

## FP7 IRSES PROJECT: ENLARGING INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COLLABORATION IN EUROPEAN STUDIES\*



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*This article presents the analysis of international scientific collaboration in European Studies developed within four years international project 7th European Community Framework Programme Marie Curie International Research Staff Exchange Scheme Fellowship “Possibilities and limits, challenges and obstacles of transferring CEE EU pre-accession best practices and experience to Moldova’s and Georgia’s pre-accession process” which became possible thanks to the funding from the European Commission of the experience exchange program. This project uniqueness lies in the fact that it allowed the Moldovan representatives to do field research in challenging conditions of economic crisis, to study colleagues’ experience, to analyze and evaluate the progress of reforms in the political, legal, economic and educational areas. During the Project implementation the researchers focused on the specific circumstances and policy trends analyses of Moldova and Georgia as the transition countries on the EU border and states between EU and Russia and exchange of EU studies experience, including successes and failures, realities and prospects of inter-university scientific relationship.*

**Keywords:** international collaboration, europenization, university education, European integration, tasks, priorities, deliverables.

International scientific collaboration in European Studies has become one of the pivotal directions of young and experienced scholars’ research and cooperation from four universities – University of Tartu, Vilnius University, Moldova State University, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University – within four years international project 7th European Community Framework Programme Marie Curie International Research Staff Exchange Scheme Fellowship “Possibilities and limits, challenges and obstacles of transferring CEE EU pre-accession best practices and experience to Moldova’s and

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Georgia's pre-accession process". It should be recorded that carrying out this project in the Republic of Moldova and establishing of scientific dialogue in the academic environment between partner universities, made possible thanks to the funding from the European Commission of the experience exchange program. This scientific and academic collaboration is of great importance for Europeanization of university programs, both in Moldova and Georgia, formation of a new generation of researchers, able to meet modern requirements and challenges as well as for enlarging relations between universities for the European studies development and implementation.

The FP7 IRSES project as a platform in terms of transfer of knowledge and to generate a basis for sustainable cooperation was targeted on research and training activities, joint workshops and seminars, as well as networking activities focused on scientific results. The joint program directed to strengthen research partnerships included four Work Packages: 1. Mapping CEE states' reform experience: environment of positive conditionality – mapping of success and failure of reforms in key policy areas related to EU accession criteria; 2. European Neighborhood Policy and Europeanization (political, economic and legal aspects) – analyzing which CEE states' pre-accession knowledge is transferable and needed; 3. Moldova and Georgia – the transition countries on the EU border and states between EU and Russia – analyzing the specific circumstances and policy trends; 4. Teaching EU, EU-Russia relations and European Neighborhood Policy in the context of interdisciplinary European Studies curricula. [1]

During the Project the researchers focused on the specific circumstances and policy trends analyses of Moldova and Georgia as the transition countries on the EU border and states between EU and Russia and exchange of EU studies experience. This article presents the results of project implementation stages, including successes and failures, realities and prospects of inter-university scientific relationship within the European Studies framework. The scholarships achievements and researches of project participants contributed to their doctoral thesis, publications in specialized scientific journals, holding conferences and workshops, providing lectures, etc. The program outcomes constituted valuable assets for curricula development in the partner universities. Moreover, due to the main objectives of the project and peculiarities stipulated in the 4th work package, special emphasis was put on improving the European curricula teaching, taking into account the interdisciplinary approach and researches done in cooperation with other working groups. The project period constitutes, in total, 310 secondments covered by exchange of professors, researchers, PhD students and administrative staff from Moldova, Georgia, Lithuania and Estonia.

This project uniqueness lies in the fact that it allowed the Moldovan representatives to do field research in challenging conditions of economic crisis, to study colleagues' experience, to analyze and evaluate the progress of reforms in the political, legal, economic and educational areas. Moldova State University academics and the administrative staff from the fields of politics, international relations,

economics, law and sociology conducted 22 research visits to Georgia within 64 secondments, out of which 17 are PhD students working on doctoral dissertation: Morari Cristina, Nicolaescu Irina, Burgudji Serghei, Ilasciuc Andrei, Vardanian Ernest, Conacu Vasile, Poleacov Dumitru, Ţurcanu Alina, Sterpu Vladimir, Cojuhari Irina (Faculty of International Relations), Gheorghişă/Hasnas Eugenia, Grosu Diana, Visanu Tatiana, Diaconu Tatiana (Faculty of Economic Sciences), Josanu Dumitru (Faculty of Law). Under the direction of doctor habilitatus in political science, university professor Valentina Teosa, carried out postdoctoral, theoretical and methodological researches Bîrladeanu Virgiliu (Faculty of History and Philosophy), Cebotari Svetlana, Benchechi Diana, Svetlicinaia Rodica, Putina Natalia (Faculty of International Relations, Political and Administrative Sciences)..

A significant component of the project implementation was to strengthen academic partnerships between the faculties of the Tbilisi State University "Ivane Javakhishvili" and Moldova State University. Thus, Georgian representatives, PhD students Vladimir Napetvaridze, Natia Kalandadze, Beka Beradze, PhD and associate professor Elizabed Bzhalava, Political Science Department chair and university professor Malkhaz Matsaberidze were hosted by the Moldova State University to perform research activities and postdoctoral studies focused on political and economic reforms of European countries that are project partners and transferring their best practices and experience to Georgia and Moldova. The project outcomes and academic achievements have been consolidated in scientific publications and serve as valuable basis for training and study processes, for improving curricula on European studies within universities of countries participants in the project.

The overview of MSU FP7 Project deliverables (detailed final report will be presented at the end of project according to schedule) demonstrates that planned activities were implemented: one day workshop in State University of Moldova to present the project and to discuss its strategy, deliverables and outcomes; scientific publications of research results (over 50) on comparative and case analysis of Moldova, Estonia, Lithuania and Georgia European transition specific circumstances and contemporary policy trends in Periodical Scientific Journals by MSU; publications of research results (over 25) on comparative study of Moldova and Georgia transition pre accession policies, strategies and perspectives in the publications of the Tbilisi State University; Publication of newsletter articles (6), TV broadcasts (3), podcasts (2) on European Neighbourhood Policy and EU-Moldova and/or EU-Georgia cooperation in Europeanization. The Moldova State University scientific community was continuously informed by publications in University newspaper, in e-resources and by social-media.

In 2014 in the framework of FP7 week in Moldova State University, among scientific events organized by the Department of International Relations with the participation of international experts of partner universities could be mentioned the Consortium Meeting with project participants, the spring school “*Good governance as*

*an essential tool for economic development*“ and the series of public lectures “European Lessons” focused on Estonia and Lithuania’s experience in European integration and the analyses of possibilities and limits of transferring best practices and experience to Moldova’s pre-accession process.

For visiting scholars Ivan Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University organized with participation of partner universities one day workshop to discuss WP-1, its deliverables and outcomes. Moreover, researchers from MSU attended many national and international scientific events, conferences and round-tables in Tbilisi. For example, during the 2016 visit secondments the project participants took part in a series of scientific conferences held in Tbilisi and Gori:

- International conference “Georgia-Iran Relations and the New Challenges after the Nuclear Deal”. *The Centre for cultural relations Caucasian House, 25.03.2016*

- NATO-Georgia Public Diplomacy Forum. *Raddisson Blue Iveria Hotel 4-5 April 2016*

- International conference “How should Georgia and the EU approach each other in a changing geopolitical environment”. *Betsy’s Hotel, 12.04.2016*

- Scientific Conference “25 years of Independence: Achievements, Problems and Perspectives”

*TSU, Building 1, lecture hall 111, 26.04.2016*

- Georgia – Facing Recent Challenges/Inter-University Scientific-Practical Conference, *Gori, Sukhishvili Teaching University, 28.05.2016* etc.

The workshop held in by Vilnius University on WP-2 progress, its deliverables and outcomes, with the participation of partner universities gave a unique possibility for Moldova professor V.Teosa to participate in Political Science Association of Central and Eastern Europe conference with presentation of research results.

The thematic workshop WP-3 on progress, its deliverables and outcomes provided the opportunity to discuss with partner universities the research results performed by each Moldovan scholar, professor or administrator within 2 public lectures and seminars held by Tbilisi State University. For example, during last visits in 2016 there were given the following public lectures:

- “Moldova and Georgia on the European way”. *Saakahvili Library, 18.05.2016*

- “Moldova Today: Realities and Perspectives of Europeanization”. *Gori, Sukhishvili Teaching University 18.05.2016*

- “Moldova and Georgia between EU and Russia” *TSU, 01, 01.06.2016* etc. (All presentations are annexed to participant reports and presented to Project leading university)

Networking meetings constituted an important part of the project working plan that converge partner organizations, PhD students, FP7 researchers to examine subjects such as Moldova and Georgia Neighborhood Policies, European transition specific circumstances and contemporary pre-accession policy trends. Furthermore, partner

universities proposals on project follow-up is a subject for discussions during all scholars and academics visits. The cooperation carried out within the FP7 project, undoubtedly, has contributed to strengthen scientific partnerships between the universities of Moldova and Georgia, and confidently will have continuity at institutional level to develop both countries.

Among the achievements of 2016, could be noted the comparative study of positive and ambiguous tendencies of establishing democracy in Moldova and Georgia, subjects addressed in details at conferences such as "Geopolitical transformation in the Caucasus: History and Present" (University of Batumi 18 March 2016) and "25 years of independence: achievements, challenges and prospects" (State University of Tbilisi "Ivane Javakhishvili" 26 April 2016), organized by the Department of Political Science, State University of Tbilisi "Ivane Javakhishvili" director prof. Malkhaz Matsaberidze. These scientific forums were attended by researchers from Moldova PhD prof. V. Teosa, PhD R. Svetlicinâi, PhD students A. Creşnev, V. Sterpu, I. Cojuhari . The joint work of researchers of two countries result in the scientific publication "Georgia and Moldova: experience of establishing a democratic state" [2]

We note that the range of issues discussed in articles included in the scientific publication, only highlights its main idea: democracy, constitutes, inevitably, the main prerequisite for the development of both countries. Moreover, the quality of democracy today determine the potential of modernization of political, economic and social aspects of life standards and, finally, the perspectives for achieving the EU development objectives set out in the Association Agreements signed by the two countries with the European Union 2014.

It is the European dimension of democratic reforms in all areas that could sustain Georgia and Moldova to find answers to issues of concern for our countries today: how long Georgia and Moldova will appear as candidates for full membership in the EU. What should be done in every country? What are the barriers to overcome? What kind of support from our European partners is desirable in this way? For the Republic of Moldova issues today are formulated even tougher: how and why over the past four years, the country has gone from the path of country with a great history and considerable experience regarding the European integration to a negative evaluation, as a "failed state." The reality is the fact that both the first and second evaluation sound like at the expert level and in civil society. The basis of the methodology of finding answers to these difficult questions is the comparative approach of expert assessments of various aspects of the democratic process in Moldova and Georgia. The joint research results of 2016 as a bound collection of scientific articles published by Ivan Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University will be presented to the scientific community of Moldova and political science and international relations students during of the FP7 Project Week at MSU (2016).

Particular answers to questions about the quality of Moldova democratic institutions, the trust issue in political institutions, the support of the European vector

in both countries can be found in this publication, in which Georgian and Moldovan scientists, reflect on the prospects of democracy and of democratic mechanisms. They presented their vision of state development and European future of Georgia and Moldova.

I want to note just a few facts and ideas that deserve attention, in our opinion, of political sciences researchers and practitioners. According to experts position in Georgia the European path is ascertained as the unity of the political elite, represented in the Parliament and of the population, which according to surveys, demonstrates "domestic political consensus" - 68% of respondents are "pro" the country's entry into the EU. [3] In our view, it attests for Georgia a good basis for modernization and deepening reforms.

A functioning democracy works as the basis for the legitimacy of any government and requires the political and state elites of Georgia and Moldova to defining the goals of internal development and foreign policy and be supported by the public and civil society. In this context, it should be considered besides the European vector of foreign policy other major strategies implemented by the government. If Georgia's accession to the EU and NATO are considered by the political elite as interrelated vectors of the country's foreign policy and are supported by up to 80% of the population, according to various sources, for the Republic of Moldova this issue is yet a dividing line for policy makers, civil society and population. This controversy reflects the attitude of society to the article 11 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova (1994) that stipulates the status of permanent neutrality. [4] It should be noted the fruitful cooperation of our department and the project to the scientific approach of this issue analyzed by PhD student Mija V. in his publications and doctoral dissertation. In our opinion it is a strong contribution to understanding the Moldova modern political process and will be appreciated both locally and abroad. [5]

Another significant aspect of our countries development - economic and social, are directly linked to the neo-liberal reforms and the free market, underestimated as a factor of democratic development. The capacity of democratic reforms decrease is undoubtedly affected by the situation in the real economy and labor relations, high unemployment and considerable flows of migrant labor force, business climate and lack of social protection of employees, the ineffectiveness of the trade union movement, dialogue between the government, workers' and employers' associations that degrade the mechanisms of democracy as a necessary part of sustainable development strategies. Doctoral dissertations of MSU students from the Faculty of Economy Sciences - D. Grosu, T.Vishanu, T.Diaconu, Hasnash E. examine particular aspects of current development problems and offer certain recommendations. [6]

In the difficult economic situation of our countries, it is crucial to identify the possibilities and directions, the place and role of the Eastern Partnership European programs implementation, to evaluate properly the pros and cons effects of the EU agreement on free trade zone in Moldova and Georgia (DCFTA, 2014). The problems

in the labor market, such as high unemployment, growing numbers of people living in poverty, migration of skilled labor force, as well as the significant amount of remittance received not only from Europe but also from Russia, - define similar tendencies of the population and continue to influence the field of research in both countries.

In our opinion, an appropriate conclusion about the current situation of Moldova, is that ignoring the economic interests of the country and the needs of the population in terms of building market-based economic relations after 25 years of tough reforms in all spheres of life is a short-sighted policy provided by both national governments and international partners. The exceptionally challenging geopolitical situation between the EU and Russia damages to post-Soviet countries primarily on systemic development course of these countries, namely on democracy as the basis of the socio-political system and the European vector as a strategic objective. [7]

At the present stage, when in our countries all democratic institutions are founded, it is advisable to direct political efforts to create conditions for a functioning democracy in all spheres of society. Each country needs to define its priorities. For the Republic of Moldova, first of all, to overcome the political and social divisions in order to determine the national interest, national identity, national unity and integrity. Should be eliminated the roots of corruption, the political elite improved and the political orientation towards reforms consolidated. Only reforms in both countries could establish a functioning democracy and generate conditions for economic revival as well as return the migrant labor force. Moldova and Georgia free trade agreement with the EU is not duly implemented in both countries as a result of tough conditionality of the European Union. For Georgia, a real step towards European integration could be the visa liberalization expected with great enthusiasm.

Implementing Georgia and Moldova internal and foreign policy, EU and national political elites do not take into account a number of important factors that largely determine the delay of democratic reforms and the accomplishment of the Association Agreement with the EU. Among them could be mentioned the strong geopolitical factor – both countries are located between the various power poles, fact that affects the efficiency of internal reforms; European values must not conflict with the socio-cultural values and traditions of these countries; foreign economic relationships are also part of the historically formed cultural ties. The starting point in the domestic politics of both countries should be a change in the approach to the process of labor migration. The population of each country - is its human capital, base and its potential for development, and therefore it is necessary to form a radically different policy in relation to human capital.

We consider, that the current survival social policy of our countries leads to devaluate the human capital, while is essential to formulate a concept of preserving and increasing the human capital as an integral part and a major driving force of sustainable development policies. Based on a rethought attitude towards the basic

elements of a comprehensive modernization, a change of the policy approaches of both countries and of European partners is required. In the process of European integration at the level of interstate relations, democracy refers to cooperation of international partners, willingness to coordinate mutual interests, eliminate the tendency to dominate in allied relations even as associate membership.

Our considerations and approaches expressed on the functioning democracy oriented to modernization and to achieve sustainable development in Moldova and Georgia at the present stage, are based on academic research and influenced by a large number of experts' works presenting extensive international research, known in Georgia, and obviously ideas that emerged as a result of communicating with Georgian colleagues. International conferences held in Tbilisi within the period of March-May 2016 offered an indispensable opportunity to participate at discussions: on the achievements of the EU Eastern Partnership policy implementation problems - events organized by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and S. Batori Foundation; on the prospects for the European future of Georgia, confidence-building in the South Caucasus – event organized by the NATO Center for Information and Documentation; on promoting corporate social responsibility in Georgia not only as an idea but as complex processes with UNDP Global Compact Network in Georgia.

Although, many of the researchers' conclusions are going to be tested in practice, applied in lectures and seminars, the joint research work, clearly gave a new vision of problems and solutions, and constituted a necessary step for internationalization of social and political research and foundation of academic partnerships between the Tbilisi State University named after Ivane Javakhishvili and the State University of Moldova. One of the most important issue for the Republic of Moldova - the contribution of political science to the modernization of todote society - became the subject of an international conference held on November 12-13, 2015. The scientific event was organized and conducted with the participants of the project members from Moldova and Georgia, offering their solutions to important political and economic development problems of the country, European integration and security challenges. The conference publications were dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the Faculty of International Relations, Political and Administrative Sciences, State University of Moldova. [8]

FP7 project participants and partners from Iasi, Romania, researchers of the University Alexandru Ion Cuza, organized a round table as part of the conference to discuss the Eastern Partnership European policy, achievements, challenges, and the necessity of reflecting towards considering the local self-government and civil society as participants to its implementation. Some studies of project participants have focused on the role of such factors as the national strategies for European Integration (C. Morari), internationalization of university education (V.Teosa), foreign policy in the context of the Eastern Partnership (S.Cebotari) and comparing the situation of Georgia and Moldova within the Eastern Partnership (A.Ilasciuk).



Another significant area of research in the project historiography are peace studies, security and conflict resolution - themes of particular relevance for both Georgia and Moldova. Within this context, the FP7 IRSES project participants initiated the research „*Peaceful Conflict Transformation from Academic Perspective*”, supported by the Austrian Development Agency in the Republic of Moldova and presented their results in a scientific conference “If You Want Peace, You Have to Plan for It” held on September 18-19 2015, followed by the publication “*Moldovan Peace dialogues: societal integration, accommodative policies and strategies, from an academic perspective*”, coordinated by FP 7 researchers V.Teosa and C.Morari. The academic event was honored by the Head of political and economic department of the European Union Delegation to Moldova *Wicher SLAGTER*, the Chairman of Coordination Office of Austrian Development Agency Dr. *Gerhard SCHAUMBERGER*, the deputy-rector of MSU, university professor Otilia Dandara. The study of trust and peace building issues in the South Caucasus, a comparative analysis with the situation in Moldova continue to be subject of studies and conferences, both in Moldova and Georgia. [9]

The imperative factor of FP7 IRSES project consists in the openness to a wide range of researchers, civil society representatives, the political elite and the public administration and their participation in conferences, round tables and project publications. Undoubtedly, its main beneficiaries are Bachelors’ Master’s and PhD students. The focus of research of Moldovan and Georgian participants is determined by their scientific interest and the relevance of the problems for both countries and universities. In Moldova, the research results have been extensively discussed within academic environment with the participation of colleagues of universities of Moldova and abroad. It should be noted that our project crossed the borders of Tbilisi State University and the MSU representatives were invited to deliver lectures and conferences in various academic institutions of Georgia, in research centers and non-governmental organizations. Moreover, it could be confirmed by the content of MSU conferences publications for the period of the project, including the today forum, attended by 10 representatives from Georgia, 4 - from Ukraine, 3 - from Romania and from other countries.

We would like to express our gratitude to all the participants of today's scientific forum. We hope that its workshops will represent a scientific platform for discussing new ideas and joint projects aimed to promote the experience of European countries towards the democratization and modernization of all life areas of Moldova and Georgia, the project countries beneficiaries. Particular results are already visible at the partner universities. Within the Project Week at MSU on September 26-30 2016, is presented the theoretical and methodological publication, developed according the project initiatives, to address the new content and quality of training International Relations and European Studies specialists.

On behalf of the representatives Moldova State University FP 7 Project participants we kindly express our heartfelt appreciations to Olga Bogdanova, the coordinator of project Consortium of the University of Tartu for considerable efforts in project implementation. A special message, we would like to dedicate to Thea Gergedava, Director of the Department of International Relations, and the project coordinator at the Ivan Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, sent to all university staff for hard working and hospitality shown to colleagues from the three partner universities. We would like to take this opportunity to extend our sincerest thanks to deans of faculties of Social and Political Sciences, Economics, Law and Humanities for supporting the program visits of Moldovan researchers to Ivan Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University at noticeable level. The project achievements would not be possible without close cooperation with research centers of the Ivan Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University Institute of European Studies, Director Nino Lapiashvili; Social Research Center, Executive Director Lia Tsuladze; Linguistic Center, Director Rusudan Dolidze.

On behalf of the project participants from the Faculty of International Relations Political and Administrative Sciences we would like to address special gratitude to the Head of the Department of Political Science, Professor Malkhaz Matsaberidze, to the Head of the Department of International Relations, Professor Zurab Davitashvili, professors, lecturers and PhD students of the Tbilisi State University, for fruitful collaboration within project activities, lectures, seminars, conferences and for research and academic exchange partnerships regarding specific research topics. Grace to their openness to scientific cooperation have been established academic partnerships between the two universities in the field of political science, administration and international relations. As part of the project, representatives of Moldova, together with prof. Malkhaz Matsaberidze and colleagues from the Department of Political Science acquainted knowledge not only on modern realities and tendencies of political processes, but as well have learned about history and culture of Georgia. Undoubtedly, the cooperation within the framework of this project contributed to the development of scientific relations between the universities of Moldova and Georgia.

We would like to mention Mr. Radu Gorincioi, PhD in Political Science, from the Embassy of Romania in Georgia, as well as Mr. Isco Daseni, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Moldova in Georgia, thanks to which the visits program for Moldovan researchers offered the possibility to attend the major international events and scientific symposiums, various meetings with representatives of the EU and NATO, but also became a platform for dialogue with representatives of the Moldovan diaspora, academics, politicians from Georgia, Moldova and Romania.

We hope that the relations established in the framework of the FP7 IRSES project would be extended to further joint researches and projects at the interpersonal and institutional levels to contribute to the development of our countries. The participation of representatives of project partner universities, namely, the University of Tartu and the TSU, as well as representatives of a number of research centers from

Georgia, Ukraine and Romania at the forum works, inspire confidence in our future partnerships. We consider the greatest outcome of the project and its continuity the broad participation of doctoral students from different universities of Moldova and neighboring countries as well as from the US, fact that guarantees the formation of scientific relations and contacts, the establishment of international research teams and networks of young researchers, focused on issues and processes of various European research directions of political, social, economic, law and international relations field.

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