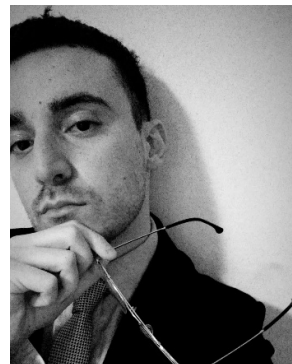


Interview
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1. During the period 15 – 20 July 2024, you were present at the “Valahia” University of Târgoviște (VUT) to carry out a study necessary for the development of a research topic. You are a doctoral student at the “Leonardo da Vinci” Telematic University. Please provide a brief summary of your CV, telling us about your studies and professional activity..

Response:

I graduated with honors in 2017 in Sociology and Criminology from Gabriele d'Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara. I continued my studies in Rome, where I completed two first-level Professional Master's Programmes (Master di I livello) , both highly specialized courses in the criminological field. I finished the master's degree cycle with honors and a mention of merit in 2022 in Social Research, Security Policies, and Criminality at the same university in Abruzzo. Additionally, I pursued another first-level Professional Master's Programme and one second-level Professional Master's Programme (Master di II livello) in educational technologies for learning, and in intelligence and security.

Expert appointed in Institutional Relations and Lobbying (Academic Year 2023-2024) at Link Campus University of Rome. Expert appointed in Public Policy Analysis (Academic Year 2024-2025) at Link Campus University of Rome. I also worked as a professor of human sciences at high schools in Piedmont.

2. You have chosen the “Valahia” University of Târgoviște to carry out a research activity. Briefly present your activity within the doctoral thesis. Specify some ideas regarding the study you carried out at VUT. Why did you choose VUT and Romania for this study?

Response:

Although my field of study was primarily oriented towards criminology, it has expanded over the years into the social sciences, particularly political sociology and public policies. This shift was driven by my growing interest in concrete issues affecting my region, such as cuts to public health and the progressive closure of several hospitals, including the one in my hometown, Guardiagrele (in the province of Chieti).

For this reason, I combined my work as a high school professor with a PhD project focused on studying citizen participation in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of health policies from a comparative perspective between Italy and Romania.

The choice of VUT was not a matter of chance; I identified a context with characteristics similar to my region to explore the analogies and differences, strengths, and weaknesses between the two health models. This examination was structured around three lines of study: citizen participation, digitalization, and the digital transition of health services.

Methodologically, I administered 260 questionnaires to citizens using the Romanian health service as well as private health services, consisting of 29 structured questions specifically designed to address these three aspects.

3. How did you collaborate with the staff of Electrical Engineering, Electronics and Information Technology Faculty, administrative services of VUT, and Romanian students? Highlight some activities carried out within VUT.

Response:

The collaboration with the VUT Engineering Department and the VUT D.P.P.D. was immediate, constant, direct, and extremely fruitful. Both deans, along with their respective professors, demonstrated a strong willingness to support my research project from the outset. They assisted me in reviewing, printing, and administering the questionnaires to many students, as well as teaching and technical-administrative staff at the university. This collaboration allowed me to cover a diverse range of age groups, work environments, perspectives, comments, and experiences.

During this research trimester, I was never left alone. In addition to teaching and research support, the VUT staff provided me with a room in the student dormitory, equipped with all the necessary services and conveniently located near the university. Furthermore, I received an invaluable invitation to the summer school on artificial intelligence, which aligns with my research area. This program, led by esteemed experts and professors, helped me develop the technical skills I had previously lacked due to my different academic background.

4. You are a high school teacher in Italy. Why did you choose to pursue a PhD? What are your hopes after completing your studies? How is the research conducted during your PhD? How many articles do you have to publish? Is there a supervisory board? How do you collaborate with your supervisor and supervisory board?

Response:

My passion and dedication to study, aimed not only at my professional, experiential, and moral growth but also at transferring the skills I have acquired to my students, have motivated me to engage in a research path that is both engaging and highly relevant. At times, I would even dare to say it is anticipatory in many aspects. Furthermore, this choice reflects my ongoing commitment to the management of public affairs, as I increasingly feel like an active participant in issues that affect the territory, the lives of its citizens, and the present and future of entire communities.

This research project aims to serve as a warning to political decision-makers who view citizen involvement as merely a final informative act. I want community engagement to start “from the bottom”, ensuring that citizens’ requests are heard and taken into consideration. I envision arenas for discussion and “reasoned” debate that are as inclusive as possible, integrating experiences, perspectives, criticisms, and suggestions regardless of class, age, work environment, or academic background.

Regarding the details of the PhD program, we have a coordinator (Prof. Arcangelo Merla) and an individual supervisor (Prof. Michele Cascavilla) with whom I collaborate and interface weekly to refine my research. I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to them, as well as to all the professors in the doctoral college and the technical-administrative staff who have made my experience at VUT possible.

The PhD in “Digital Transition, Innovation and Health Services” which I started in November 2022, is delivered at the “Leonardo da Vinci” Telematic University of Torrevicchia Teatina (in the province of Chieti). It is the “telematic rib” of the aforementioned University d’Annunzio with which it shares teaching staff, strategies and objectives, providing the possibility of distance learning, equally valid and formative.

For scientific publications, my colleagues and I are encouraged by our professors to publish contributions that reflect the topics analyzed during lessons, seminars, and high-level interdisciplinary conferences in which we are personally involved.

I have a constant collaboration with the university journal Pro Edu. International Journal of Educational Sciences (PEIJES) - Editor PhD. Marian BUGIULESCU, in which I have published several contributions with my romanian supervisor, involving some colleagues who have enthusiastically accepted my/our invitation. I would like this journal as well as many others in Romania to grow further with transdisciplinary papers that see a growing mix of knowledge and skills.

5. Give us some impressions about your experience in Romania in general and about the one at the University of Valahia in particular.

Response:

The choice of Romania continues my clear will, started during the Academic Year 2016-2017 in which I spent ten months on the Erasmus + project during my bachelor's degree at the University of Craiova first, and five months on the Erasmus + project at the University of Bucharest in the Academic Year 2021-2022 in which I learned and improved (also) my linguistic level about the Romanian language. In essence, the VUT was not a choice resulting from territorial assonance for PhD thesis but from a total and sincere appreciation towards the Romanian education system, with which I immediately felt at ease, helping me to grow both personally and academically. All this would not have been possible without the omnipresent and wise guidance of my local supervisor, Prof. Elena Cernoiu, who guided me step by step in my research activity in Romania and with whom I maintain a working and personal relationship based on genuine respect and gratitude. My thanks must be extended once again to all those in the UVT who made my arrival possible, starting from the Rector, the professors, the secretarial staff, and all the students who decided to contribute to the success of my work. It is difficult to put down in black and white the gratitude that I have developed towards the VUT, real, sincere, total, and all-encompassing. I firmly hope that in the future there may be further collaborations in the internationalization key that does nothing but increase the centers of knowledge and strengthen the bonds of brotherhood between Italy and Romania.

All the spaces of the university were made available to me, in comfortable, modern environments and with adequate equipment for my research. These, to the inattentive reader, might seem like ritual and superficial personal thoughts. Nothing could be further from the truth. There was not even a moment in which I felt abandoned by myself, not even when I continued my research work independently at a distance, constantly supported by the VUT teaching staff and my romanian supervisor in a continuous exchange of perspectives, advice, and formative criticisms of a multidisciplinary nature.

My experience can only be considered positive as I increased a wealth of theoretical and practical knowledge that I transferred - and continue to do so - to my research project and my teaching activity. Before leaving, I was asked which university I would choose for my subsequent research activities. The answer was both immediate and spontaneous: Universitatea „Valahia” din Targoviste.

*Mulțumesc mult
Francesco Mastrocola*