# Work Package 2 Consolidated Report

# Evaluation of Existing Situation of University Institutional Autonomy in Moldova

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# Executive Summary

This report introduces four studies in which the current status of university institutional autonomy in Moldova is evaluated. University institutional autonomy consists of four types of autonomy: organizational, financial, human resource, and academic, *and* five interfaces that characterize external and internal points of interaction between modern universities and their key stakeholders: government–university; university management–university staff; university staff–students; university–businesses; and university–internationalization. In addition, this report discusses the context and the structure of higher education as well as the overall education system in Moldova.

For the purpose of these evaluation studies, a research methodology was developed by the EUniAM project team and used by the Task Force teams to collect and analyse the data. Unobtrusive data in form of laws regulating directly or indirectly the higher education system in Moldova, governmental and ministerial decrees, university chapters and organizational structures, and education records were collected and analysed. A total of 144 documents (c. 8000 pages) have been analysed.

These evaluation studies directly contribute to the aim of work package two of the project. At the same time, the studies contribute to work package three and four of the project. The developed methodology will assist the project teams in the collection and analysis of data for the benchmark analysis that is part of work package 3. Data and information from these evaluation studies will be later compared and analysed by the project teams during work package 4 the main objective of which is to draft legislative proposals on university autonomy in the Republic of Moldova.

These evaluation studies were conducted by the EUniAM Task Force teams in 2013 and reported in 2014. They commenced at the time when the Government of Moldova made changes to the financial autonomy of universities, allowing them inter alia to open own bank accounts in a bank of their choosing, and keep and transfer the balance for the next reporting year. At this same time, the Ministry of Education together with the higher education community started working on the Code of Education. Although during this period data were a moving target, the Task Force teams made every effort to accommodate the changes in the evaluation studies.

During the above mentioned period, data and information from the evaluation studies contributed to a great extent, directly and indirectly, to the debate on university institutional autonomy legislation in Moldova. Preliminary findings of the evaluation studies were presented at the International Conference on "A Quest to (Re)define University Autonomy" organized by the EUniAM project. At the same time, the findings had an impact on the context of the new Code of Education.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This report introduces the 4 studies that the EUniAM Task Force conducted on the current status of university autonomy in Moldova (herein referred to as Evaluation Studies). In doing that, the report first positions the Evaluation Studies within the EUniAM project portfolio so that the reader could see how the studies are inter-linked with other EUniAM project activities, as well as within the context of university autonomy development in Moldova. The Methodology that was developed and employed to collect and analyse the data is presented next, followed by an overview of the general context, structure and system of higher education in Moldova. Summaries of the Evaluation Studies follow and a discussion concludes this consolidated report.

# 2. POSITIONING THE EVALUATION STUDIES WITHIN THE EUniAM PROJECT

The Evaluation Studies are among the outputs of the second work package (WP) of the EUniAM project (www.euniam.aau.dk/work-packages/wp2). For the purpose of implementing WP2 of the project, 4 Task Force teams were put together; each Task Force team had a team leader and consisted of representatives from partner universities (Table 1). Each team had a designated translator/interpreter and a designated person who drafted a respective study (and who later formed the Lead Task Force team).

Directly contributing to the aim of WP2, which is to assess critically the current situation of university autonomy in Moldova, WP2 studies benefited from and also contributed to WP3 of the project, the aim of which was to learn in depth and assess university autonomy in the EU and conduct a benchmark analysis of university autonomy in the project partner countries (www.euniam.aau.dk/work-packages/wp3). WP2 and WP3 started almost at the same time. WP3 commenced with study visits to EU project partner countries – 5 in total. Most of the members of the Task Force (Table 1) took part in these visits alongside rectors and representatives from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, students, labour unions, and business community. During these visits the Task Force had the opportunity to learn and understand more about university autonomy and eventually apply this knowledge to the process of evaluation of university autonomy in Moldova, for example by identifying and better defining specific areas of and issues related to each type of university autonomy in Moldova.

The aim of the second part of WP3 was to conduct a benchmark analysis of university autonomy in the EU project partner countries. This benchmark analysis was conducted by the Lead Task Force team that also took part in WP3 study visits. For the purpose of the benchmark analysis, the Lead Task Force team travelled to the EU project partner countries and collected in-depth data based on specific methodology. Knowledge and experience gained during these benchmarking visits allowed the Lead Task Force team to revise and enhance the Evaluation Studies.

Table 1: Task Force teams

| Team | Name, affiliation | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| Organizational Autonomy | Revenco Mihail, SUM | Team leader |
| | Vrancean Vasile, SAUM | |
| | Niculiţa Angela, SUM | Drafted the study |
| | Puţuntean Nina, SAUM | Interpreter |
| Financial Autonomy | Cotelnic Ala, AESM | Team leader/Drafted the study |
| | Chistruga Natalia, TUM | |
| | Gîrlea Svetlana, TUM | |
| | Guţu Nnadejda, AESM | |
| | Lupaşco Svetlana, SUMP | |
| | Plămădeală Emilia, SAUM | |
| | Cebotari Svetlana, SUM | |
| | Gaugaş Tatiana, AESM | |
| | Lucinschi Tatiana, TUM | Interpreter |
| Human Resources Autonomy | Cernetchi Olga, SUMP | Team leader |
| | Mogoreanu Nicolai, TUM | |
| | Muravschi-Lişman Aliona, SUM | |
| | Sadovei Nicolai, SUM | |
| | Teaca Aliona, AESM | |
| | Novac Tatiana, SUMP | |
| | Sava Turita, AESM | |
| | Lazar Angela, SUC | |
| | Pojar Daniela, SUB | Drafted the study |
| | Cara Maria, CSU | |
| | Babara Elena, SUMP | Interpreter |
| Academic Autonomy | Todos Petru, TUM | Team leader/Drafted the study |
| | Zacon Eugeniu, SAUM | |
| | Solcan Angela, AESM | |
| | Balanici Alexandru, SUB | |
| | Chiciuc Andrei, TUM | |
| | Şaptefraţi Lilian, SUMP | |
| | Negara Corina, SUB | |
| | Priţcan Valentina, SUB | |
| | Guvir Stela, TUM | Interpreter |

**Note**: AESM: Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova; CSU: Comrat State University; SAUM: State Agrarian University of Moldova; SUB: State University of Balti "Alecu Russo"; SUC: State University of Cahul "Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu"; SUM: State University of Moldova; SUMP: State University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Nicolae Testemitanu"; TUM: Technical University of Moldova

The above iteration process is reflected in the process of submission of the WP2 first drafts in 2013 that were later revised in spring 2014, with final drafts being submitted in early summer 2014. During this process (in 2013), feedback on the early drafts of the Evaluation Studies was sought from internal and external experts (Table 2) and incorporated in the revised versions.

Table 2: The team of internal and external experts

|  | Affiliation | Country |
|---|---|---|
| **Internal experts** | | |
| Victor Kordas | Royal Institute of Technology | Sweden |
| Marin Marinov | University of Gloucestershire | UK |
| Birute Mikulskiene | Mykolas Romeris University | Lithuania |
| Stefan-Gheorghe Pentiuc | University of Suceava Stefan cel Mare | Romania |
| Olav J. Sorensen | Aalborg University | Denmark |
| Nadejda Velisco | Ministry of Education | Moldova |
| **External Experts** | | |
| Mihail Popescu | Polytechnic University of Bucharest | Romania |
| John Reilly | University of Kent | UK |

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 A holistic view of the institutional autonomy of universities

To evaluate the current situation of university autonomy in Moldova, a research methodology was developed. A starting point in this process was the institutional autonomy framework that was developed at the beginning of the project (Figure 1). In addition to 4 types of autonomy as defined by Lisbon declaration, we have added five interfaces that characterize external and internal points of interaction between modern universities and their key stakeholders. These interfaces are: government – university; university management – university staff; university staff – students; university – businesses; and university – internationalization.

*Government – university interface* explores inter alia state policies towards higher-education; role of central and regional governments in issuing regulations for the structure of university governance; governance vs. management: are governance structures fit for purpose, effective, accountable (to whom); advocacy of higher education institutions; need and role of accreditation; models of financing research and teaching; accountability and public responsibility; implications for the mission of an university; understanding the interface vs. practicing the interface.

*University management – university staff interface* explores inter alia governance and management models of a modern university; power sharing in strategic and operational decision making; implications of top-down, bottom-up or flat organization; incentive and evaluation mechanisms; external vs. internal appointment and promotion policies; staff mobility; research, teaching, and contribution to community vs. university mission;

understanding the interface vs. practicing the interface; accountability and public responsibility.


Figure 1: Institutional autonomy framework
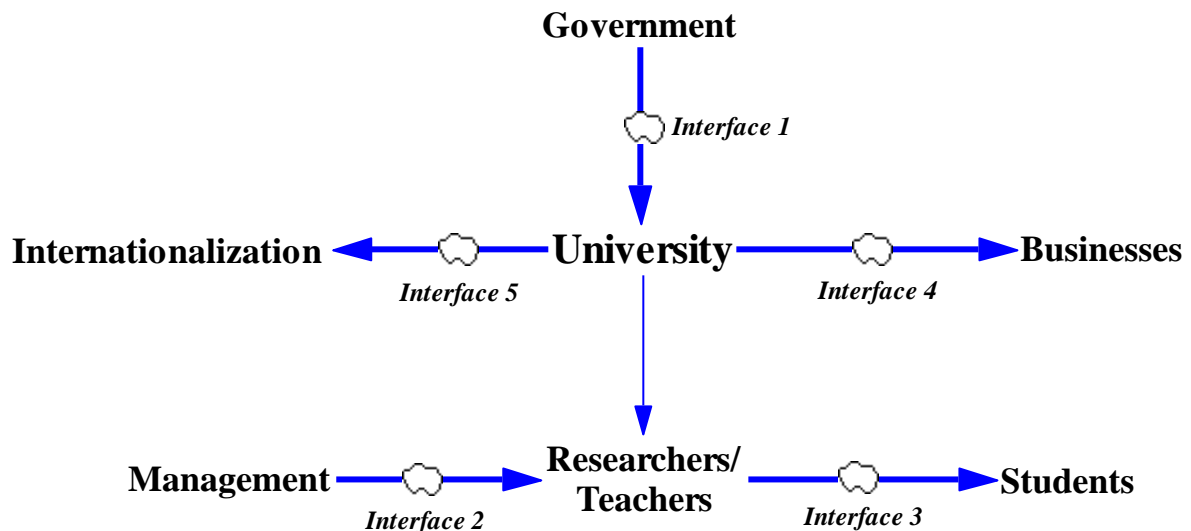


*University staff – students interface* explores inter alia students' role in university governance and management, as well as in learning and  teaching with the new learner centred paradigm and research processes; staff as teachers vs. staff as mentors; changing the mind set about the students; models of student admissions (e.g., linked to overall higher-education state policies); students' evaluation models; students' mobility; problem based learning; understanding the interface vs. practicing the interface; accountability and public responsibility.

*University – businesses interface* explores inter alia businesses' role in university governance and management, as well as in teaching and research processes; models of knowledge transfer (e.g., financing, ownership, spin-outs, intellectual property rights) and knowledge sharing (e.g., staff exchange programs, student internships, promoting entrepreneurship); career development, and innovation; life-long learning; understanding the interface vs. practicing the interface; accountability and public responsibility.

*University – internationalization interface* explores inter alia university internationalization policies; university strategies for internationalization; staff and student mobility; in-ward and out-ward internationalization modes and models; partnership models and their implication for accreditation related to the process of internationalization; compatibility of internationalization and university autonomy; internationalization and university mission; understanding the interface vs. practicing the interface; accountability and public responsibility.

By cross-tabulating the 4 types of university autonomy and 5 university interfaces we arrived at a holistic view of the institutional autonomy of universities, which was the basis of our research methodology (Table 3). As it can be noticed, 20 types of institutional autonomy are defined by this framework. This holistic view of institutional autonomy of universities is based on iterative relationship between autonomy types and interfaces, without preconceived judgements on causal relationships and effects.

Table 3: Methodology framework – a holistic view of university institutional autonomy

|  | Organization Autonomy | Financial Autonomy | Staffing Autonomy | Academic Autonomy |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Interface I** Government – University |  |  |  |  |
| **Interface II** Management – Staff |  |  |  |  |
| **Interface III** Staff – Students |  |  |  |  |
| **Interface IV** University – Businesses |  |  |  |  |
| **Interface V** University – Internationalization |  |  |  |  |

**3.2 Data collection instrument**

Based on the above (methodology) framework, a data collection template was developed (Appendix 1) and internal and external experts contributed to the development of a detailed data collection instrument. For each type of institutional autonomy, the internal and external experts identified a set of questions/issues that in their opinion were critical for understanding or learning about a particular type of institutional autonomy (20 in total). As in any brainstorming exercise, there is no limit on the number and type of questions/issues to be included in each grey box – so the experts were asked to include as many questions/issues as necessary and/or relevant. In developing potential questions/issues, the experts were also asked to take into account depth and breadth of each questions/issues, specificity (rather generality) of the questions/issues, and indicate potential sources of related data.

Upon receiving inputs from the experts, the Project Management team put together a generic data collection instrument per autonomy type that the Task Force teams employed to collect the data. These instruments are available in Appendixes 2 in the Evaluations Reports. The Task Force teams reviewed and analysed over 250 documents; the list of reviewed data is

presented in Appendixes 1 in Evaluation Reports. The electronic copies of reviewed material from Appendixes 1 in the Evaluation Reports are available upon request on the project intranet: http://euniam-moodle.samf.aau.dk/.


## 3.3 Data analysis

To facilitate data analysis, data analysis templates were developed (Tables 4 and 5). First, the Task Force teams reviewed the identified?? external (governmental and ministerial) and internal (university) documents (see Appendixes 1 in Evaluation Reports), aiming to distil the properties and indicators of university autonomy embedded explicitly and implicitly in these documents. In this within-case analysis (Table 4), the teams built on properties and indicators of a type of university autonomy as defined in the generic draft methodology. The list of properties and indicators was extended through a brain-storming exercise. For example, the teams were asked to bring in column 1 all data that emerged from various documents and brainstorming related to organizational autonomy; and if they had doubts about the positioning of a specific property/indicator, the teams were asked to insert it in the table and in the comments/description column provide an argument for including it as part of organizational autonomy.

After understanding how a type of university autonomy is manifested and regulated in Moldova (in the example above - organizational autonomy), the next step was to conduct a cross-case analysis, i.e., to analyse the mutual relationship a type of autonomy (e.g., organizational autonomy) might have on 5 interfaces of the institutional autonomy of universities; a potential relationship and respective impact are presented in Table 5.


Table 4: Evaluation of organizational autonomy – an example

| Properties/indicators | Source (title of the source and citation) | Comments/Description |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Enacting university governance | | Either does not exist or if exists, it does not provide separation of power; this point could be later inserted in Table 3 by expanding on potential relationship and impact |


Table 5: Relationship between organizational autonomy and interfaces – an example

| Interface | Relationship (incl., citations) | Impact |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Government-University | Law on HE regulates: University management (details) | No separation of powers; issues with accountability, conflict of interests, etc. |

## 3.4 Evaluation Studies

Based on the above methodology and data collection and data analysis tools, the Task Force teams put together 4 Evaluation Studies (Appendixes 2-5). The executive summaries of these evaluation studies are presented in Chapter 5; the e-versions of the studies are available on the project website: http://www.euniam.aau.dk/work-packages/wp2/evaluation-reports/.

## 4. HIGHER EDUCATION IN MOLDOVA

### 4.1 The context of higher education

The Republic of Moldova is sandwiched between Romania and Ukraine with approximately three and a half million people. After recession in 2008-2009, Moldova witnessed an increase in its GDP of approximately 35% (steady yearly growth of about 6.4-6.9%) and reached in 2013 a GDP of € 5,972m compared to € 3,892m in 2009 (Table 6). The overall GDP growth was accompanied by a steady increase in GDP per capita. Compared to the previous years, GDP per capita was showing a continuous rise of about 31%, from €1,151 in 2008 to €1,678 in 2013. These positive trends suggest Moldova is slowly recovering from the economic recession.

Higher education is financed approximately at 1.26% of GDP, which is € 75m, and R&D at 0.4% of GDP, which is € 24m. If the funding received by higher education sector increased in terms of absolute numbers from € 53m in 2008 to € 75m in 2013, the share of GDP spent on higher education decreased from 1.44% in 2009 to 1.26% in 2013. The same negative trend is observed in the share of GDP spent on R&D that decreased from 0.6% to 0.4% (Table 6). Policy makers are anticipating an increase in R&D funding to reach a level of 1% in the coming years – a target set in most of the European countries, but yet, hard to achieve.

The emigration trend among economically active population as well as young population is very high and persists. According to the World Bank, in 2012, approximately 25% of the economically active population has left the country. According to the Ministry of Education, 17.7% of young people aged 15-29 migrated abroad in 2010.

As of 2013, the overall number of universities providing higher education is 32, including 19 state and 13 private institutions. However, not all universities received official accreditation. The Moldovan Ministry of Education lists 27 accredited universities in the country, of which 16 are state universities and 11 are private. The number of faculty in 2013 was approximately 5,700, out of which 3,338 are researchers.

The number of students receiving education in Moldovan universities in 2013 was97,285. Out of this total, about 85,000 (c.87%) are enrolled in the 19 public universities. There is one public university in the breakaway region of Transnistria with about 15,000 students and 85 PhDs. Compared to 2008, the student population dropped by more than 15% in 2013This trend is mainly due to the high emigration among the young population – more and more Moldovan students prefer to study for their degrees in other European countries The number

of international students coming to the Republic of Moldova almost doubled within the last six years. However, compared to other EU countries such as Denmark and Sweden where the share of international students is c.11%, the share of international students in Moldova is about 2%.

Table 6: The context of higher education in Moldova, 2008-2013

|  | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Population** (000) | 3,573 | 3,567 | 3,563 | 3,560 | 3,560 | 3,560 |
| **GDP** (€, 000) | 4,115 | 3,892 | 4,381 | 5,030 | 5,645 | 5,972 |
| **GDP per capita** (€) | 1,152 | 1,091 | 1,230 | 1,413 | 1,586 | 1,678 |
| **HE budget** (€, 000) | 53 | 56 | 60 | 65 | 70 | 75 |
| **HE budget** (% GDP) | 1,28% | 1,44% | 1,38% | 1,29% | 1,25% | 1,26% |
| **Research budget** (% GDP; €, 000) | 0,6% | 0,6% | 0,5% | 0,4% | 0,4% | 0,4% |
|  | 26 | 23 | 22 | 21 | 23 | 24 |
| **Number of universities** (total) | 31 | 33 | 33 | 34 | 34 | 32 |
| Public | 17 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 19 |
| Private | 14 | 14 | 14 | 15 | 15 | 13 |
| **Research institutes** (within Academy of Sciences) | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 31 | 31 |
| **Number of students** (total) | 114,865 | 109,892 | 107,813 | 103,956 | 102,458 | 97,285 |
| Cycle I | 95,480 | 93,404 | 90,702 | 85,345 | 82,819 | 78,049 |
| Cycle II | 5,242 | 10,973 | 12,855 | 14,438 | 15,455 | 15,098 |
| Integrated studies | 4,157 | 4,106 | 4,186 | 4,173 | 4,184 | 4,138 |
| Before adhering to Bologna | 9,986 | 1,409 | 70 | - | - | - |
| **International students** | 1,219 | 1300 | 1,372 | 1,632 | 2,028 | 2,138 |
| **Graduates** | 29,614 | 26,611 | 28,408 | 27,788 | 26,730 | 24,848 |
| **Doctoral students** | 1,574 | 1,601 | 1,550 | 1,556 | 1,485 | 1,522 |
| **Number of faculty** | 6,415 | 6,413 | 6,493 | 6,147 | 6,003 | 5,700 |
| **Cycles of education** | Cycle I: 3-4 years Cycle II: 1,5-2 years Intergraded studies (I+II cycle) for veterinary medicine, pharmaceutical and architecture domain: 5-6 years Doctoral studies: 3 years | | | | | |

Source: World Bank, 2014; National Bureau of Statistics, 2013; Ministry of Education, 2014

Moldova joined the Bologna process in 2005 and by 2011 had restructured its higher education system, primarily in the first two cycles. Today higher education programs are

delivered on the three cycles. Full time undergraduate courses last 3 to 4 years (180 – 240 ECTS); the number of students enrolled in the first cycle of higher education in 2013 was 78,049. Master degree studies last from 1 to 2 years (60 – 120 ECTS); the number of students at this level in 2013 was 15,098 (c.16%). Doctoral studies in the Republic of Moldova last from three to four years; the number of doctoral students in 2013 was 1,522 (c.1.6%). There are some programs from the previous system, such as integrated 6-year programs; 4,138 students were enrolled in such programs in 2013.

## 4.2 The Structure of the Higher Education Sector

The higher education and research sectors in Moldova are organized in three levels: political, policy and operational (Figure 2). At the political level, the Parliament and the Government provide political and financial support to the higher education sector. At the same, they are founders of public higher education institutions. The policy level coordinates funding and policy initiatives. The main player at this level is the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance. Another player is the Academy of Sciences of Moldova (ASM) it coordinates all research and innovation policies and public funding for research. The operational level is represented by R&D institutes under the ASM, the accredited public and private universities and a few private companies that perform research activities.

Moldova's R&D system is highly centralized, with the Moldovan Academy of Sciences (ASM) being the key player, with conflict of interests. That is, ASM fulfils the functions similar to that of a ministry of science, being the main policy-making institution, distributing research funding while at the same time being the recipient of that funding. The head of ASM is a member-by-appointment of the Government. The Moldovan Government is responsible for approving the R&D budget, and the Moldovan Parliament approves laws for R&D and innovation as well as the national scientific priorities. Some other ministries (for example, Ministry of Environment) take part in R&D policy making, but their role is minor compared to ASM.

The system of Higher Education is mainly coordinated by the Ministry of Education (overseeing 19 public and 13 private universities). However, the specialised universities are affiliated to other ministries, e.g., the State Agrarian University also reports to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry, and the State University of Medicine and Pharmacy - to the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Economy coordinates private sector research and innovation in the country.

ASM is the main policy implementation body for research. Together with its executive body, the Supreme Council for science and Technological Development (SCSTD), ASM manages all public R&D and innovation programs. Two agencies of ASM have a function of managing the funding programs: the Agency for Innovation and Technology Transfer (AITT) is responsible for innovation funding and the Centre for Fundamental and Applied Research Funding (CFCFA) takes care of public funding. Most of the R&D programs – about 77%– are performed by the research institutes of ASM, whereas R&D performed by universities and

businesses is significantly less, about 11.6% and 11.3% respectively (Erawatch, 2014). The National Council for Accreditation and Attestation (NCAA), an institution of ASM, is responsible <u>only</u> for the accreditation of science activities (currently there is no agency that accredits educational programs). The government research sector being composed mostly by the 15 institutes of the Academy of Sciences, all of them are accredited for the science performing. At the same time from 32 universities, only 17 universities, 13 of which are state (42%), have been accredited for science activities. A number of universities have not gone through the science accreditation process because they are not involved in research of any kind or their research output does not meet accreditation criteria.

Figure 2: The structure Moldovan Higher Education and Research sector
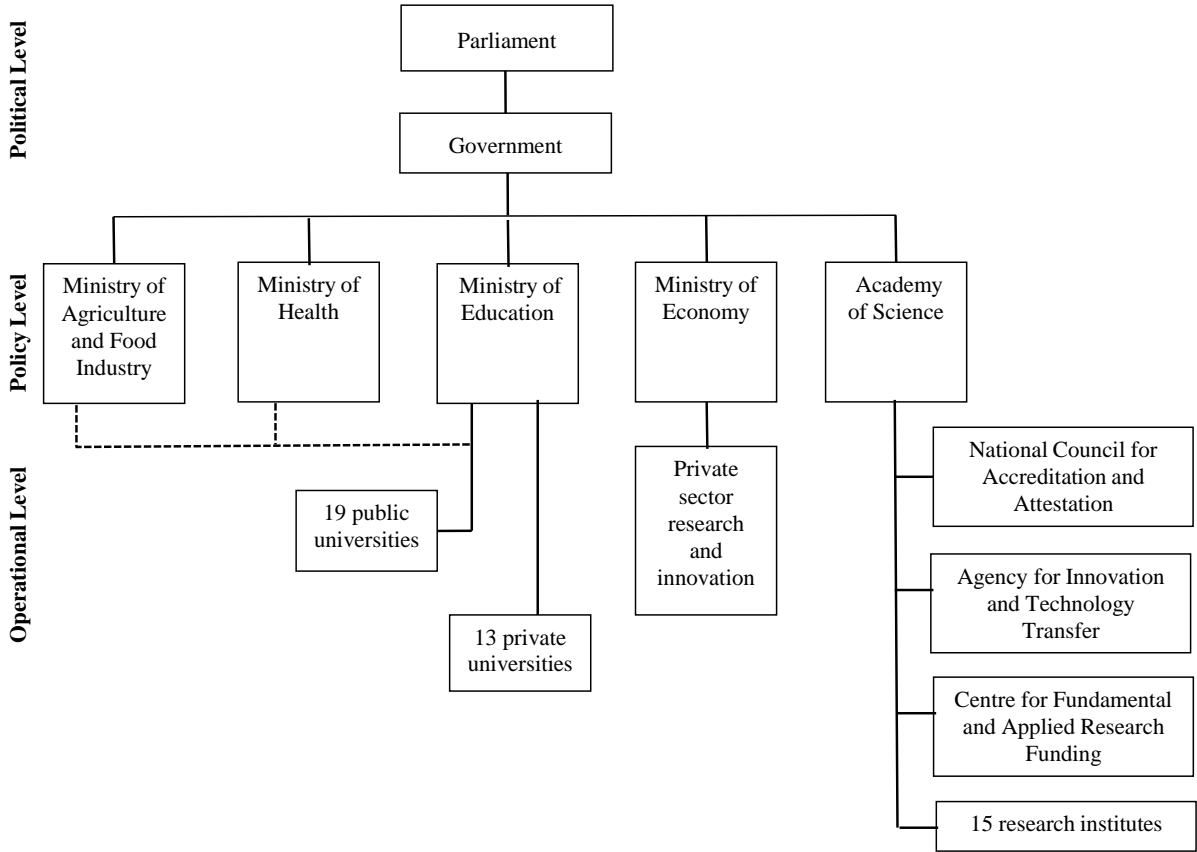


## 4.3 The Education System

The education system in Moldova consists of preschool, primary, secondary, post-secondary and higher education (Figure 3). These levels correspond with the major levels identified by the international Standard Classification of Education (ISCED, 1997). Preschool education is for children up to the age of seven years. Primary education is between grades one through four and typically involves children between the ages of 7-11. Secondary education falls into

two tracks: general and vocational. General secondary education from grades 5-9 is called gymnasium, and the level of grades 10-12 is called lyceum. The students who obtained general higher education certificates can continue in higher education institutions.

Figure 3: Education System in the Republic of Moldova
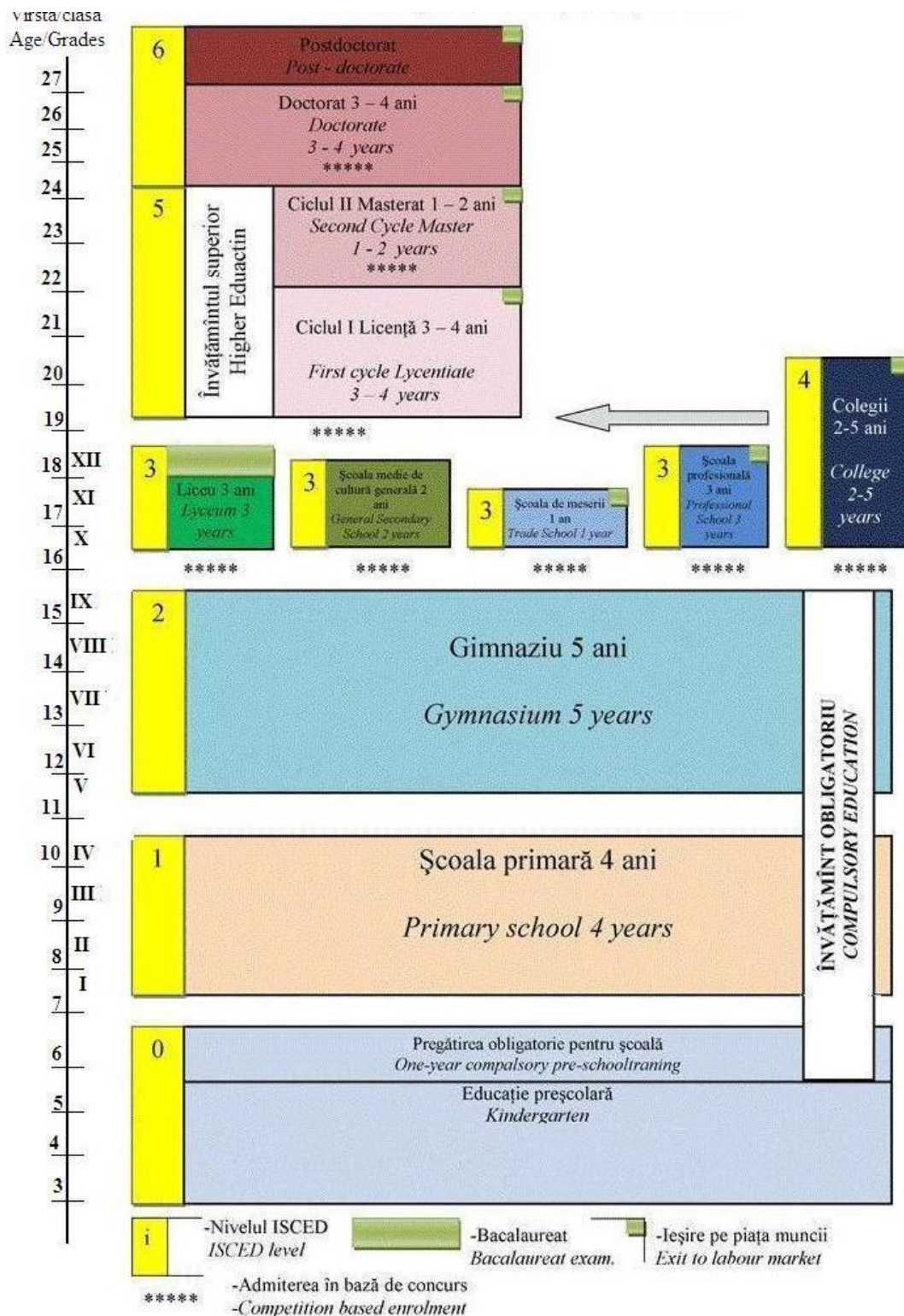
The vocational track of secondary education is represented by the professional lyceum and professional school. There are a number of post-secondary studies (technical/vocational type). These programs are taught at colleges and are not referred to as higher education. The duration of the study programs varies between two to five years, depending on the level at which the students were admitted to college. Courses lead to qualifications at college degree level; graduates receive the degree of vocational education. Higher education is represented by university education. Universities traditionally awarded Diplomas, but from2005 – after joining the Bologna process, they started to award Bachelor and Master degrees to comply with the international standards.

Diplomas, qualifications or certificates are awarded for completion of the secondary education programs. They are specific for different tracks of education (academic and vocational). Upper secondary education can last either three or four years and be certified by the Diploma de Bacalaureat or Atestat de Maturitate in the Transnistria region (Atestat de Maturitate is a necessary precondition for entering the system of higher education in Transnitria region that does not adhere to the Bologna process). To be accepted into universities that adhere to the Bologna process, the students from Transnistria take a one year top-up program that finishes with the Diploma de Bacalaureat. There are schools of general secondary education and vocational schools that award leaving certificates and professional certificates, which do not provide access to the system of higher education. Schools are accredited by the Agency for School Accreditation.

After joining Bologna in 2005, the Law on Education was amended to incorporate the basic Bologna Principles; a two-cycle system of higher education has been introduced. It should be mentioned that doctoral programs have not yet been changed in the light of the Bologna process. Doctoral studies are still regulated by the Science and Innovation Code and the Law on Education (TEMPUS, 2012).

Higher education studies consist of two major cycles of education: first cycle, that last from three to four years and master study that lasts from 1 to 2 years. The duration of studies depends on the field of education. The Diploma de Licenţă is awarded for the first cycle; it gives access to the second cycle, master degree. The Diploma de Master is awarded for the second cycle study and gives access to doctoral study. There are integrated studies such as medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, pharmacy and architecture that last from five to six years. The diploma awarded has the same level as master studies.

The new (2014) Code of Education that is in the Parliament for voting provides three levels of higher education. However, doctoral study retains two stages: Doctor and Doctor Habilitat. Doctoral programmes last from three to four years, and are completed by the public defence of an original research work (thesis). Doctor Habilitat represents the highest scientific degree conferred in all fields, it is awarded on the basis of the original contribution to a particular field and also requires a public defence of the doctor habilitate thesis.

Since the late 1990s, private education as an alternative to state education has developed in Moldova. Today the private sector is growing, there are 13 private universities. These private universities follow the regulations established by the Ministry of Education and a few of them have already passed the process of state accreditation.

The entrance procedures are common for all higher education institutions in Moldova. The government establishes and approves the number of places available for all the education tracks at each state university. The competition for admission is on the basis of the grades achieved during the secondary education and at the end of secondary education (Bacalaureat exams). Depending on the score obtained, applicants can be enrolled either for state-funded places or for places with tuition fees; about one third of students are financed by the state, the rest pay tuition fees (self-financed) (TEMPUS, 2012).

## 5. SUMMARIES OF EVALUATION STUDIES

### 5.1 Organizational Autonomy

The aim of the study is to evaluate the current situation of organizational autonomy in Moldovan universities. For the purpose of this study organizational autonomy is defined as university's freedom to determine its own structure, governance, and relations of subordination and responsibility, since no explicit definition of organizational autonomy is provided in national laws and regulations. We extended the scope of the study by analysing the relationship of organizational autonomy with five interfaces that characterize the internal and external points of interaction between modern universities and key stakeholders. These interfaces are: Government–University; University Management–University Staff; University Staff–Students; University–Business, and University–Internationalization.

Following a developed research methodology, unobtrusive data in form of laws regulating directly or indirectly the higher education system in Moldova, governmental and ministerial decrees, university chapters and organizational structures, and education records were collected and analysed. A total number of 30 documents have been analysed, adding up to approximately 1400 pages.

The analysis of the data suggests that universities in Moldova have relative organizational autonomy in determining their structures, working relationships between and within faculties and departments, as well as in distributing responsibilities. A number of issues have been identified in relation to organizational autonomy (although some of the issues have been already partly addressed by the new Education Code that was submitted by the Government to the Parliament for approval.

The key issue relates to the extant conflict of interests that exist in the governance of universities. There is no separation of power between the university board (currently this function is fulfilled by a Senate) and university management. Currently, a Rector is the Chair of the Senate; s/he is elected by the Senate; and at the same time manages the university. The other issue relates to the size and the composition of the Senate. The large size of a Senate,

sometimes consisting of 100 people and more, makes the senate inefficient and ineffective. A Senate is elected by the entire university community by open or secret vote consisting of teaching and scientific staff, students, doctoral students and auxiliary staff of the university. The rector, vice-rectors, deans and heads of academic subdivisions are members of a Senate by virtue of their functions.

Recently (in 2013), students have been invited to participate more actively in Senate activities (as well as at the faculty and department levels), but students' involvement is rather weak, either due to staff reactance to embrace student participation or students' lack of initiative or both. Outside stakeholders are not represented in the Senate (Board), e.g., business representatives, incl., national and international.

The Ministry of Education still plays a role in determining the organizational structure of universities; it approves or confirms university organizational structures, as well as the establishment, restructuring and suspension of faculties. In addition, the State University of Medicine and Pharmacy and State Agrarian University receive approval of their organizational structures from the respective ministries, of Health and of Agriculture and Food Industry. The Ministry of Education regulates the election procedures of the Senate, rectors, deans and deans of academic departments. It proposes newly elected Rectors (by the Senate) to the Government for confirmation.

The other emergent issues relate to the election of rectors. Under the current legislation, there is no limit on the number of terms (mandates) the same person may occupy the rector's office. The vacancy for rector's position is available only for Moldovan citizens.

The other key issue relates to the outdated Law on Education adopted in 1995 that undertook? a large number of alterations. A new Code of Education has been developed by the Government and submitted to the Parliament for approval; this new Code of Education is meant to replace the Law on Education of 1995.

Another issue relates to how universities are founded. There is a high risk of political influence on the establishment, restructuring or liquidation of universities. The Ministry of Education is the founder of universities, makes proposal on establishment, restructuring or liquidation to the Government that approves it, the President of the Republic of Moldova promulgates the decision, thus having a final say.

A number of issues emerged at the university-business interface. Although universities are free to engage in academic collaboration with businesses, these relationships are often limited to offering students internships, and even in this field many businesses are reluctant to take students as interns and most internships are just formalities, barring the students from actual work and/or problem solving.

At the university-internationalization interface, it emerged? that although universities are theoretically free to seek international partners, collaboration agreements with universities and other international organizations must be coordinated with the Ministry of Education in order to obtain its permission to sign respective documents. It also emerged?, that there is no law

that regulates the recruitment of foreign students, and define the rights and responsibilities of the universities; currently, in relation to the recruitment of foreign students, universities are treated in the same way as economic agents that employ foreign.

## 5.2 Financial Autonomy

The aim of the study is to evaluate the current situation of financial autonomy in Moldova. In 2012 the Government issued a decree (GD 983, 2012) that aimed to grant financial autonomy to Moldovan universities. The Government decree came into effect in January 1, 2013, with a transitional period of two years. The analysis of current situation was conducted for two periods: before (period 1) and after (period 2) January 1, 2013. Hence, two sets of findings are reported in the study for each period respectively. The analysis of data from period 1 is more comprehensive as it is based on a large number of laws, regulations and norms, some of which remained valid after January 1, 2013. As it may be expected, data available for analysis from period 2 was scarce; it was largely based on few recent normative acts and on new personal and institutional activities.

Following a developed research methodology, unobtrusive data in form of laws regulating directly or indirectly the higher education system in Moldova, governmental and ministerial decrees, university chapters and organizational structures, and education records were collected and analysed. A total number of 38 documents have been analysed, adding up to approximately 2000 pages.

According to the Government Decree (GD 983, 2012, Article 6), financial autonomy is defined as "the right of institution to organize its activity independently and to self-manage financially, to perform its work without any ideological, political or religious interference, to take a number of competences and duties in accordance with national strategic options and guidelines for the development of higher and postgraduate education, as well as of research, development and innovation areas, as established by law and policy documents". This definition of financial autonomy was enhanced for purposes of this study by using the definition provided by Estermann and Nokkala (2009) and Estermann, Nokkala, and Steinel (2011) whereby financial autonomy is seen as the capacity of universities to: accumulate funds and retain surplus budget funds; establish tuition fees; borrow money from financial markets; invest in financial products; issue shares and bonds; and have land and buildings in ownership. We further extended the scope of the study by analysing the relationship of financial autonomy with five interfaces that characterize the internal and external points of interaction between modern universities and key stakeholders. These interfaces are: Government–University; University Management–University Staff; University Staff–Students; University–Business, and University–Internationalization.

As a result of granting relative financial autonomy to universities, a number of benefits have emerged. Universities now have the right and freedom to accumulate reserves, transfer funds from one year to another and distribute their financial resources internally as per accountability, quality assurance of education, and compliance with legislation principles.

Funding sources have been diversified, reducing dependence on limited public funding. At the same time, universities were allowed to open bank accounts so that the management of financial resources is conducted via bank accounts and not the Treasury.

A number of key issues could be identified as a result of data analysis. Although universities have in principle freedom in setting their tuition fees, they are required to coordinate these fees with the Minister of Education. Despite the fact that tuition fees do not cover actual (full) costs, since 2008, the Minister has not allowed any changes in tuition fees. The same applies to accommodation fees that do not cover actual accommodation costs.

Funding that comes from the state (cost per student) does not cover full costs. A new methodology is to be implemented to allocate budgetary resources per student rather than per expenditure items. But this methodology is far from perfect. The methodology is based on the principle introduced by the Government Decree (GD 983, 2012) which is to become the basis of annual funding formula: money follows the student. It aims inter alia to allow the students to choose between universities during their studies, to encourage competition between the universities and to enhance the quality of education. Related methodology is yet to be developed.

The size of intake every year is determined by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family and the Ministry of Finance that adjusts the number of students to the financial possibilities of the state, taking into account the state's needs in various professions, number of graduates, and cost per student. The basis and criteria which the Ministry of Education uses to distribute the places among each public university is non-transparent. If the Ministry allocates places and if students 'vote with their feet' and decide that they want to go en masse to a particular university then the places do not get re-allocated? Moreover, although students are now free to apply to as many universities as they like, after enrolment the students cannot move to another university on the same state financing conditions – they have to pay themselves for the education in that new university.

Another key, very important issue refers to research funding. Universities do not receive funding for research directly from the Ministry of Education. Historically (from the Soviet times), universities were seen only as teaching, education institutions, leaving research to the Academy of Science. This situation has not changed. Research funding is allocated to universities by the Academy of Science that is also a recipient of such research funding which is clearly a situation of conflict of interest.

Another issue refers to the lack of flexibility in determining entrepreneurial services that could be offered by universities. As of today, such services could only be performed by Government decision.

**5.3 HR Autonomy**

The aim of the study is to evaluate the current situation of human resource (HR) autonomy in Moldova. HR autonomy is defined as the right of a university to develop and implement its

own recruitment, salary and promotion strategies and operating procedures. HR autonomy is supported by the following mechanisms: hiring, monitoring, motivation, and flexibility.

Hiring mechanisms involve developing and implementing unified procedures for hiring academic (teaching and research) and administrative (technical) staff. Monitoring mechanisms involve a periodic and permanent evaluation of academic staff performance, ensuring healthy competition, personalized accountability and a customized approach to one's work in line with higher education institutions objectives. Motivation mechanisms involve applying clear and non-discriminatory incentives procedures for academic (and technical) staff, as well as sanctions. Flexibility mechanisms involve setting efficient procedures for determining the optimal number of academic and technical units, and applying employee layoffs as a university development measure.

The scope of the study was extended by analysing the relationship of HR autonomy with five interfaces that characterize the internal and external points of interaction between modern universities and key stakeholders. These interfaces are: Government–University; University Management–University Staff; University Staff–Students; University–Business, and University–Internationalization.

Following a developed research methodology, unobtrusive data in form of laws regulating directly or indirectly the higher education system in Moldova, governmental and ministerial decrees, university chapters and organizational structures, and education records were collected and analysed. A total number of 26 documents have been analysed, adding up to approximately 1500 pages.

The analysis of the current situation of HR autonomy in higher education suggests that the involvement of the state in regulating HR activities in universities is high, Laws and regulations governing labour relations are of a general nature (and outdated), and do not accommodate the specifics of activities within universities.

The introduction of financial autonomy in January 2013 had a snowball effect on HR autonomy: universities became more autonomous in establishing their own HR policies and regulations. Universities began adjusting their HR policies and regulations to new realities by developing and implementing new payment/salary mechanisms, incl. new performance indicators. However the data suggest that universities are very limited in deciding on the levels of remuneration, although there is flexibility in setting the incentive payments and payments for awards.

The Data further suggest that there is a lack of basic indicators for wage differentiation and of performance indicators based on well-defined and transparent criteria such as professionalism, continuous development, and organizational, functional and personal capacity. This deficiency has an impact on the ability to decide on the termination of employment contracts. Separate hire for teaching and research adds to the complexity of academic staff evaluation.

The lack of well-defined and transparent performance indicators has an impact on the relationship between the academic staff and the students. How do students evaluate staff,

based on what criteria? And how the evaluation results are taken into account by the university management and what actions are taken to enhance or address the situation? Is there a fit between evaluation, performance and finance? Data suggest that these are still burning questions that are yet to be answered.


## 5.4 Academic Autonomy

The aim of the study is to evaluate the current situation of academic autonomy in Moldova. As national laws and regulations do not provide a definition of academic autonomy, for the purpose of this study academic autonomy is defined as university's freedom to decide on degree, curriculum and methods of teaching, deciding on areas, scope, aims and methods of research. The scope of the study was extended by analysing the relationship of academic autonomy with five interfaces that characterize the internal and external points of interaction between modern universities and key stakeholders. These interfaces are: Government–University; University Management–University Staff; University Staff–Students; University–Business, and University–Internationalization.

Following a developed research methodology, unobtrusive data in form of laws regulating directly or indirectly the higher education system in Moldova, governmental and ministerial decrees, university chapters and organizational structures, and education records were collected and analysed. A total number of 50 documents have been analysed, adding up to approximately 3000 pages.

Data analysis revealed that universities enjoy a fairly large amount of academic autonomy when it comes to launching or terminating Bachelor's, Master's and PhD programmes; deciding on the type and form of examination and admission criteria; concluding student exchange and student mobility agreements; defining the needs and structure of student career support; and planning the content and the organization of the educational process.

Data further point to a number of issues at the level of academic autonomy. The process of authorising new BSc programmes (Cycle I) by the Ministry of Education is complex and cumbersome. The Government also sets quotas for admissions among the budgets places ??for the fee based studies for all cycles . Although formally established, doctoral schools cannot establish PhD study programmes to enhance institutional research capacity. The mobility of students at all levels is stifled by the lack of knowledge of foreign languages. The introduction and promotion of modern studies are inhibited by the outdated Occupational Framework that details professional occupations for all three cycles: Bachelor, Master and PhD.

Being a highly centralized system, Moldovan Higher Education and R&D sector is not very successful in overcoming the challenge of knowledge sharing between universities, research institutes and business enterprises. Research in universities is traditionally weaker than in the academy and research institute sector. Limited financial and human recourses, poor infrastructure and weak incentives for individual researchers make development of knowledge

sharing problematic. At the university level, there is no clear separation of teaching and research workloads. In relation to the latter, there are no formal planning, evaluation, funding and incentives mechanisms for research activities of the academic staff. This is due to the fact that universities are seen by policy makers as teaching institutions with no or limited research attributes and adequate funding.

## 6. DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS AND IMPACT

WP2 commenced at the same time that the Government of Moldova made changes to the financial autonomy of universities, allowing them inter alia to open bank accounts in a bank of their choosing, and keep and transfer the balance for the next reporting year (GD 983, 2012). At the same time, the Ministry of Education together with the HE community started working on the Code of Education that was approved by the Government in June 2014, yet to be voted in the parliament (http://edu.md/ro/evenimentele-saptaminii/codul-educa-iei-a-fost-aprobat-de-guvern-15969/). The draft of the Code of Education was heavily debated with lots of inputs from rectors, vice-rectors and heads of faculties and departments who took part in various EUniAM project activities. For example, after study visits to EU Universities vice minister of Education, rectors and vice rectors have changed their opinion regarding the structure of the university Governance and Management, Council and Senate, the role of the students in the university life and initiated debates at the Rectors Council. Another example is when a Vice Minister proposed to use the Danish approach for the calculation of the cost per student that state finances the universities.

Another event that contributed to the current debate on university in Moldova and organized by the EUniAM project was the International Conference on "A Quest to (Re)define University Autonomy" (http://www.euniam.aau.dk/international-conference/). Just over 35 speakers, of which 17 from EU countries and 100 local attendees took part in the conference. A number of issues presented and discussed during the conference influenced the current debate on university autonomy. For example, separation of power and conflict of interests in the governance and management of universities; threats coming from internationalization and globalization activities in higher education; need to have a modern university with a mission to teach, research, and knowledge transfer and not just university that teaches; external funding and internal funding sources and allocations; and understanding the role of the university in society.

## 7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

As in any other context, maybe in emerging economies to a greater extent, institutional university autonomy is a 'moving target', constantly changing. The experience of the EUniAM Task Force teams during the evaluation period is no exception. Data collected in 2013 for the purpose of WP2 have changed dramatically since then and the Task Force teams made everything possible to reflect those changes in the revised reports that they drafted in

2014. At the same time, the findings and results of the evaluation studies contributed to a great extant, directly and indirectly, to the current debate on university autonomy legislation in Moldova. In WP4, the findings and results of these evaluation studies will be used together with findings and results of benchmark analysis from WP3 to develop legislative proposals on enhanced institutional university autonomy in Moldova.

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## APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Data collection template

| Interfaces | Organizational autonomy |
|---|---|
| Government - University | |
| Management – Staff | |
| Staff – Students | |
| University – Businesses | |
| University – Internationalization | |

| Interfaces | Financial autonomy |
|---|---|
| Government - University | |
| Management – Staff | |
| Staff – Students | |
| University – Businesses | |
| University – Internationalization | |

| Interfaces | Staffing autonomy |
|---|---|
| Government - University | |
| Management – Staff | |
| Staff – Students | |
| University – Businesses | |
| University – Internationalization | |

| Interfaces | Academic autonomy |
|---|---|
| Government - University | |
| Management – Staff | |
| Staff – Students | |
| University – Businesses | |
| University – Internationalization | |

Appendix 2: Evaluation of Existing Situation of <u>Organizational</u> Autonomy

# Evaluation of Existing Situation of <u>Organizational Autonomy</u> in Moldova

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Revised:  April-May 2014

Final draft: June 2014

**Chisinau**

Available on: http://www.euniam.aau.dk/work-packages/wp2/evaluation-reports/

Appendix 3: Evaluation of Existing Situation of Financial Autonomy

# Evaluation of Existing Situation of

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**Enhancing the University Autonomy in Moldova (EUniAM)**

www.euniam.aau.dk

# Evaluation of Existing Situation of

# <u>Human Resource Autonomy</u>

# in Moldova

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Appendix 5: Evaluation of Existing Situation of <u>Academic</u> Autonomy

# Evaluation of Existing Situation of

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# in Moldova

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