and research achievements (books, courses and guides, different studies, articles and papers) of the professors that contributed to the development of geographical studies within Baia Mare Branch. First and foremost, the books, lectures and guides by I. Mac, V. Gârbacea and N. Raboca, known to thousands of students who studied Geography in Cluj-Napoca, which were eventually passed on to the students of Baia Mare university branch. Furthermore, the following table will give us a glimpse of the doctoral theses of the professors who taught generations of students at „Vasile Goldiș” Western University of Arad, Baia Mare Branch. It includes the title of the thesis, the scientific coordinator, year of enrollment, year of defense and year of publication.

At a glance, the table reveals that four professors (I. Mac, V. Gârbacea, N. Raboca, V. Buz), who introduced Geography in Baia Mare, have been disciples of the renowned *prof. Tiberiu Morariu, PhD*. Seven others (F. Dumescu, D. Petrea, R. Spânu, N. Hodor, C. Faur, Ileana Vasilescu, and D. I. Bogdan) were coordinated by *prof. Ioan Mac, PhD*. Many other colleagues completed their theses under the guidance of reputable teachers: O. Mândruț (*prof. Grigore Posea, PhD*), C. Vert (*prof. Ion Velcea, PhD*), V. Zotic and I. Covaci (*prof. Vasile Surd, PhD*), I. Keller (*prof. Ionel Haidu, PhD*), D. N. Sanislai and Oana Antonia Pop (*prof. Victor Sorocovschi, PhD*), P. R. Șerban (*prof. Ioan Ianoș, PhD*) and G. B. Tofan (*prof. Nicolae Ciangă, PhD*).

Table 6. Scientific research and doctoral theses of the educational staff from the Geography Department, Baia Mare Branch

Crt. no.	PhD Candidates	Title of the Doctor's Degree Theses	Scientific coordinator	Year of enrollment	Year of defense	Year of publication
1	Gârbacea Virgil	Bistrița Hills. Geomorphological study	Prof. Tiberiu Morariu, PhD	1953	1957	2015
2	Mac Ioan	The Transylvanian Subcarpathians between Mureș and Olt. Geomorphological study	Prof. Tiberiu Morariu, PhD	1963	1969	1972
3	Mândruț Octavian	Subcarpathian topography between Argeș and Argeșel. Geomorphological study	Prof. Grigore Posea, PhD	1971	1993	2002
4	Raboca Nicolae	Secașe Plateau. Geomorphological study with focus on slopes and soil	Prof. Tiberiu Morariu, PhD	1975	1980	1995

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Crt. no.	PhD Candidates	Title of the Doctor's Degree Theses	Scientific coordinator	Year of enrollment	Year of defense	Year of publication
5	Buz Victor	Codru-Moma Mountains. Physical-geographical study	Prof. Tiberiu Morariu, PhD	*3	1980	-
6	Dumescu Florin ⁴	The underground waters of the central part of the Western Plain. Hydroecological study	Prof. Ioan Mac, PhD	1990	1994	1996
7	Petrea Dănuț	The substance, energy and information thresholds in geomorphological systems	Prof. Ioan Mac, PhD	1990	1997	1998
8	Spănu Radu Călin	Synergy in territorial systems. Case study: Apuseni Mountains	Prof. Ioan Mac, PhD	1990	1998	-
8	Hodor Nicolaie	Igniș-Gutâi Mountains. Geomorphological study	Prof. Ioan Mac, PhD	1993	2002	-
9	Vert Constantin	Types of rural landscapes in Banat	Prof. Ion Velcea, PhD	1994	1999	2001
10	Zotic Vasile	Geographical space organisation in the Mureș Corridor, between Sebeș and Deva	Prof. Vasile Surd, PhD	1995	2001	2007
11	Cureleac Vasile ⁵	The Ukrainian diaspora of Maramureș. Ethnogeographical study	Prof. Fedir Zastavnyi, PhD	1995	2000	2001
11	Covaci Iosif	Organisation of rural space near Baia Mare	Prof. Vasile Surd, PhD	1999	2005	-
12	Faur Victor-Cornel	Oaș Mountains. Geomorphological study	Prof. Ioan Mac, PhD	2001	2007	2011
13	Vasilescu Ileana	Integrated heritage study. Maramureș Depression	Prof. Ioan Mac, PhD	2002	2008	-
14	Bogdan Ioan	Geographical epistemology	Prof. Ioan Mac, PhD	2004	2010	2013
15	Keller Iulius Eduard	GIS assessment and simulation of water flows during situations of risk. Application on Baia Mare	Prof. Ionel Haidu, PhD	2004	2008	-
15	Sanislai Daniel Nicușor	Risks induced by water excess in Someș Plain	Prof. Victor Sorocovschi, PhD	2005	2015	-

³ Lack of data.

⁴ Transferred from prof. Petru Tudoran, PhD, who passed away in January 1994.

⁵ Thesis defended in Ukrainian at the Faculty of Geography of „Ivan Franko” National University, Lviv, Ukraine.

Crt. no.	PhD Candidates	Title of the Doctor's Degree Theses	Scientific coordinator	Year of enrollment	Year of defense	Year of publication
16	Pop Oana-Antonia	Study of liquid flows in Tur catchment area	Prof. Victor Sorocovschi, PhD	2006	2010	2012
17	Șerban Paul Răzvan	Mechanisms of enhancing spatial complexity in disadvantaged social-economic environments	Prof. Ioan Ianoș, PhD	2009	2012	-
18	Tofan George-Bogdan	Small depressions, factors and components of the humanisation of the Central Group of the Eastern Carpathians. Case study: the Northern area of the Drăgoiasa-Glodu-Bilbor-Secu-Corbu-Tulgheș depressions	Prof. Nicolae Ciangă, PhD	2009	2012	2013

As many professors from Cluj-Napoca gradually retired from teaching and scientific activities, the need to create and publish new guidebooks for students became increasingly vital. The following list contains some of the more recently published works at „Vasile Goldiș” University Press of Arad.

1. Ardelean, A., Mânduț, O. (2012), *Geography of the environment*, „Vasile Goldiș” University Press, Arad.
2. Mânduț, O. (2011), *Regional Geography. Regional Geography of Romania*, „Vasile Goldiș” University Press, Arad.
3. Mânduț, O. (2012), *General physical and human geography*, „Vasile Goldiș” University Press, Arad.
4. Mânduț, O. (2012), *Cartography*, „Vasile Goldiș” University Press, Arad.
5. Mânduț, O. (2012), *Methods and techniques of analysing geographical data*, „Vasile Goldiș” University Press, Arad.
6. Mânduț, O. (2012), *Geography of the EU*, „Vasile Goldiș” University Press, Arad.
7. Mânduț, O., Faur, C. (2012), *Population geography*, „Vasile Goldiș” University Press, Arad.
8. Mânduț, O., Bogdan, D. I. (2012), *World Economic Geography*, „Vasile Goldiș” University Press, Arad.
9. Mânduț, O. (2015), *Romania. Regional geomorphology*, „Vasile Goldiș” University Press, Arad.

Without lingering on the scientific research of our esteemed professors from Cluj-Napoca (I. Mac, V. Gârbaacea, N. Raboca), whose work has been well known, we would like to emphasize the endeavours of the newly tenured staff who currently work in Baia Mare.

Studies, articles and papers on relief and topography have been center stage for more than a decade, starting with a series of practical-applicative endeavours presenting the magmatic and volcanic activity cycles in Oaş Mountains, as well as applicative geomorphological research, interchain valleys, etc, which eventually led to an integrated geomorphological study of Oaş Mountains and a PhD thesis, by C. Faur, published in 2011 at the Northern University Publishing House, Baia Mare.

Another major component of Physical Geography, *Hydrology*, has been carefully studied and researched, for instance in D. N. Sanislai's doctoral thesis (2015), which covers the issue of water excess-induced risks in Someş Plain. The thesis came with a series of articles which focused on: hydric balance sheets and average annual flow on plains, hydrological warnings - crucial in flood management - and the hydrological risk map for the area, flood induced risks between 1979 and 2004, etc.

The characteristic features of *Environmental Geography*, with focus on Hydrology, were captured in a hydroecological study of the underground water systems located in the central part of the Western Plain, finished in 1994 and published in 1996, at „Vasile Goldiş” Publishing House. It was imagined as a doctoral thesis as well, by the former dean of the Faculty of Economic Sciences - „Vasile Goldiş” Western University Arad, prof. F. Dumescu, PhD. He published similar papers and articles, with the following main topics: resource geography and environmental economics, with papers published at different houses, in revised or addended editions, in 1998, 2002 and 2006; environmental impact assessment, laws and norms for environmental protection (book published in 1999 at „Servo-Sat” Arad), economic activities in natural protected areas, etc.

The second largest branch of Geography was researched by two scientists, one being G. B. Tofan (2012), with his thesis on the human component of a less studied geographical space - small innermountain depressions. His case study area is located in the northern part of the central area of the Eastern Carpathians (Drăgoiasa-Glodu-Bilbor-Secu-Borsec-Corbu-Tulghes), and the study was later published at Cluj University Press.

The same investigator conducted two more Human Geography studies, in 2014 and 2015, one focused on the Mureş Corridor, published at the same house, and one (postdoctoral study) focused on *Electoral Geography*, entitled *Ethnicity, religion and electoral behaviour in Harghita, Covasna and Mureş Counties. Geographical study (2008-2014)*, published at „Casa Cărții de Știință”, Cluj-Napoca. Other themes touched

by the author in his articles include: the numerical evolution of the population in the Drăgoiasa-Tulgheş depressions, geodemographic and economic disparities in the Drăgoiasa-Tulgheş depressions, aspects regarding settlement typology in small mountain depressions, the geodemographic and habitat characteristics of the Mureş Defile, gender and age group structures in Covasna, Harghita and Mureş counties, the professional structure of Romania etc.

The doctoral thesis defended in 2012, by P. R. Şerban, from Bucharest, still unpublished, is also an economic geographical study. Other valuable works focused on the evolution of spatial complexity in Romania, spatial organisation elements in Southern Bucovina, the role of agriculture in Romania's trade, causes and effects of commercial policies, role of international trade in the territorial development of the North-West Development Region, the human potential of the settlements from the Romanian Danube Valley – working population, ethnic structure etc.

One must also consider the recent studies on *Theoretical Geography*, culminating in a PhD thesis from 2010, written by D. I. Bogdan, published as *Epistemological endeavours into Geography*, "Vasile Goldiş" University Press, Arad.

Ever since 2006, as the Baia Mare branch was experiencing massive changes, all the scientific staff have begun publishing studies on *Geography of Tourism*, with emphasis on: the rehabilitation and tourism remodelling of Borsec resort, tourism potential and organisation in Mureş Defile, tourism flows in Borsec, the zoogeographical potential of the Drăgoiasa-Tulgheş depression alignment, current aspects regarding the accommodation infrastructure in Harghita, Maramureş and Mureş counties, the tourism infrastructure of the Romanian seaside, the geographical-tourism map of Borsec etc (G. B. Tofan); the tourism alternative, manner of capitalising the natural and man-made potential of Maramureş County and Tourism, an ever-expanding economic activity (C. Faur); tourism in Oaş Land - potential and future (D. N. Sanislai), as well as several unpublished student guides and courses: *International tourism, Tourism - active factor in the globalisation process, Tourism policies* etc (D. I. Bogdan).

In 2014, "Vasile Goldiş" Western University began running an annual publication entitled ***Baia Mare University Paradigms***, with N. Iuga, PhD, tenured professor of the branch, as its chief editor. This scientific journal publishes papers from different fields, including Geography. The Department of Engineering and Informatics, which currently encompasses Geography of Tourism, publishes its own journal - ***Studia Universitatis „Vasile Goldiş” Arad, Engineering and Agritourism Series***, with a national **B +** index, as well as an international index.

The third year of the History-Geography specialisation saw its first scientific conference in Baia Mare. It was the second edition of the *Rural Space and Regional Development* Conference, between the 26th and the 30th of September 2001. This meeting was organised by the Faculty of Geography from Cluj-Napoca,

specifically by *prof. V. Surd*, in partnership with „Vasile Goldiș” Western University of Arad, bringing together many specialists from Romania and abroad. Their papers were later published (2003) in a compendium at Studia Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca.

On the 27th and the 28th of May 2005, professor *I. Mac* directly coordinated the first symposium on “*Territorial Science and Development*”, with 46 guests, from the organising university and Cluj-Napoca, some being PhD students coordinated by professor Mac. All papers were published in a volume at Risoprint Publishing in Cluj-Napoca. The reputation of this symposium steadily increased year after year, reaching its 14th edition in 2018.

In 2011 (between the 3rd and the 5th of June), the Annual Conference of the Romanian Geographical Society took place, its main theme being *Geography and Human Society*, organised by the president of the Maramureș branch, *prof. Ileana Vasilescu, PhD*, in partnership with the School Inspectorate of Maramureș County and “Vasile Goldiș” Western University, Baia Mare Branch. The five sessions comprised 109 papers, mostly by Geography school teachers, as well as by young researchers from Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Iași, Oradea, Târgoviște, Târgu Mureș, Baia Mare etc. There were other, smaller scientific meetings, which focused on *Regional development, geographical space and the regionalisation process; Assessment and capitalisation of tourism in Maramureș and Geographical epistemology*, coordinated by professor O. Mândruț.

Furthermore, since 1990, there has been an annual scientific session - „*Arad Academic Days*”, including a section dedicated to Geography and had a different theme every year.

5. THE MATERIAL BASE OF BAIIA MARE GEOGRAPHICAL SCHOOL

As previously mentioned, the first two years (1998-1999) saw this young university extension operating in a building owned by “*Gheorghe Șincai*” National College, paying a certain amount of money as rent. However, in autumn 1999, the branch moved to a larger, more central space, one that would provide proper conditions for education and research. The building was once occupied by the Maramureș County Planning Center, but in 2002 it was purchased by „Vasile Goldiș” Western University. The infrastructure of the university branch has two components: spaces for courses and seminars, as well as reading rooms, and its library (including books, studies, plans etc).

The branch is located on 5 Culturii Street, in a structure composed of: **Building A**, six stories high, with seven lecture halls, with a capacity between 30 and 40 seats. The fourth floor houses three rooms for the Geography of Tourism specialisation (room 401, Human Geography; room 402, Physical Geography, and room 403, Applied Tourism).



Fig. 2. Headquarters of „Vasile Goldiș” University Arad, Baia Mare Branch, 5 Culturii Street.

The library is located here as well, alongside two reading rooms, while the fifth floor has three multimedia labs, with 60 computers. There is also a room for equipment storage. **Building B** has four levels and contains “Dorel Chereches” Amphitheater (120 seats), a center for scientific research, meeting room and the secretariat, while **Building C** hosts the “Aris” Grand Hall (160 seats), “Vasile Goldiș” lecture hall (60 seats), a teachers lounge, the archives and the garages, adding to a total surface area of 3,800 square meters.

The second component is represented by the massive library of the university branch, located on the fourth floor, with a total number of 10,882 books and studies, 1,002 of which filed under Geography.

6. CONCLUSIONS

During its two decades of existence (1998-2018), the geographical tertiary education system of Baia Mare experienced an interesting evolution, with the following high points:

- accreditation of three geographical specialisations: *History-Geography* (1998-2005), *Geography* (2005-2007) and *Geography of Tourism* (2006-present);
- in terms of the number of enrolled students in each specialisation, Geography of Tourism has the highest enrollment percentage (52.8% of total of 1770 students), peaking at 105 students in 2009-2010 and hitting its lowest number in 2017-2018 (42 students) (values for the entire three-year cycle), followed by History-Geography (44.8%) and Geography (2.4%);
- the dynamic of the number of enrolled students and graduates is as follows: 222 enrolled students in the first year of study and 179 graduates in History-Geography; 18 enrolled students and 12 graduates in Geography; 385 students and 256 de graduates in Geography of Tourism;
- the main student catchment areas are: Baia Mare, Satu Mare, Baia Sprie, Borša, Târgu Lăpuș, Ocna Șugatag, Satulung, Valea Chioarului etc;
- in terms of professional insertion, a large segment of History-Geography and Geography graduates are employed as primary and secondary school teachers, while some are working at the „*Romanian Waters*” National Administration - Maramureș Water Administration; others found jobs at different levels of government or in private cartography, topography and land survey companies; many Tourism graduates work in hotels or travel agencies, in Romania or abroad;
- there are currently six tenured instructors (F. Dumescu, who mostly teaches Geography for students of Economic Sciences, C. Faur, D. I. Bogdan, D. N. Sanislai, P. R. Șerban and G. B. Tofan) and two visiting professors (O. Mândruț and C. Vert); they focus on the academic fields of *Physical Geography* (Geomorphology, Hydrology, Environmental Sciences), as well as on those of *Human Geography* (Population and Settlement Geography, Geography of Tourism, Political Geography); some concentrated their efforts on *didactics* (O. Mândruț), publishing school books, university courses, atlases, compendiums and methodological guides etc.

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