

**FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF COOPERATION AND  
PARTNERSHIP RELATIONS EU - REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA  
IN THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION****Sergiu CORNEA**Republic of Moldova, Chisinau  
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*In the modern world, the importance of the education is increasing as the most important factor in the formation of a new quality not only of the economy, but of the society as a whole. Its role is constantly growing along with the growing influence of human capital. This article aims to study the main stages in the formation of relations between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova in the field of higher education, since the education system of the Republic of Moldova is able to compete with the education systems of advanced countries. However, its advantages can be quickly lost if a nationwide educational policy will not be formulated, if the state will not restore its responsibility and active role in this area, will not carry out a deep and comprehensive modernization of higher education with the allocation of the necessary resources and creation of mechanisms for their effective use.*

**Keywords:** *higher education, state, educational policy, partnership, reforms, quality.*

**STABILIREA ȘI EVOLUȚIA RELAȚIILOR DE COOPERARE ȘI PARTENERIAT  
UE – REPUBLICA MOLDOVA ÎN DOMENIUL ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI SUPERIOR**

*În lumea contemporană, importanța educației crește ca fiind cel mai important factor în formarea unei noi calități, nu numai a economiei, dar și a societății în ansamblu. Rolul său este în continuă creștere odată cu influența tot mai mare a capitalului uman. Prezentul articol are drept scop de a studia principalele etape în formarea relațiilor dintre Uniunea Europeană și Republica Moldova în domeniul învățământului superior, întrucât sistemul de învățământ al Republicii Moldova este capabil să concureze cu sistemele de învățământ din țările avansate. Cu toate acestea, avantajele sale pot fi pierdute rapid, dacă nu va fi formulată politica educațională la nivel național, dacă statul nu își reia responsabilitatea și rolul activ în acest domeniu, dacă nu va realiza o modernizare profundă și cuprinzătoare a învățământului superior cu alocarea resurselor necesare pentru aceasta și crearea unor mecanisme de utilizare eficientă a acestora.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *învățământ superior, stat, politica educațională, parteneriat, reforme, calitate.*

## FORMATION ET DEVELOPPEMENT DES RELATIONS DE COOPERATION ET DE PARTENARIAT UE - REPUBLIQUE DE MOLDOVA DANS LE DOMAINE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPERIEUR

*Dans le monde moderne, l'importance de l'éducation augmente en tant que facteur le plus important dans la formation d'une nouvelle qualité non seulement de l'économie, mais de la société dans son ensemble. Son rôle ne cesse de croître parallèlement à l'influence grandissante du capital humain. Cet article vise à étudier les principales étapes de la formation des relations entre l'Union européenne et la République de Moldavie dans le domaine de l'enseignement supérieur, puisque le système éducatif de la République de Moldavie est en mesure de rivaliser avec les systèmes éducatifs des pays avancés. Cependant, ses avantages peuvent être rapidement perdus si une politique éducative nationale n'est pas formulée, si l'État ne restitue pas sa responsabilité et son rôle actif dans ce domaine, ne procède pas à une modernisation profonde et globale de l'enseignement supérieur avec l'attribution des ressources nécessaires et la création de mécanismes pour leur utilisation efficace.*

**Mots clés :** enseignement supérieur, état, politique éducative, partenariat, réformes, qualité

## СТАНОВЛЕНИЕ И РАЗВИТИЕ СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА ПАРТНЕРСКИХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ ЕС - РЕСПУБЛИКА МОЛДОВА В ОБЛАСТИ ВЫСШЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ

*В современном мире увеличивается значение образования как важнейшего фактора формирования нового качества не только экономики, но и общества в целом. Его роль постоянно растет вместе с ростом влияния человеческого капитала. Данная статья призвана изучить основные этапы становления взаимоотношений ЕС – Республики Молдова в области высшего образования, так как система образования Республики Молдова способна конкурировать с системами образования передовых стран. Однако ее преимущества могут быть быстро утрачены, если не будет сформулирована общенациональная образовательная политика, если государство не восстановит свою ответственность и активную роль в этой сфере, не проведет глубокую и всестороннюю модернизацию высшего образования с выделением необходимых для этого ресурсов и созданием механизмов их эффективного использования.*

**Ключевые слова:** высшее образование, государство, образовательная политика, сотрудничество, реформы, качество.

### Introduction

Education, as a separate type of activity, arose a long time ago. As main purposes for this, in the most general form, we can single out the need of the individuals to increase the level and the presence of the social need for educated people. A person strives for knowledge, but society (represented by the state) strives to have educated people, who can consciously fulfill their duties<sup>1</sup>. An educated person is

better adapted to life in society, which cannot be positively evaluated by society. Currently, education is being promoted to the first place among the factors of human development.

Problems in the sphere of education, in one way or another, affect almost all members of our society. The role of higher education, in general, at the current stage of the country's development is determined by the tasks of the transition of the Republic of Moldova to a democratic society, to a rule of law state, a market economy, the tasks of overcoming the danger of

<sup>1</sup> KNELLER, G.F. *Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. N.Y-London-Sidney: John Wiley and Sons, inc., 1967. ISBN-13: 978-0415012850, p. 15

Moldova's accumulating lag behind world economic and social development trends.

### Methods applied

In the process of research has been used a number of principles, rules and methods, as: the historical method, the structural-functional method, the empirical method, institutional method, etc. All these used methods allow to trace the evolution of the dialogue between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova; to analyze the functioning mechanisms of institutions, official documents, report of development and statistics, etc.; to investigate the problem in the activities of such institutions as higher education institutions, ministers, the state, etc.

### Results.

In the modern world, the importance of education is increasing as the most important factor in the formation of a new quality not only of the economy, but of society as a whole. Education became one of the main priorities of the Moldovan society and state. The process of higher education' reforming is characterized by continuity. If we try to determine the first starting point of this process, we will find that the national system of higher education determines the first stage of reform back in the Soviet period, in 1987, when the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union approves the law "Main directions for Reforming Higher and Secondary Special Education". Thus, throughout the Soviet Union, from 1987 until the collapse of the USSR, begins the process of an extensive adaptation of the Union system of higher education. With the process of liberalization, the entire education system is moving to the stage of ideological reform. Then, after 1991, began a new process of educational reform in the Republic of Moldova, which, at times, led to real crises in the system<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> ПАПЦОВА, А. Обмен знаниями как социальный процесс: факторы и тенденции развития академической среды Молдовы. In: *Școala internațională de metodologie în științele socioumane Dezvoltarea personală și educația pentru societate: temeuri epis-*

Although the transition period proved to be particularly difficult, the Republic of Moldova takes an active position towards its European partners and cooperates with the international community. Regardless of which party has been in power in recent years – the Christian Democrats, the Agrarians and Socialists, the Communists etc. – the country's European orientation has never been doubted. The first state document that defined the country's strategic goal as gradual integration into the European Union was the Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Moldova<sup>3</sup>, adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova on February 8, 1995. Subsequently, in the work programs of all successive governments – from Sangeli A. to Gavrilita N. inclusive – this goal was confirmed, and certain measures of its achievements were provided: development of a national strategy for EU integration, implementation of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Moldova, establishment of an interministerial committee, intensification of political and diplomatic efforts, etc. The intensification of relations between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union began immediately after the official letter' submission by the President M. Snegur (on November 1993), addressed to the President of the European Commission J. Delors, and the subsequent assessment of the degree of compliance of the situation in the country with the requirements of the EU, where the Commission confirmed the changes for the better; organization of the first multi-party parliamentary elections (on February 1994), legisla-

*temologice actuale*. Ediția 4-a, 19-20 noiembrie 2020, Chișinău, CEP USM, 2020, pp. 77-80. ISBN 978-9975-152-62-4, p. 78.

<sup>3</sup> Hotărârea Parlamentului Republicii Moldova cu privire la aprobarea Concepției politicii externe a Republicii Moldova, nr. 368 din 8.02. 1995. În: *Monitorul Oficial al Republicii Moldova*, nr.20, art. 187. Available at: [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=60504&lang=ro](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=60504&lang=ro) (accessed at 10.02.2022).

tion reform and preparation of a new Constitution, economy liberalization, ensuring financial macro-stability, democratization of public relations<sup>4</sup>.

The signing of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Moldova (1994) and its entry into force (1998) meant the direct recognition of Moldova as an EU partner for political dialogue, legal and economic cooperation. On December 1996, the President P. Lucinschi sent a message to the President of the European Commission J. Santer, where, for the first time, he expressed the idea of the intention of the Republic of Moldova to join the European Union, and the usefulness of the starting preparatory procedures for this process<sup>5</sup>. In 1997 – 1998, during the official visits of the President of the Republic of Moldova to Paris, Rome, Bucharest and the visits of the Presidents of Hungary and Poland to Moldova, the leaders of number of the EU member states and associated countries, expressed their support for the Republic of Moldova. Others were disbelief. However, the general conclusion was made on March 1998, when Moldova was invited to more clearly formulate its geopolitical orientation and begin the process of implementing the provisions of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which entered into force in July the same year<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> TODERAȘ, N. *Aspectele racordării sistemului de învățământ superior la standardele statelor membre ale Uniunii Europene: politici educaționale și de tineret*. Școala Națională de Studii Politice și Administrative din București 2006. 98 p. Studiu realizat în cadrul Proiectului „Planul de acțiuni Uniunea Europeană – Republica Moldova: document accesibil publicului”. Available at: [http://www.e-democracy.md/files/aspectele-racordarii-sistemului-  
invatamant-superior.pdf](http://www.e-democracy.md/files/aspectele-racordarii-sistemului-invatamant-superior.pdf). (accessed at 22.02.2022).

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> TODERAȘ, N. *Aspectele racordării sistemului de învățământ superior la standardele statelor membre ale Uniunii Europene: politici educaționale și de tineret*. Școala Națională de Studii Politice și Administrative din București 2006. 98 p., , p. 35. Studiu realizat în cadrul Proiectului „Planul de acțiuni Uniunea Europeană – Republica Moldova: document accesibil publicului”. Available at: [Since its establishment as a sovereign and independent state, the Republic of Moldova has formed its own legal framework in the field of higher education. Thus, to some extent, it is largely complete, but not fully adapted to European requirements and principles. So, article no. 35 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova guarantees the right to education, but the Law on Education no. 547 – XIII from July 21, 1995, regulates the relevant constitutional norm. This was followed by several legislative acts, that were regulate the evaluation and accreditation of educational institutions, the refinement of the nomenclature of specialties, the access of foreign citizens to local educational services and various other strategies, planning and reporting.](http://www.e-</a></p>
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In this context, higher education in the Republic of Moldova had the opportunity to make itself known abroad for the first time, during the reign of the Alliance for the Democracy and Reform (1998 – 1999). According to the Action Program of the Government of the Republic of Moldova for 1998 – 2001 “Deeping reforms, restructuring and economic growth”, was published the main objective of the Government’s policy, which was aimed at overcoming the crisis, modernizing the country, moving closer to Europe, actively participating in the processes of European and international integration, etc.<sup>7</sup>. As a result of the Parliamentary elections from 1998, the Movement “For a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova” entered the legislative body, but Dumitru Diacov was elected as a President of the Parliament. Based on the principles, enshrined in its

[democracy.md/files/aspectele-racordarii-sistemului-  
invatamant-superior.pdf](http://www.e-democracy.md/files/aspectele-racordarii-sistemului-<br/>invatamant-superior.pdf). (accessed at 22.02.2022).

<sup>7</sup> *Программа деятельности Правительства Республики Молдова на 1998 – 2001 годы. «Углубление реформ, реструктуризация и экономический рост»*. Постановление Правительства Республики Молдова, №523 от 4.06.1998, с.26. Available at: [http://www.e-democracy.md/files/parties/program-  
activitate-guvern-moldova-1998-2001-ru.pdf](http://www.e-democracy.md/files/parties/program-activitate-guvern-moldova-1998-2001-ru.pdf) (accessed at 15.02.2022).

electoral platform, the DMDM (the Movement “For a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova”) decided to take part in the creation of the Alliance for Democracy and Reforms (ADR). The government of the ADR – the first coalition government in the history of the country – was created as a result of difficult negotiations. It was based on the ADR management program (1998 – 2001, 1999 – 2002) and included representatives of all the formations that established the Alliance. The ADR coalition broke up on December 1999, when the Christian Democratic Popular Front left its structure, but the ADR government, headed by Ion Sturza, was dismissed by the deputies’ votes of the Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova and Christian Democratic People’s Party. According to the Activities Programs of the Government of the Republic of Moldova for 1999 – 2002 “Sovereignty of laws, revitalization of the economy, integration into European structures”<sup>8</sup>, the ruling circles realized that it is necessary to carry out the higher education’ reforms in the very near future, focused on achieving world experience in this field.

The Post-Soviet process of reforming the entire education system of the Republic of Moldova was perceived in national space as a way of modernization. If at the first stage, before the adaptation of the Law of Education in 1995, modernization was perceived as the identification of one’s own values and educational priorities, then, after the adaptation of the legislative framework, the system was stabilized and approved abroad. In parallel with the second stage in Western Europe, the

Bologna process was barely emerging as a pan-European action.

The Bologna Declaration, signed on June 19, 1999, identified among its main objectives the promotion of European cooperation in the field of quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies. This idea was continued in the Prague Communiqué (on May 19, 2001), which reaffirmed the commitment to the creation of a “common space for higher education”<sup>9</sup>, the development of European cooperation in order to ensure quality – an important factor in increasing the attractiveness and international competitiveness of European higher education.

The idea of quality assurance in higher education becomes the main strategic direction of the Berlin communiqué (September 19, 2003). The European Ministers of Education have decided that by 2005 the national quality assurance system will include:

- Defining the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved;
- Evaluation of programs or institutions, including the involvement of internal evaluations, external evaluations, student participation and publication of results;
- System accreditation, certification or comparable procedures;
- Participation, international cooperation<sup>10</sup>.

Only in autumn 2004, political authorities from Chisinau realized that the goal of integration into the structures of the European Union would be achieved

<sup>8</sup> Програма деятельности Правительства Республики Молдова на 1999 – 2002 годы. «Главенство законов, оживление экономики, интеграция в Европейские структуры». Постановление Правительства Республики Молдова, № 270 от 8.04.1999, с.10. Available at: <http://www.e-democracy.md/files/parties/program-activitate-guvern-moldova-1999-2002-ru.pdf> (accessed at 15.02.2022).

<sup>9</sup> *Towards the European Higher Education Area: Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education in Prague on May 19, 2001.* Available at:

[https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/prague\\_communique\\_may\\_2001.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/prague_communique_may_2001.pdf) (accessed at 15.02.2022).

<sup>10</sup> *Realising the European Higher Education Area. Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Berlin, 19 September 2003.* Available at:

<https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/u39/Berlin%2003.pdf> (accessed at 15.02.2022).

much faster, if the higher education system were interconnected with the provisions of the Bologna process. Because, the logic and direction were taken correctly, because, due to education policy is possible to ensure the long-term sustainability of the integration process, because, this field is intended to form new economic, political, social and cultural elites, actively participate in the development, implementation and monitoring of several policies with an integrative role, as well as stimulate other areas for the sustainable development of society.

With the implementation of actions to join the Bologna process, the legislative framework in the field of higher education has undergone a number of changes, thanks to which it has become largely compatible with the requirements of the Bologna process<sup>11</sup>. Thus, in the spring 2005, the Republic of Moldova signed the Bologna Declaration, but, already in summer of the same year, were made a number of amendments to the legislative base. However, the most important step initiated by the Government of the Republic of Moldova, is the development of a new legal framework in the field of education, included in a separate set of laws. It was published on August 2005 and became the subject of a lengthy public debate. Thus, the interested parties were able to make additions, suggestions, criticism and various options for resolving contentious issues.

As it was mentioned earlier, in the Republic of Moldova, from 1999 to 2002, was an intensive process of developing regulations and tools for assessment and accreditation in national education. As a coordinating body for the external evalua-

tion and accreditation process, the National Council for Academic Assessment and Accreditation (in addition to the Government) was established, with the following responsibilities: a) institutional assessment; b) evaluation of curricula and programs; c) evaluation of scientific activity. Later, in the period 2002 – 2008, this Council was transformed into the Department of Evaluation and Accreditation of the Ministry of Education, whose powers included: a) external evaluation and accreditation of educational institutions; b) institutional assessment; c) evaluation of vocational training programs. In 2008 was established a new Quality Assurance Agency. However, this agency dealt only with the assessment of school results in pre-university education. The introduction of a quality assurance system in higher education is the main strategic direction of the Berlin Communique (September 19, 2003). The quality of higher education is becoming a key element in the formation of the European Higher Education Area. In this sense, it should be noted, that the higher education institutions of the Republic of Moldova have created their own quality management structures, began to develop and implement quality management documents. Internal quality control mechanisms and own internal quality assurance systems are created and developed. To achieve and promote the objectives of external quality assurance, it is necessary to establish a Quality Assurance Agency at the national level, that would be entrusted with a number of functions, including the evaluation and accreditation of higher education institutions. The National Agency for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education, established by the Code of Education, should become an administrative body of national importance, with a legal personality, independent from the Government, independent in decision making, organization and budgeting, but also finances from its own revenues.

It should be noted that after two unsuccessful attempts – in 2008, when it was

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<sup>11</sup> *The Bologna process 2020 — the european higher education area in the new decade. Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, 28–29 April 2009.* In: *Știința juridică în contextul promovării valorilor statului de drept.* 13-14 mai 2010, Chișinău: Tipografia Grafema Libris SRL, 2010, pp. 308-314.

not promulgated by the President Vladimir Voronin, in 2010, when it was also blocked due to certain interest groups – on July 7, 2014, the Code of Education was finally approved, but from November 23, 2014, entered into force. With the Code of Education' adoption, the Education Law was repealed. The Ministry of Education proposed a new approach to the higher educational process, aimed at modernizing the education system in the context of the European integration process of the Republic of Moldova, in line with the Bologna process. The Code of Education was intended to lay the foundations of a new doctrine in education, which primarily implies the availability of quality education for everyone, but also the irreversible overcoming of the involvement of the political factor. According to the Code of Education, the main tasks of higher education are:

- Creation, preservation and dissemination of knowledge at the highest level;
- Training of highly qualified specialists, who are competitive in the national and international labor market;
- Creating the opportunities for lifelong learning;
- Preservation, development and popularization of national cultural and historical values in the context of cultural diversity<sup>12</sup>.

The implementation of the Code of Education led to the development of a number of Framework Regulations, elaborated to ensure the effective functioning and high quality of higher education:

- Framework Regulation on the organization of the examination for the completion of higher education.
- Framework Regulation on the standardization of scientific-didactic and research activity in higher education.

- Framework Regulation on the organization and functioning of the governing bodies of higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova<sup>13</sup>.
- Framework Regulation on the organization and functioning of distance higher education<sup>14</sup>.
- Framework Regulation on the organization of studies in higher education based on the National System of Study Credits<sup>15</sup>.
- The framework plan<sup>16</sup> etc..

The Code of Education also contributed to the implementation of the Education Strategy 2020, which was approved in 2014 by the Government Decision no. 944 from November 2014. The Strategy was organized on the basis of three pillars: access, relevance, quality. And one of the

<sup>13</sup> *Ordin Ministerului Educației al Republicii Moldova cu privire la aprobarea și punerea în aplicare a Regulamentului – cadru privind organizarea și funcționarea organelor de conducere ale instituțiilor de învățământ superior din Moldova*, nr. 10 din 14 ianuarie 2015. Available at: <https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/conducere.pdf> (accessed at 16.02.2022).

<sup>14</sup> *Ordin Ministerului Educației al Republicii Moldova cu privire la aprobarea Regulamentului – cadru privind organizarea și desfășurarea învățământului superior la distanță*, nr. 474 din 24 mai 2016. Available at: [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/ordin\\_474\\_sin\\_24.05.2016.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/ordin_474_sin_24.05.2016.pdf) (accessed at 15.02.2022).

<sup>15</sup> Anexa la ordinul Ministerului Educației nr. 726 din 20.09.2010. Regulamentul de organizare a studiilor în învățământ superior în baza Sistemului Național de Credite de Studiu. Available at: [https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fmecc.gov.md%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fregulamentul\\_de\\_organizare\\_a\\_studiilor\\_in\\_Invatamantul\\_superior\\_in\\_baza\\_sncs.doc&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fmecc.gov.md%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fregulamentul_de_organizare_a_studiilor_in_Invatamantul_superior_in_baza_sncs.doc&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK) (accessed at 12.02.2022).

<sup>16</sup> *Ordin Ministerului Educației al Republicii Moldova cu privire la aprobarea și punerea în aplicare a Planului-cadru pentru studii superioare (ciclul I – licență, ciclul II – master, studii integrate, ciclul III doctorat)*, nr. 1045 din 29 octombrie 2015. Available at: [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/ordinul\\_nr\\_1045\\_din\\_29.10.2015\\_plan\\_cadru\\_pentru\\_studii\\_superioare\\_ciclul\\_i\\_-\\_licenta\\_ciclul\\_ii\\_-\\_master\\_studii\\_integrate\\_ciclul\\_iii\\_-\\_doctorat.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/ordinul_nr_1045_din_29.10.2015_plan_cadru_pentru_studii_superioare_ciclul_i_-_licenta_ciclul_ii_-_master_studii_integrate_ciclul_iii_-_doctorat.pdf) (accessed at 12.02.2022).

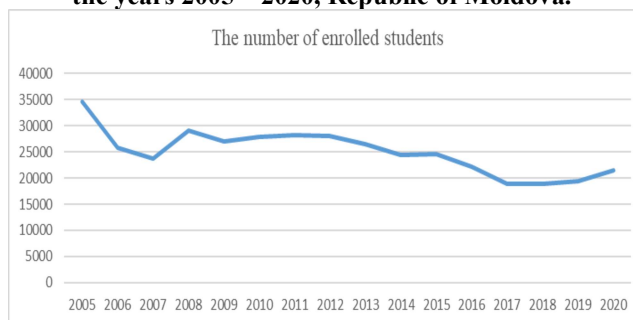
<sup>12</sup> *Codul Educației al Republicii Moldova, nr.152 din 17.07.2014*. În: Monitorul Oficial al Republicii Moldova, 2014, nr.319-324, art.634. Available at: [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=110112&lang=ro](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=110112&lang=ro) (accessed at 5.03.2022).

main objectives of the Education Strategy 2020 was to organize the sustainable development of the educational system in order to form an integral, active, social and creative personality – as a main factor of human development and socio-economic progress<sup>17</sup>.

Subsequently, by the Governmental Decision no. 199 from April 22, 2015, the Regulation on the organization and functioning of National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACIP) and its official states, was approved<sup>18</sup>. ANACIP is an independent entity, which will work, based on the evaluation standards and methodologies, approved by the Government and, respectively, in accordance with the European Quality Assurance Standards.

At the same time, we can mention that there have been some rather contradictory trends in the higher education of the Republic of Moldova, which should by no means be attributed to the accession to the Bologna Process, but rather to the governmental policies of the last decade. Thus, the main worrying trend is the decrease of students' enrollment. For example, the evaluation of the number of students in the period 2005 – 2020, there is a tendency to a sharp decrease, the number of students has almost halved (Fig. 1). But, we should note, that this trend is specific to both cycles: bachelor and master degree, with a more pronounced decrease for the bachelor's degree level.

**Fig. 1. The evolution of enrolled students during the years 2005 – 2020, Republic of Moldova.**



**Source:** Elaborated by the author based on data from the National Bureau of Statistics, [https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/ro/30%20Statistica%20sociala/30%20Statistica%20sociala\\_07%20INV\\_INV060/INV060500.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=9a62a0d7-86c4-45da-b7e4-fecc26003802](https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/ro/30%20Statistica%20sociala/30%20Statistica%20sociala_07%20INV_INV060/INV060500.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=9a62a0d7-86c4-45da-b7e4-fecc26003802)

There are a lot of factors that have generated this situation, more important being the extremely negative demographic situation of the last decade, the massive migration abroad, free and massive access to various programs, grants, foreign scholarships, etc. However, another extremely important factor, which must be mentioned, is the fact that the last governments practically opposed the massization of higher education in the Republic of Moldova<sup>19</sup>. The education policies promoted by the Government of the Republic of Moldova is, to some extent, in the same context of efforts to regulate the flow of students through planning, motivated by the need to produce enough qualified specialists to meet the economic needs for qualified personnel.

One way or another, based on current conditions, higher education on the Republic of Moldova begun to seek and find viable solutions for survival and subsequent development, based on new realities. Thus, as one of the medium and long-term possibilities, was the internationalization of higher education in Moldova.

<sup>17</sup> Hotărârea Guvernului Republicii Moldova cu privire la aprobarea Strategiei de dezvoltare a educației pentru anii 2014-2020 „Educația – 2020”, nr.944 din 14.11.2014. În: Monitorul Oficial al Republicii Moldova, nr. 345-351, art. 1014. Available at: [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/1\\_strategia\\_educatia-2020\\_3.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/1_strategia_educatia-2020_3.pdf) (accessed at 10.03.2022).

<sup>18</sup> Agentie Nationala de Asigurare a Calitatii in Educatie si Cercetare. Available at: <https://www.anacip.md/index.php/ro/home-ro-ro/istoric/> (accessed at 08.03.2022).

<sup>19</sup> POPA, A. *Perspectivile universitare în procesul de reformare a sistemului educațional și de cercetare științifică*. In: *Perspectivile și Problemele Integrării în Spațiul European al Cercetării și Educației*. 5 iunie 2015, vol. 1, Cahul: Tipografia Centrografic, 2015, pp. 7-9. ISBN 978-9975-914-98-7.



Higher education reforms - including implementation the Bologna process- were fully supported by the European Union through funding schemes such as TEMPUS and Erasmus+. These programs bring together international consortia of higher education institutions and related stakeholders to promote the reform of higher education institutions and higher education systems<sup>20</sup>. For Moldova, 83 Tempus projects (1994 – 2013) and 17 Erasmus Capacity Building projects in higher education (2015-2019), 17 Jean Monnet projects, were selected for funding. In addition, educational institutions in the Republic of Moldova have participated in several Erasmus mobility projects for students and staff (2015-2017: 1303 mobilities)<sup>21</sup>. All these projects have contributed to the internationalization of higher education in Moldova and have promoted the integration of higher education institutions in the European Higher Education Area. However, the real degree of internationalization of Moldovan educational institutions remains unequal<sup>22</sup>.

### Conclusions

Nowadays, the higher education system in the Republic of Moldova is at a critical stage. Despite the improvement of the national legal framework in recent years,

the results do not always meet expectations. The delay in institutional reforms, aimed at optimizing the bloated organizational infrastructure and the revision of the funding mechanism, have negated the positive effect of new legislation and led to a deterioration in the quality of higher education<sup>23</sup>. The lack of political will, combined with resistance within the higher education sector to push up for much-needed, but politically and socially sensitive reforms, has only compounded the problem. Key stakeholders have failed to anticipate and find appropriate solutions to overlapping problems, embodied in negative demographic trends, emigration, internal and external competition, which has seriously affected their ability to recruit new students and competitive universities, that is critical to the long-term survival of the entire sector. Unfortunately, as a result of these developments, the quality and competitiveness of higher education have fallen, despite significant financial investment in recent years.

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<sup>20</sup> TODERAȘ, N. *Aspectele racordării sistemului de învățământ superior la standardele statelor membre ale Uniunii Europene: politici educaționale și de tineret*. Școala Națională de Studii Politice și Administrative din București 2006. 98 p., p. 30. Studiu realizat în cadrul Proiectului „Planul de acțiuni Uniunea Europeană – Republica Moldova: document accesibil publicului”. Available at: <http://www.e-democracy.md/files/aspectele-racordarii-sistemului-invatamant-superior.pdf>. (accessed at 22.02.2022).

<sup>21</sup> *Erasmus+ Programme in the Republic of Moldova, 2019*. Available at: [http://www.erasmusplus.md/sites/default/files/media\\_file/2019-09/erasmus\\_programme\\_in\\_rm\\_final.pdf](http://www.erasmusplus.md/sites/default/files/media_file/2019-09/erasmus_programme_in_rm_final.pdf) (accessed at 10.03.2022).

<sup>22</sup> WETZINGER, J. *Higher Education Reform in Moldova: Achievements and Challenges*. International Higher Education, (98), 2019, p. 28-30. Retrieved from <https://ejournals.bc.edu/index.php/ihe/article/view/11207/9457> (accessed at 11.03.2022).

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