Experience report on the study visit to Vilnius, Lithuania
10-14 June, 2013
Svetlana Barbalat, Cahul State University „B. P. Hasdeu"
"Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova" project

The visit to Lithuania took place on June 10-14, 2013. The main purpose of this visit was to acquire experience from Lithuanian higher education institutions in terms of the existing system of university autonomy and academic governance.

During the 5 days we visited Mykolo Romerio University, Vilnius University, Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA), Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SCVC), Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology (MITA), Research Council of Lithuania, Ministry of Education and Science and the historical center Vilnius University Library.

These visits were useful for us because the discussions were focused on the current situation, functioning, analysis of perspectives of state higher education institutions in terms of financial autonomy. Meanwhile, there were specified some points related to the management, study programmes, research, practical implementation of the projects, academic mobility.

Further, I would like to mention several aspects that are worth implementing in the Republic of Moldova.

The admission committee works in a centralized way based on the national electronic register which includes the levels of education with students' average grades for all disciplines studied over the years including the final examination to which different coefficients are applied. The candidates submit the documents electronically to the specialized admission agency by filling in the blanks of the proposed form with the necessary information and also they have the possibility to choose three specialties. Waiting for the voucher is also a positive moment, which excludes the human factor in the process.

The process of submitting the documents lasts up to a certain date, and then the next day there is the automatic distribution of candidates according to the rating of universities. Thus, the candidate has the opportunity to examine and decide independently his/her choices by sending a message on the website of the Admission Committee.

Usually, only those candidates who submit their original documents are considered enrolled. In the Republic of Moldova there are created admission committees in each institution during the admission competition, which leads to enormous additional expenses (this committee activates more than a month and about 20 people are employed).

It would be rational to take the example of the Lithuanian educational system and to implement a similar process in Moldova, which will create a lot of advantages such as:

- Efficiency of funds' use;

- Unemployment of human resources;

- Simplifying the admission procedure for candidates, etc.

During the admission all the candidates should be admitted on equal terms whether they are orphans, under guardianship/curatorship, children from vulnerable families, or children of participants in the war, etc. If these categories of candidates are admitted, they could benefit from material aid or allowances according to the legislation in force. The funding of these material aid and allowances should be done through special centers under the Ministry of Labour.

If the university decides to form groups with a small number of students, these funds should be transferred together with the approved funds to the institution where they will continue their studies.

The teaching load within a department should be modified depending on the movement of students during the academic year and there should be organized as many large lecture classes as possible in order to save money.

The acceptance to transfer students who pay tuition fees in the category of tuition-free students takes place at the end of the academic year when the average grade for the year is higher than 8, replacing him/her with a less successful tuition-free student. The transfer is made on a competitive basis in order to encourage students to improve their average academic success, using the same registry of students' personalization during all the academic years.

The practice of compensating the cost of studies by the state for the students achieving excellent success is accomplished by granting a scholarship or refund the full amount of the contract.

There is also a flexible system of loans for studies, in some cases without reimbursement.

Involvement in as many international projects as possible as well as winning the support of structural funding and grants are necessary actions in order to improve the material and technical base, infrastructure and development of new study programmes.

Evaluation and Accreditation of institutions should be carried out by the National Agency consisting of the members of the Ministry of Education by centralized means, structural funds, projects and it should not be funded by the institution that is subject to accreditation.

The activity of the Evaluation and Accreditation Committee (department) shall be subject to external experts review.

The Republic of Moldova is an agricultural country, which needs Government support and introduction of the State Order to approve additional strategic study programmes in order to create favourable conditions and attract candidates to the specialities necessary for the mentioned regions.

Due to this support, there will be a mobilization of proposed ideas in order to achieve qualitative and quantitative improvement of the study process, stop the migration of young people from the south of the country through job offers and enhance the demographic change of specialists in all areas of the national economy.

We are a young institution involving active young specialists with successful ideas and proposals leading to positive radical changes and modernization of the educational process.

In conclusion, I would like to mention that the main objective of this visit - identifying methods of operation of higher education institutions in terms of financial autonomy - was achieved. The program including the visit to various important institutions from Vilnius was well organized, with a beneficial effect in identifying the operating conditions of universities in terms of financial autonomy.

I express sincere gratitude to EUNIAM project coordinator, Mr. Romeo Turcan, PhD, Assoc. Prof., International Business and Entrepreneurship, University of Aalborg, Denmark, and to the national coordinator, Ms. Larisa Bugaian, Doct. Hab., Prof., Vice Rector for MA and PhD activity, TUM.

Experience report on the study visit to Vilnius, Lithuania
10-14 June, 2013
Gheorghe Cimpoies, State Agrarian University of Moldova
"Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova" project

As a result of visiting universities and other organizations as well as studying the reports and presentations of their collaborators and also due to the discussions we had, the following suggestions could be recommended:

- Vilnius University was founded in 1579. At present, it consists of 12 faculties, 7 institutes, 4 study and research centers. About 22,000 students study at the University, including about 16,000 in the 1st Cycle, more than 4,000 in the 2nd Cycle and approx. 1,000 in the 3rd Cycle in the following areas: social sciences (39%); humanitarian sciences (23%), physical sciences (21%), biomedical sciences (14%) and technological sciences (3%). It is important to mention that about 700 students from different countries are enrolled in the university. Also, there is a very qualified academic staff – out of 1,347 teachers there are 238 Professors, 72 Doctor Habilitatus, 493 Associate Professors and 296 PhDs. The University budget is approx. 80 million EUR, of which only 15.2 % are from tuition fees. I was impressed by the University library, which was founded in 1570 and is the oldest among the libraries of the Baltic Sea countries. One of the library buildings, recently constructed, is possibly the most modern in Europe;

- Mykolo Romerio University was founded in 2004 as a result of the University of Law reorganization. The University consists of 6 faculties (law, economics and financial management, policy and management, computer science, social policy and public security) and a humanistic sciences institute, the total number is about 20,000 students, including more than 12,000 in the 1st Cycle, about 7,000 in the 2nd Cycle and 160 in doctoral studies. The university offers 31 specialities for the 1st Cycle, 73 specializations for the 2nd Cycle and 6 for doctoral studies. At present, over 80% of university's study programmes have international accreditation. It is important to note that the University is focused on establishing joint study programmes with other prestigious universities. Also we should mention the tendency to promote the entrepreneurship in all study programmes (specialities).

- Higher education in Lithuania is a national priority. 47% of the population has higher education. At present there are 23 universities, including 14 state and 9 private and 23 colleges, including 13 state and 10 private, where more than 200 thousand students are enrolled. The colleges in Lithuania differ from our colleges and from the university colleges in other countries. They have the status of higher education institution providing mostly practical training for students. The difference between the 1st Cycle university graduates and those from colleges consists is the fact that the latter, in order to be admitted to Master's Degree studies, have to pass a compensatory year at the University where they study the basic disciplines. Due to the fact that the share of population with higher education is higher than the EU average, Lithuania aims to improve the quality of the educational system through its

internationalization creating joint study programmes, joint faculties with advanced European universities, as well as through student mobility.

- A fact of interest presents the methodology to elaborate and approve the specialties which means not only their name but also those documents (academic curriculum, staff, technical and material basis, etc.). Each speciality is strictly individual and belongs to a university, unlike our specialties, which are approved by the Parliament and are the same for all universities. Although they are autonomous in elaborating specialties, the approval procedure is quite severe. This is done by an independent organization - Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC), which was established in 1995, but regular evaluation of the study programmes started in 1999. SKVC evaluates the existing and new specialties. Specialty accreditation is based on the external evaluation report, which in its turn is based on the self-evaluation report of the university. SKVC forms a team of local or international experts for external evaluation. External evaluation reports are published on the website of SKVC. Law on research and higher education allows the University to choose SKVC or other quality assurance agency in Europe, but the decision on speciality accreditation is taken only by SKVC. All specialties are accredited at least every six years by the decision of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. All new specialities are accredited for 3 years. I suggest to implement this methodology of study programmes evaluation and accreditation in our country because the existing one does not meet today's requirements. Also, I would like to mention that SKVC is the only institution in Lithuania approved by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education to organize external evaluation and accreditation of higher education institutions. It is important for the Republic of Moldova that the evaluation of universities is done only by experts from other countries as in Lithuania;

- The higher education system in Lithuanian universities is organized into Cycles since 1993, but the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was implemented only in 2012. The 1st cycle lasts 3-4 years and it equals 180-240 ECTS credits. Studies in the 2nd Cycle last 1.5-2.0 years and equal 90 and 120 ECTS respectively. Integrated studies last 5-6 years and equal 300-360 credits. Unlike education in our country, Lithuania has the 3rd Cycle for doctoral studies lasting 3-4 years with a minimum of 30 ECTS credits. The 3rd Cycle will be implemented in the Republic of Moldova too;

- The Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology (MITA) is the public body responsible for innovation policy in the country. It was founded in 2010 in the context of Government approval of the Innovation Strategy for 2010-2020. MITA was founded by the Ministry of Economy in order to promote innovation in partnership with business. MITA has 11 technological parks and 5 centers integrating education, science and business. MITA funds annually applied research and technology transfer in the amount of 10 million EUR. The Agency finances three types of projects: innovation, commercialization of research results and nanotechnologies. It is interesting to note the method of innovative projects funding for which 1 million EUR is allocated. At the beginning the universities offer a list of innovations for implementation to businesses. Businesses study this list and choose the innovations they

need. In order to implement an innovation the business receives a voucher from MITA that is given to the university whose innovation they chose. The maximum value of this voucher is 6,000 EUR to which the business adds 40%. Once the university has implemented the innovation, the business informs MITA, which pays the voucher value to the university. Commercialization projects of research results are destined for those who want to start up a new business. This kind of project can be up to 20,000 EUR to which a co-financing of 5,000 EUR is added. The value of a project related to nanotechnologies could be up to 200 thousand EUR. MITA provides free consultation for business and academic representatives to participate in research, development and innovation. There is also the Agency for innovative business financing that will activate until 2014, then it will merge with MITA;

- Research Council of Lithuania was founded in 1991 by the Seimas and Government, and it was restructured in 2008. It is composed of a committee (Board), two committees of experts and a research foundation. The Board consists of 29 members. Each expert committee is composed of 10 renowned scholars. One of the committees is for social sciences and humanities, and the other for natural sciences and technology. The Research Foundation is responsible for the daily activities of the Council and consists of approx. 80 people. The Board is composed of the president, two vice presidents, who are committee chairmen, a Member of the Parliament, the Government, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance and the Academy of Sciences. The Council is the governing body of science funding and consultation of the Parliament and Government on the issues related to research and education. The main objectives of the Council are: to establish criteria for scientific work assessment, to present proposals on the education development strategy as well as research and development priorities, to implement the EU research program, to fund scientific research etc. Since 2009 the Council increases projects' funding on a competitive basis. In 2011 their share was of 50%. The Council coordinates and provides funding for other scientific activities: promotional resources for Ph.D. students, research activity of students, funding of scientific publications, research visits, etc.

The Council, together with the Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology manages FP7 projects. I think science in Lithuania is not successfully managed. Science is under the Ministry of Education. De facto it can't manage science as the only leverage is the representative of the Ministry in the Board. Moreover, it is not rational to have two bodies: the Council for Research and MITA, which sometimes are superposed (I think the staff far exceeds the one of the ASM). However, it is interesting to note the method of funding and expertise of projects.

- The Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA) is a budgetary institution founded by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2007. 22 people activate here. The main objectives are to monitor, analyze and forecast the development of higher education by 2030 and priorities in scientific research by 2020. The main function of MOSTA is to support the development and implementation of research and higher education policy. As mentioned above, many organizations deal with science, but there is no single

body responsible for the situation in this field. I do not think it is a successful model of science management.

- It is expected that the University is managed by the Board which approves strategic development decisions and chooses the Rector of the university. The Constitutional Chart decides that Board's composition will include more members nominated by the university than by the Minister, for example 5:4. Moreover, unlike other countries, Lithuanian universities maintain the Senate which examines questions related to education and science and proposes candidates for Board membership. If Moldovan universities had a Board, it would be advisable to follow the Lithuanian model that is more democratic than in Denmark.

- Lithuanian universities are autonomous in conferring the title of PhD and Professor. But it is premature to implement this decision in our country.

Experience report on the study visit to Vilnius, Lithuania
9-15 June, 2013
Girlea S., Technical University of Moldova
"Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova" project

During the visit to Lithuania, in the period of 9-15 June, there were organized meetings and discussions within two universities – Mykolo Romerio University and Vilnius University, Ministry of Education and Science, MOSTA, SKVC, MITA, etc.

23 universities and 24 colleges activate in Lithuania, of which 9 private universities and 14 private colleges.

During this high-level and well-planned meeting organized at Mykolo Romerio University we got acquainted with the university autonomy, financial autonomy and autonomy of human resources at the university, faculty, chair and department levels. The Education Reform in Lithuania started in 2009 and there was introduced the voucher system for the admission to higher education. This is a budget funding model of higher education. The student is enrolled in the chosen university and then the money follows the student. This method creates a healthy competition.

Lithuania is a country with a high percentage of people with higher education. The specialists with higher education have higher salaries. Consequently, people are very interested in having higher education diplomas. Most young people speak two or more foreign languages. The quality of education is high and university's graduates are recognized in the EU.

The Ministry regulates the number of places funded from the budget and the university is entitled to enroll independently (according to its capacity) the number of students who pay tuitions. The tuition at each cycle is different, but its amount doesn't have to exceed the limits fixed by the law.

The scholarship is awarded by the university decision only to those students who have special merits, students with disabilities or students from socially vulnerable groups. In Moldova, the scholarship is regulated by the Government Decision.

The teaching load is planned as follows: 50% for the didactic activity and 50% for research.

The university budget consists of funding from the budget based on competition, international Structural Funds (in 2012 they had 23 projects – the fund was approximately 700.0 thousand EUR) and paid services (in 2012 – the paid services provided by the university constituted approximately 300.0 thousand EUR).

In Lithuania, before the reform, the state funded only 47% of the cost for a student, while after the reform the funding is doubled. The candidates choose the most viable specialties. The largest number of students is enrolled in technical studies funded from the budget. The most successful universities are those that have implemented university autonomy. Universities are accredited, especially at the stage of creating new study programmes by a

national accreditation and evaluation center. The Ministry requires external evaluation of university activities once in six years. The accredited university receives a positive notification. Each study programme can be accredited for 6 years after a positive notification or for 3 years if it receives a negative notification or it is not accredited at all if it receives negative notifications twice. The educational institution cannot activate without a license.

Mykolo Romerio University is the first university that offers joint study programmes to students. These programmes are offered in cooperation with several European universities. Also, this is the unique university which organizes two admissions – in fall and spring. At present, the university has about 20 thousand students enrolled in the 1st and 2nd cycles.

University autonomy means freedom and without freedom the university can't develop its strategic capacity, avoid the contract with the authorities, internationalization, etc. However, the university seeks for new ways and development possibilities.

Financial autonomy presupposes the right of the university to buy and sell property, while the public property is used by concluding contracts between the university and the state for a period of 20 years.

Proposals for implementation in Moldova's universities:

- *To introduce the on-line registration for admission;*

- *To introduce the voucher system, which would create healthy competition;*

- *To introduce the mandatory internal audit system;*

- *To introduce special coefficients for state budget funding according to the complexity of studies;*

- *To merge the specialties from several universities in one;*

- *To reduce the number of private universities;*

The transition to university autonomy should be accompanied by more rights offered to universities such as:

- The right to determine the student enrollment plan with tuition fees independently;

- The right to independently establish, depending on the expenditures, the fees for tuition, accommodation, repeated exams, laboratory work, etc.;

- The right to buy and sell property;

- The right to get bank loans;

- The right to independently establish students' scholarship based on internal regulations;

- All budget funds that the university has not spend and remain at the end of the year, should be available to be spent the next year.

Experience report on the study visit to Vilnius, Lithuania
9-15 June, 2013
Dumitru Ivanov, National Trade Union Confederation of Moldova
"Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova" project

In the period 9-15 June 2013 I was in a work visit to Vilnius (Lithuania), with the purpose to study the effect of higher education systems reforms and in this context I would like to mention the following facts.

The activity of the two agencies is welcome. I believe that the delimitation of influences on university's activity has as a consequence the accurate and objective assessment of the academic staff's work. Namely the independence of these agencies makes it possible to increase the quality of education and fair evaluation of the education results.

MOSTA evaluates the potential of universities and colleges to efficiently accomplish the possibilities of training future specialists.

SKVC deals with the accreditation of institutions and has extensive flexibility in the assessment of their work.

I have been quite impressed by the degree of university autonomy, which could serve as an example to be implemented in the Republic of Moldova, or this factor is crucial for quality education. Unfortunately, we didn't have enough time to study actual content of education, but it seemed to me that the curricula were more decongested than those from our country. I am convinced that the higher education content shouldn't be overloaded (like in our country) because it will enable students to experience deeper the practical matter and as a result, to cope with the rigors submitted by the labour market. A great part of the material taught in the higher education institutions of Moldova is unnecessary for future specialists, this ballast, in my opinion, constitutes about 30%. These disciplines should be removed from the academic curriculum. And the principle of multilateral development followed by, I believe, is a strategic mistake. This implicitly could tip the balance of competition not in favour of the specialists from our country.

I am convinced that higher education reform is imperative, as our delay in this process is about 20 years.

I want to express my sincere thanks to the organizers for the opportunity to study the situation of higher education in a country with rich European culture and traditions, from which we could take much in this area.

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Experience report on the study visit to Vilnius, Lithuania
9-15 June, 2013
Tatiana Jeju, State University of Comrat
"Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova" project

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1.   General information

On June 9-15 the delegation from the Republic of Moldova composed of: Gheorghe Ciocanu, Gheorghe Cimpoies, Larisa Bugaian, Nicholae Mogoreanu, Angela Sirbu, Svetlana Cibotari, Aliona Muravschi-Lisman, Lilian Saptefrati, Nina Putuntean, Daniela Pojar, Svetlana Barbalat, Maria Kara, Dumitru Ivanov, Tatiana Jeju, Ana-Maria Chilianu and Romeo V. Turcan visited Vilnius, Lithuania under the TEMPUS project "Enhancing university autonomy in Moldova". The objectives of this visit were the following:

- To study and adopt the best practices of Lithuania regarding the university governance reform;

- To study the structure and the operation method of the institutions that assess the quality of higher education;

- To study and adopt the structure of higher education institutions;

- To study and adopt relevant solutions and procedures of the university governance system implemented in Lithuanian higher education institutions;

- To study the system of university autonomy implemented in higher education institutions from Lithuania.

2.   The organized activities

The following activities were organized within the visit of the delegation from Moldova to Vilnius:

1. Our visit to Mykolo Romerio University

I met many university professors who told me about Mykolo Romerio University, the projects it was involved in as well as about the university autonomy. Mykolo Romerio University is quite a young institution, although it comprises about 20,000 students and 1,200 employees and is one of the most powerful universities in Lithuania. The University is partially funded by Structural Funds, but it earns the largest part of its budget (about 76%) on its own, 24% of which is received by means of projects.

Despite the fact that the University is autonomous, the content and curricula, external education quality and the distribution of state money for higher education are strictly regulated by the law. The University is obliged to go though the accreditation procedure every six years.

The autonomy consists of 4 components: educational, financial, academic and organizational autonomy.

The university autonomy is based on the strategic capacity, ethic standards, internationalization and critical mass.

2. *Our visit to Vilnius University*

Vilnius University is the oldest educational institution in the Baltic States. It was founded in 1579, four years later than the university library. The higher education institution in Vilnius is a true masterpiece of the Lithuanian intellectual spirit. The University campus is spread across multiple locations, its main office is located in the old university building. Vilnius University has three committees: the educational, research and strategy committee. The Rector is elected by the Senate for five years. The Senate is elected by the teaching staff.

3. *Our visit to the Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA)*

The centre was founded in April 2007 and aims to assess the infrastructure of higher education institutions. They provide precise data that are primarily used by politicians to make decisions in the sphere of education. The centre's activity is concentrated on three areas: Monitoring, Analysis and Assessment.

The centre provides yearly reports on the student enrollment and develops three reports at the European level: MESIS, METRIS and ERAWATCH.

The Centre offers statistics on higher education institutions. 47 higher education institutions activate in Lithuania, including 23 universities (14 public and 9 private) and 24 colleges (13 public and 11 private).

Our visit to the Centre of Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC)

The purpose of the Centre is to improve the quality of higher education and accredit graduate and postgraduate diplomas.

The assessment aims to identify strengths and weaknesses of the university study programmes. The assessment process includes: the Group of experts, the University application, the Visit to

the institution, Drafting of the report and Decision making. The assessment of institutions is done at the international level.

The process of assessment and accreditation is regulated by the Law on Higher Education and Research; the Decree on external assessment and accreditation of study programmes; the Methodology for assessment and accreditation.

4. *The Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology (MITA)*

The Agency is a budgetary organization established in 2010. Its main responsibility is to coordinate and finance innovation projects. The basis of the innovative economy consists of 3 components: Innovations in traditional industry, New technologies (high tech) and New economic sectors.

The Agency is financed by the state, but it also has "science and technology parks" that provide services and generate profit.

The Agency deals with project financing as well as project initiation to gain funding.

5. *Our visit to the Ministry of Education*

The main priorities of higher education are quality and affordability.

The main directions of the Ministry in 2013 are to review the law on higher education and research, to change the enrollment procedure, to solve quality problems of higher education, to improve the strategy of continuing education and to organize a conference on the internationalization of higher education.

3. Conclusions and Proposals

Lithuania is the country where the population number is almost the same as in the Republic of Moldova. The number of higher education institutions is 47, educational institutions are well structured, and every structure knows its own responsibilities.

My proposals:

- To include research as a mandatory part of the teaching activity in order to increase the number of initiated projects and to open the door to innovations;
- To assess the structure of higher education institutions in order to find out the most advanced and efficient structure;
- To introduce study programmes for distance learning in order to attract both local and foreign students;

- To develop a new evaluation method of higher education institutions in order to enable the graduates to choose exams depending on the chosen speciality;

- To develop loans for studies with a low interest rate because many students cannot afford studies at the desired university for financial reasons;

- To pay more attention to student practical training as during these trainings they implement the acquired knowledge in practice;

- To create students' committee at the university that will support and defend students' interests and, thus, motivate them to more actively and efficiently participate in the activities inside and outside the university;

- To initiate the establishment of the library that would work 24 hours and be equipped with special rooms for individual and group work;

- To establish the non-governmental organization for students or/and teachers which will join some organizations and international projects and will be able to engage in more extensive projects and have more chances to win them;

- To establish a student executive body that will be of help in solving students' problems and involving and organizing activities inside and outside the university.

Experience report on the study visit to Vilnius, Lithuania
10-14 June, 2013
Kara Maria, State University of Comrat
"Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova" project

On July 10-14, 2013 there was organized a trip to Vilnius (Lithuania) as part of the TEMPUS Project "EUNAM: Enhancing University Autonomy in Moldova". We have visited: Mykolo Romerio University, Vilnius University, Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA), Centre for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (SKVC), the Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology (MITA), the Ministry of Education and Science, the Research Council of Lithuania, Vilnius University Library and Communication Center, Central Historical VU Library.

Lithuania.

The population is 3,043 thousand people. The total number of students is 200,000. There are 47 universities in Lithuania. 23 universities (14 public and 9 private) and 24 colleges (13 public and 11 private). 48.2% of students pay for their studies (the 1st and the 2nd Cycles). 5.5% of students have the possibility to receive grants. 7.5 % of students win grants (including scholarships for academic excellence and study scholarships). Study fees depend on the study programme (specialty) or the mode of study (full-time/part-time). There are three main types of scholarships / grants: for academic excellence; social grants; research scholarships. The amount of the scholarship for academic excellence is established by every higher education institution. The amount of research scholarships is the same as the study fee (it varies depending on the study programme and mode of study). Social grants are designed for students with low socio-economic opportunities, students with disabilities and orphans. Their amount is about 1,833 lei (390 litas per month), students also have the opportunity to receive a state-supported loan for accommodation and studies.

Tax benefits for parents

The parents, who pay for their children's education, are entitled to have an annual income tax return, in favor of the student, if the student receives a scholarship. The income tax return is up to 15 % of the amount paid for studies. Students' parents can enjoy family benefits, if they have three or more children under the age of 18 and/or older, who are full-time students (until they are 24 years old).

We have visited two major universities: Mykolo Romerio University and Vilnius University.
Mykolo Romerio University

The mode of study:

BA STUDIES	11681

MA STUDIES	**6701**
DOCTORAL STUDIES	**149**
Compensatory studies	**973**
Distant studies	**136**
Modular studies	**206**
Partial studies (according to EU programmes)	**123**
Total students and listeners:	**19969**

BA students are funded by the state at a rate of 14.4% and 81% of BA students pay for their studies and the rest are partially funded; MA students are funded by the state at a rate of 11% and 88% of MA students pay for their studies and the rest are partially funded; PhD students are funded by the state at a rate of 70% and 29% of PhD students pay for their studies and 1% of them is partially funded.

There are 6 faculties and 1 institute (Faculty of Economics and Finance Management, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Politics and Management, Faculty of Social Policy, Faculty of Public Security, Faculty of Social Technologies and the Institute of Humanities).

MRU offers only accredited study programmes. Research is carried out in accordance with the accredited programmes approved by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. Since 2011 Lithuania has been using the ECTS credit system based on the student average workload of 1,600 hours per academic year. The optimal student workload is 60 ECTS credits per academic year.

Study programmes: educational and research programmes, doctoral scientific programmes.

Joint/Dual degree study programmes:

Bachelor degree programmes: Financial Economics (Bachelor in Economics - 3.5 years) Business Informatics (Bachelor in Informational Technologies - 3.5 years) **Master degree programmes** in collaboration with Middlesex University, London, UK) Communication and Creative Technologies (Master in Communication - 1.5 years). **Benefits:** students receive two diplomas and the opportunity to participate in exchange programmes in Europe and Asia.

The University has the training center that organizes and coordinates the educational process at MRU, development of new study programmes, internal and external accreditation process. It is responsible for ensuring the quality and maintenance of the learning process.

Research activities.

Priority research areas and programmes: Social Innovation for the Global Economic Growth; Justice, Security and Human Rights; Social Technologies.

About 20 international and more than 30 National **Annual Scientific Events**.

The main objectives of the research internationalization are the following:

- Active participation in international networks, as well as development of the new ones;

- Participation in international research programmes and projects;

- Promotion of researchers' mobility;

- Strengthening of the international cooperation at the level of PhD (bilateral exchange agreements, Erasmus, Cotuttele agreements, it joined dual degree programmes).

  MRU is involved in 70 projects amounting to 41 mln. EUR

  Joint Doctoral Programmes: Law, Science and Technology.

The University has many partners: the University of Bologna, Italy (the coordinating body); the University of Turin, Italy; University of Barcelona, Spain; the University of Luxembourg, Tilburg University (the Netherlands), etc., including 11 associate partners and 9 industrial partners.

MRU - electronic books since 2011.

All university books and magazines are published in electronic form and made available to the so-called POD - print-on-demand. Its readers are from 47 countries. The first step towards the global knowledge exchange was the eBooks project, which was initiated in early 2011. The EBooks website is based on the innovative iPublishCentral platform that allows readers not only to enjoy reading online, but also downloading books by iOffline program in order to read them without the Internet connection. The University publishes 9 scientific journals in order to expand and improve access to research.

Vilnius University

The oldest and the largest Lithuanian university actively participates in international scientific and academic activities. Currently the university includes 12 faculties, 7 institutes, 3 university hospitals, the oldest library in Lithuania (established in 1570), the Astronomical

Observatory, the Botanical Garden, St. Johns' church. There are eight academic campuses scattered around the city of Vilnius. At present the University administration, the library, the Institute of Foreign Languages, the Faculty of Philology, Philosophy and History, as well as some interdisciplinary centers are located in the old city.

The management structure of universities was reformed as the result of the university transition to Financial and Management Autonomy. A new structure, the Council, was established and it consists of representatives of the city, university and other agencies. Council members are empowered to take important decisions, appoint the Rector of the university. The Senate is involved in the academic administration while the Rector organizes the   educational   process.
Diagram 1. The management structure of the University.
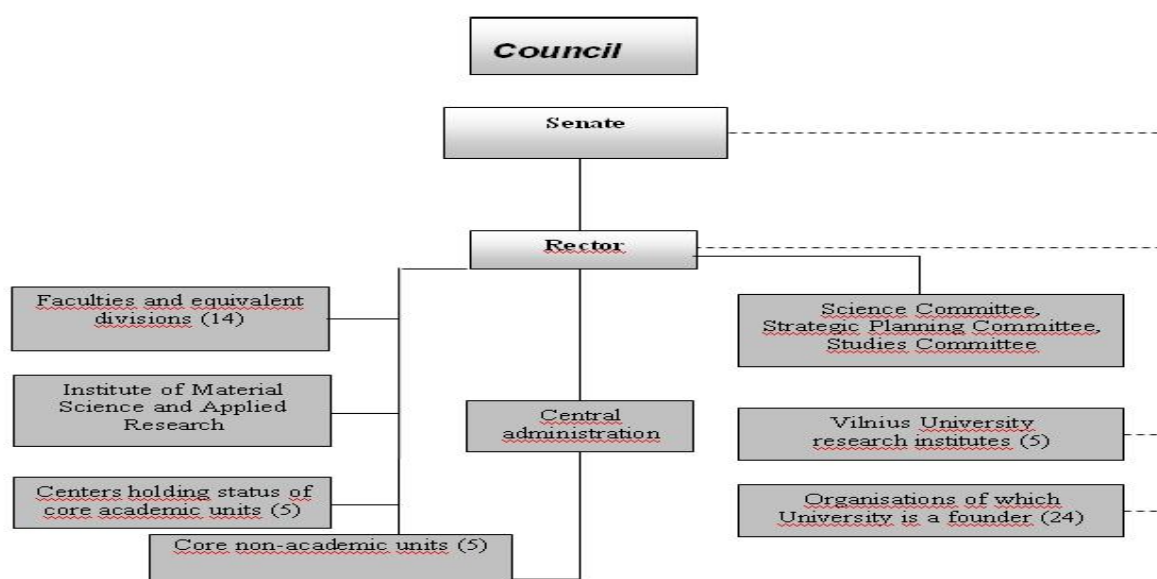
The staff includes 3,761 people: 247 teachers, 476 associated professors, 1,353 people of the academic staff and 480 researchers.

The number of students is 21,596 of which 14,890 Bachelor's degree students, 4,046 Master's degree students, 793 PhD students, 713 foreign students and other categories.

The Bologna system was introduced in 1993:

The first cycle – the Bachelor's degree programme: 3 - 4 years (180-240 ECTS credits)

The second cycle – the Master's degree programme: 1.5 - 2 years (90-120 ECTS credits)

Integrated research: 5-6 years (300-360 ECTS credits)

The third cycle – the Doctoral programme: 3-4 years (at least 30 ECTS credits)

International Cooperation

Bilateral Agreements - 123 (2012); Erasmus Agreements - 757 with 395 universities (2012).

European educational programmes:

Erasmus Mundus Master's Programme: "Sustainable Regional Health Systems".

Universities – the University of Deusto, Corvinus University, the University of Verona and Vilnius University (Project Coordinator).

Action 2 (7 projects): academic exchanges with universities from the following countries: Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Palestine, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Israel, Georgia, Armenia, etc.

Research Collaboration at both National and International levels.

Active participation in national research programmes (The Development Programme for Lithuanian Research; The State And The Nation: Heritage And Identity; Social Challenges To National Security; Energy Of The Future; Chronic Non-Infectious Diseases; Ecosystems Of Lithuania) and other projects funded at the national level. There is an increased number of implemented projects based on the intergovernmental agreements with France, Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia, Taiwan and Switzerland.

The University annually publishes about 3,000 scientific works, including: about 40 monographs, 70 textbooks and learning aids; 1,700 articles in national and international journals;
about 700 reports and reports from conference proceedings and hearings. About 140 national and international scientific conferences and seminars are annually held at the   University.
18 research papers of Vilnius University were awarded the highest scientific award - Lithuanian scientific award. During the last 5 years 36 university researchers became the winners of this award.

There are two libraries at Vilnius University. One of them is located in the old building, which has preserved a large reading room and the book fund includes unique ancient editions. The second library is located in a unique modern building of 5 floors and called "The Center of Scientific Information".

The visit to the Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA).

This state budgetary institution was founded on April 27, 2007 by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania. Its staff currently consists of 22 people. **Objectives:** to monitor the science and the higher education system; to analyze the state of research and higher education system; to develop recommendations for the sustainable development of research and higher education in accordance with the socio-public needs and the international context. The main function is to support the development and implementation of research and policy in the field of higher education.

MOSTA - Monitoring, Observation, Analysis, Evaluation

The quality of scientific research and studies should be provided by the internal quality assurance system of higher education and research institutions, external evaluation and accreditation of study programmes, the external evaluation system of research activities and external evaluation and/or accreditation of higher education and research institutions.

The evaluation of the research effectiveness should be carried out every five years in accordance with the procedure stated by higher education and research institutions. ***We have visited the Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology (MITA),*** which is the main governmental institution, responsible for implementation of the innovation policy in Lithuania.

MITA was established on the 4th of May, 2010 with the aim to foster business and science cooperation and to create a friendly environment for business needs and innovation in Lithuania.

The company's mission is to provide qualitative and professional services aiming to foster the development of Lithuanian science, industry and service sectors based on advanced technologies and innovation.

The founders of MITA: the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Education and Science.

MITA provides free of charge services for clients from business, science and public sectors, interested in possibilities to develop strong cooperation relations with international partners and get national or financial support from the European Union. MITA takes part in the national coordinators' network, provides information, consultations and searches for partners for Lithuanian participants.

MITA's main task is to ensure funding of national projects.

Possible topics related to the coordination of various programs.

The coordination of national NIOKR programmes:

• High Technology Development Programmes for 2011-2013;

• Industrial Biotechnology Development Programme for Lithuania for 2011-2013.

The coordination of national initiatives aimed at promoting the implementation of innovation:
• Innovation vouchers;

• Industrial property objects;

• Clustering.

The coordination of international research and innovation programmes:

• FP7, EUREKA , EUROSTARS, etc.

Lithuania implements 23 projects together with its international partners. The most successful areas of involvement are: Energy, Research infrastructure, Research for SMEs, Informational Technologies, Healthcare and Nanotechnology.

The Research Council of Lithuania was established to ensure the successful implementation of scientific research.

The founder – the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania (the Seimas). The Council was founded in 1991 and renewed in 2007. The basic functions of the Research Council of Lithuania: to consult the Parliament (the Seimas) and the Government on strategic research and higher education issues; to provide research funding on a competitive basis.

The Implementation of the Research Funding Policy:

The Parliament (the Seimas) of the Republic of Lithuania

The Ministry of Education and Science

The Ministry of Economy

The Research Council of Lithuania (LMT)

The Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology (MITA)

The structure is as follows: The supreme governing body is the Parliament (the Seimas), the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Economy and the Research Council of Lithuania (LMT) submit to it. The Ministry of Education supervises the Research Council of Lithuania (LMT) and MITA. The Ministry of Economy is responsible for MITA.

Members of the Council: Candidates for the positions of Chairman, Academic Secretary of the Council and Committee Chairman are elected by the Ministry of Education and Science together with the organizations that represent scientists. The Prime Minister forms two groups of scientists for each committee upon presentation of the Minister of Education and Science.

Scientific research is funded through:

National research programmes and National Development Programme for Lithuanian Studies 2009-2015.
National programmes:

Chronic Non-Infectious Diseases (2010-2014)**;** Ecosystems in Lithuania: Climate Change and Human Impact (2010-2014); Future Energy (2010-2014); Healthy and Safe Food (2011-2015); Social Challenges to National Security (2010-2013); The State and the Nation: Heritage and Identity (2010-2014).

Funding of scientific events;

Financial support for the publication of research results;

Support for students' research activities;

Support for subcontract research in the private sector, etc.

The Ministry of Education and Science.

It implements the state policy in the field of higher education, coordinates research and higher education institutions and is responsible for the promotion and development of the public research sector. Some other ministries are involved in the research.

The Research Council of Lithuania (the Council) is a specific institution with a dual function: it serves as a scientific advisor of the Seimas and the Government, and at the same time it is one of the executive bodies. The Council makes proposals for the implementation of the science and technology policy, evaluates research, research effectiveness and compatibility with state requirements. It also carries out institutional assessment of research institutions and evaluates scientific production. Besides the consulting and advisory functions, the Council manages competitive funding schemes of research activities financed from both the state budget and Structural Funds. It consists of the Board of Directors, two expert committees - the Committee of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Committee of Natural and Technical Sciences and the Research Fund, which deals with administrative duties.

The Council continues implementing programmes on the basis of competitive NIOKR funding, focusing on funding major research projects. Half of science allocations are distributed through competitive funding programmes, and the other half remains as the base funding in Lithuania. The Council currently manages about 20 research programmes and other types of scientific activities funded by the state budget and EU structural funds. There was developed the Strategy "Lithuania 2030", which was approved in 2012. Each Ministry or government agency will be directly involved in the implementation of the Strategy. Authorities will be guided by the Strategy provisions when preparing their individual strategic plans.

Conclusions and suggestions.

Being acquainted with the changes in the higher education system, which are held as a result of the transition to the university financial autonomy, one should mention positive changes. They reformed the administrative structure of universities, expanded authority for the introduction, evaluation and accreditation of new study programmes. Universities have the right to independently earn money by creating multiple service centers that provide specific services. There were established new structural units: the Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology (MITA), the Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA), the Research Council of Lithuania (LMT), the National Quality Assurance System (SKVC), etc. Science has undergone great changes. They develop many research

areas and implement international scientific projects with significant funding. For example: Mykolo Romerio University participates in 70 projects amounting to 41 million EUR, Vilnius University has developed a research programme Horizon and expects to receive 80 million EUR, etc.

As to the educational process, since 2005 our universities have implemented a number of reforms in accordance with the requirements of the Bologna process. But this is not enough. In order to improve the education system and strengthen university autonomy our authorities should do the following:

1. The education quality should be a priority for the higher education system of the country.
   In order to ensure the competitiveness of the Moldavian higher education system within the European standards one should bring into harmony the qualitative characteristics of the educational process. Therefore, we need to develop and implement the National qualification framework for professional education. This will enable us to solve the following tasks: the improvement of the national higher education quality, strengthening students and teachers' mobility at the national and international levels; borrowing and implementing European values of the university education into the educational system of the Republic of Moldova.

2. Develop models for both external and internal examination of the education quality.

3. In order to strengthen university autonomy we should develop a new legal framework of higher education based on the Law on Education. The universities that have their own material basis should be allowed to develop a list of specialties focused on regional needs, independently enrolling at all levels and modes of studies (the 1st, the 2nd and the 3rd cycles).

4. To improve the procedure of university assessment and approaches for higher education institutions' accreditation.

5. To establish institutions of public participation in educational and scientific activities management at all levels, this requires the foundation of the **Council of consolidated employers.** Functions of the Council: to update the list of professions; staff training in accordance with market needs.

6. To establish the **National Agency of Professional Qualifications**. Its functions - to improve the mechanism of the labour market and education sector interaction.

The program of our trip was very interesting and eventful. I would like to thank the organizers and coordinators of the program. I express gratitude to LARISA BUGAIAN, the vice rector of TUM.

Experience report on the study visit to Vilnius, Lithuania
9-15 June, 2013
N. Mogoreanu, Technical University of Moldova
"Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova" project

General assessment

Out of a multitude of forms and ways to learn in depth about the university experience in a certain field, the study visit (as a form to acquire experience) to advanced universities and the discussions with staff at different university hierarchy levels are the most effective ones. This fact was confirmed by the whole work team representing the universities of the Republic of Moldovan who had travelled to Lithuania in the period 09.06. - 15.06. 2013. The well-structured work program for this period enhanced enough the interest and success of the study visit. There were held meetings and discussions with people at different decision making levels and low-level staff of the following institutions:

- Ministry of Education and Science;
- Scientific Council of Lithuania;
- Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA);
- Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC);
- Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology (MITA);
- Vilnius University (public university);
- Mykolo Romerio University.

The fact that Lithuanian higher education system includes 5 independent public authorities, 18 public universities, 9 private universities and 24 colleges highlights a highly qualified and enormous managerial potential of the higher education environment. This was one of the conclusions of the study visit to Lithuania that guaranteed the successful result of the visit as all participants were pleased and enriched their knowledge and perception about the managerial responsibilities, methods and principles.

Findings:

1. The Universities that we visited were presented in the most open manner so that all members of the team realized that they had the opportunity to see how a modern university should look like;
2. All university employees are loyal to their institution and make proof of intelligent loyalty and tolerance in cases of inter-university competition. The academic staff from other universities can't hold positions here, they can just cooperate in the framework of national and international scientific projects;
3. All the university employees speak at least one foreign language (80% English, 20 % Polish and Russian);
4. All the employees, especially, those holding managerial positions know:

- The list of responsibilities and duties. A separate job description is developed for each position;
- The legislative and regulatory framework necessary for the qualitative and correct accomplishment of employee's obligations and duties;

5. The average age of the academic staff who discussed with our delegation was between 35-60 years old, mostly 40-45. Regardless of age, all report presenters and participants in the discussions demonstrated deep knowledge in their field as well as in the related fields;

6. The academia, working conditions, material support for the training activity and labour remuneration stimulate continuous improvement and reliability;

7. Approx. 40% of the university teaching load is performed by well-trained professionals who have a rich experience in business;

University's administration (rector, deans, heads of department) are absolutely free in selecting and employing teachers. This is motivated by the fact that educational institutions (especially the academic staff and study programs (specialties) are periodically subject to evaluations. Due to the fact that every six years the university is subject to accreditation (through SKVC and MOSTA), the responsible decision making levels, being aware of the accreditation perspective, select and promote the academic staff (training level, age, scientific results - a list of selection criteria) in order that the subdivision and the university, as a whole, meets the accreditation requirements.

The managerial staff (deans, heads of departments, heads of divisions and services) had achieved different stages and completed different forms of management trainings (projects, courses, seminars, workshops, round tables, etc.).

Besides the fact that within the university there is a strict hierarchy and obedience to superiors, one can feel the attitude of friendliness, respect and care both in bilateral relations and within the staff. This fact proves the careful and thorough selection of the academic staff.

Conclusions:

1. Without the modernization of the higher education system, in general, and especially without the organizational restructuring of the universities, the higher education has no future;
2. University autonomy is one of the steps of the higher education reform;
3. Successful achievement of university autonomy requires at least two things:
- The employee must correctly understand what really means university autonomy and new code of conduct;
- The managerial potential: rector, vice-rectors, deans, heads of departments, heads of divisions, etc., should possess innovative thinking and improve the existing one.
4. Improving the system of academic staff selection and training.

Experience report on the study visit to Vilnius, Lithuania
9-15 June, 2013
Aliona Muravschi-Lisman, Moldova State University
"Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova" project

The main objective of the visit to Lithuania was to gain didactic and scientific experience from the higher education institutions and other organizations related to the existing system of university autonomy and academic governance applied in the higher education institutions from Lithuania.

During the 5 days we visited Mykolo Romerio University, Vilnius University, Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA), Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SCVC), Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology (MITA), Research Council of Lithuania, Ministry of Education and Science and Vilnius University Library.

The discussions we had with the senior management and the employees of these institutions and organizations have been helpful to us, because there were specified some points related to the management, study programme evaluation and accreditation, research, implementation of projects and academic mobility. The discussions were mainly focused on topics such as: changes in the admission procedure, merging of the higher education institutions, competition and others.

During the visit there were discussed the opportunities for cooperation, participation in conferences and seminars, which would open new perspectives of effective collaboration.

Another important aspect of the discussions was focused on the analysis of university autonomy in higher education institutions as an opportunity for academic development.

Further, I will highlight some key issues.

MANAGEMENT.

As a result of these meetings, we found out that the structure of these universities differs little from that existing in Moldova, namely, the existence of a Council; let's say the unaffiliated one which monitors broadly the university activity. There was observed an emphasis on the professional management within the institution, for example, in Mykolo Romerio University. As for the structure: Rector, Vice Rector, heads of chairs/departments (as a result of department merging), institutes (smaller in size than departments), etc., it is almost the same, but at Moldova State University, the position of Department Head is supplementary to the teaching position, while in Lithuania, the basic position is the administrative one. In MSU, the process of creating departments began in spring 2012 and continues till today, representing a process of optimizing human and financial resources.

OBJECTIVITY.

The accreditation of a higher education institution is the result of two teams' activity: Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA) and Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SCVC). MOSTA analyzes the quantitative factors (fixed and current assets, teaching resources, staff, etc.), while SCVC is mainly focused on the qualitative factors, especially on the quality of study programmes. The final decision belongs to SCVC Director, but it is regulated by instructions, i.e. there are some requirements in the decision making. Out of these two components - MOSTA and SCVC, the emphasis is put on the SCVC assessment results.

Almost the same scheme is used in terms of science: the Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology (MITA) is focused on the applied sciences while the Research Council of Lithuania is mainly focused on the fundamental sciences.

Attracting business representatives to participate in projects (with share option) aims at the practical implementation of research results.

I believe that the objectivity principle lies at the basis of Research Council activity, as half of its members changes at half of the term, besides this, when changing some of the members, they try to keep those who know better the methods and methodology and to introduce new members who come with fresh perspectives from outside, thus enhancing the efficiency of Council activity.

QUALITY.

According to the figures presented by the institutions and organizations visited within this project, it is obvious that the number of students and candidates who want to obtain higher education is high enough, therefore there is a tendency to turn this quantitative process into a qualitative one, namely, through the accreditation of new study programmes, their diversification, limited accreditation if there is a lack of certain elements (for three years) on condition to eliminate them, and even through the non-accreditation of institutions and study programmes. Meanwhile, the six-year accreditation term offers sufficient time to the institution to activate, implement study programmes, see the final outcome or even modify them during this period.

ADMISSION.

One of the best experiments, in my opinion, is the admission procedure, beginning with the registration till the choice of the higher education institution.

Registering the candidates in electronic form saves both the time of candidates as well as that of the higher education institution; therefore it reduces university's expenses, which currently is a strong argument when we are in the process of autonomy. At the same time, the

interconnection between the candidate application and the database of the Ministry of Education eliminates the human factor when entering the information on the candidate's grades within each higher education institution, i.e. the average score of each candidate is calculated without involving the subjective factor.

The idea of the voucher system seems extraordinary, as it serves as a direct indicator of the competence and authority of the higher education institutions, being at the same time a tool motivating the institutions to improve the quality of education, academic staff qualifications, facilities and general conditions in order to ensure its further existence and development.

Generally, I was almost convinced that everything that is done in the Lithuanian higher education system, including the emphasis on quality, has a well-determined purpose: practical implementation of knowledge, high level of competitiveness on the market and the focus on the human being.

Certainly, we lag far behind because of several factors: social, economic, national, but also the difference of 18-20 years in the implementation of the university autonomy project - from 1995 to 1998 in Lithuania and since 2013 in Moldova - is great and I hope the efforts of Moldovan team should not remain only on paper in the Ministry, but they will be followed by actions, legislative modifications, structural changes, etc.

Undoubtedly, Lithuania has access to various structural funds being supported by organizations from EU and I consider that all this is due to the fact that they have chosen the correct path and know for sure where they want to go.

In conclusion I would like to mention that all planned activities have been accomplished, the program was organized greatly and I appreciate the organizers' effort, who took a serious and responsible attitude toward the visit of the Moldovan delegation.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the staff involved in carrying out the program, especially to the EUNIAM project coordinator, Mr. Romeo Turcan, PhD, Associate Professor, International Business and Entrepreneurship, University of Aalborg, Denmark and to the national coordinator, Ms. Larisa Bugaian, Vice Rector, TUM.

Experience report on the study visit to Vilnius, Lithuania
9-15 June, 2013
Daniela Pojar, "Alecu Russo" State University of Balti
"Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova" project

On June 9-15, 2013 I along with a group of representatives from various higher education institutions of the Republic of Moldova made a working visit to Vilnius, Lithuania under the project 530740 - TEMPUS-1-2012-1-DK-TEMPUS-SMGR "Enhancing the University Autonomy in Moldova (EUniAM)".

During this visit I had the opportunity to get familiar with the higher education system in Lithuania. We were hosted by various institutions, such as Mykolo Romerio University (Vilnius), Vilnius University, the National Research Council, the Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology, the Ministry of Education and Science of Lithuania, etc.

The Law on Higher Education and Research of 2009 is the main regulatory document in the field of education in Lithuania. As seen from the title of this document, higher education in Lithuania is inseparable from research; actually, the mission of the higher education system is research and promotion of the society based on knowledge.

As it is in the Republic of Moldova, one of the basic principles of the higher education in Lithuania is freedom and academic autonomy, correlated with the principle of public accountability. University autonomy in Lithuania is governed by the same principles as in the Republic of Moldova. The governing principles of academic autonomy in Lithuania are generally reflected in the principles of academic autonomy in the Republic of Moldova.

As distinct from the Republic of Moldova, higher education institutions are structured in universities, university colleges and research institutes in Lithuania. They can be both state and private.

The Lithuanian university college is a good model to follow for our country, especially in order to solve the problem of teacher training colleges. As our Lithuanian colleagues have told us, the college diploma is a diploma of higher professional education. If a college graduate wants to get a master's degree (IInd Cycle), he/she is required to study a compensatory year at a university. The general structure of the higher education system is the one that can be borrowed by the Republic of Moldova. Higher education is divided into three cycles:

1. Cycle I - Licentiate, universities provide a bachelor's degree and colleges – a licentiate professional degree;

2. Cycle II – MA studies, which are offered exclusively by universities;

3. Cycle III – PhD studies that are organized only at universities and/or research institutes.

Study programmes for all cycles are mainly in Lithuanian, English and Russian. Most people we met, regardless of their age, spoke English fluently. Every higher education institution in the Republic of Moldova should encourage its staff, especially the teaching and administrative staff, to speak a foreign language. In this case the law of the RM on teachers' salary should foresee a salary increase for the use of foreign languages in teaching activities in the amount of 15% or 25% of the standard salary. To my mind, the salaries of those who teach in a foreign language could be increased by 100% due to the increased intellectual effort. The increase could be smaller for other categories of employees.

Research is an essential component of higher education. A university is a research centre, and together with doctoral schools and colleges, it promotes research. The funding of higher education institutions is done in two ways: 50% - teaching activities and the rest, which can be less than 50% - research activities. Money from research projects represents distinct revenue sources.

The Lithuanian Academy of Sciences is not a financial coordinating body of the scientific activity; it does not manage financial resources. The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for these activities, as well as the National Research Council (fundamental sciences and the Lithuanian philology) and the Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology (applied sciences). It would be great if the funding of research activities in higher education from the state budget was provided on a competitive basis and organized by an independent structure other than the ASM, and the latter participated in the contest of projects along with other institutions.

The accreditation of higher education institutions is carried out by two structures:

1. MOSTA, which is a state budgetary institution, an analytical and advisory body. MOSTA develops recommendations on the development of higher education systems at the national level and performs monitoring; it analyzes the research situation in the higher education systems and takes part in the development and implementation of higher education and research policies. It also takes decisions on the logistics system of universities.

2. The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, which consists of business representatives. It generally decides on the study programmes that are evaluated and accredited by it. These study programmes can be accredited for 3 or 6 years. It also accredits and evaluates the whole teaching activity.

It is necessary to establish a single structure that will fulfil the above mentioned tasks in the Republic of Moldova, particularly, if we take into consideration the increasing number of higher education institutions, especially the private ones, which, with some exceptions, are nothing but some printers of diplomas. I think that first of all some foreign experts should be involved in the institution activity in order to better define its objectives and to enhance its impartiality.

As to the organizational autonomy, higher education institutions in Lithuania have the right to determine their own structure, internal working methods, the number of employees, rights, conditions of work payment, requirements to hold certain positions, the procedure for organizing competitions for vacancies, employee performance assessment methodology, etc. In this context, the rights of higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova are limited in terms of remuneration. According to Government Decision nr.193 of March 13, 2013 on wages in state higher education institutions under financial autonomy, there were established minimum state-guaranteed salaries; employers are allowed to pay differentiated wages only to auxiliary workers, as to the teaching staff salary, it should be equal for the representatives of the same position, and if you apply any coefficient, the principle of proportionality should be respected. As to the conditions of teaching staff employment, there is the Regulation approved by the Government of the Republic of Moldova that states that universities are free to supplement this Regulation, having no right to introduce articles which are less favourable than the ones approved by the Government. I think we should borrow the experience of Lithuania on autonomy and salary determination, where every higher education institution may set its own salary scale, taking into account indicators other than the number of students at the institution.

As for the governing bodies of higher education institutions in Lithuania, I have learnt about the Council of University Administration (different from the Administrative Council of the RM), which is actually the supreme governing body in higher education institutions. As concerning their duties, they are the same as those of the financial governing bodies of the HEIs in the Republic of Moldova (the Senate or the Administrative Council); the duties are stated in Chapter III of the Government Decision nr. 983 of December 22, 2012 on the functioning of state higher education institutions in terms of financial autonomy. Analyzing the text of the mentioned law, we may note that University Administrative Councils and Senates are allocated the same exclusive rights in Moldova. Moreover, the text of the concerned law does not explain the way these councils should be established. Moldavian laws state only the procedure of the Senate formation. University Administrative Councils in Lithuania are able to manage the financial policy of the institution, representing its interests in various bodies and authorities, etc., while Senates are responsible for the academic activity.

I believe that the Lithuanian experience on University Administrative Councils should be borrowed by the Republic of Moldova, as the administrative management functions need to be clearly distinguished from the academic ones. And it is necessary to think over the structure of administrative councils, as some foreign specialists, business representatives, notorious graduates, etc. may be involved too.

However, the impartiality of these councils is questioned by some informal points of view in Lithuania, the candidates are approved by rectors and they often express rectors' will.

As to the Senates, one should mention that the election procedure is similar to the one in the RM, however, vice-rectors are not ex officio members and the rector is not the president of the Senate.

The staff of higher education institutions consists of assistant lecturers, lecturers, associate professors and Professors. We believe that the same staff categories should exist in the Republic of Moldova too, as the position of assistant lecturer is virtually rare in the country, being assimilated to the position of university lecturer, moreover, the same wage rate is meant for both assistant and university lecturers. The way a person is elected for the position is almost the same – it is done on the competitive basis for a period of five years.

As to the rectors, they have largely the same duties as those in the RM, being elected for five years, but the candidate for the position of rector is approved by the Administrative Council, while it is the College of the Ministry of Education who approves the candidate in the Republic of Moldova.

Concerning the structure of MRUNI, I have noticed the position of Chancellor among the top management positions in this institution. His duties are focused on the coordination of non-teaching, but very important departments, especially since they are responsible for human and financial resources management at the institution, the documentation flow, etc. I think it would be appropriate to introduce such a position in our higher education institutions, as we need to have a competent person for such activities, since our rectors are often outstanding people with academic and scientific merits who do not always have the necessary knowledge on legislation, financial management, etc.

As to the funding, I have noticed the following:

Higher education institutions in Lithuania are entitled to bring almost the same incomes as in the RM. However, universities in Lithuania are always looking for new sources of revenue.

The funding of places financed from the state budget comprises the costs for:

- tuition fees;

- research and development activities;

- administration and financial needs, etc.

By contrast, in the Republic of Moldova, financial resources provided by the state plan do not cover all these sectors, about 80% - to pay wages, the rest – are uncovered overhead costs. Research is not funded at all, except some projects won at the ASM.

I had no access to the methodology for the tuition fee calculation, since the regulatory document that establishes this mechanism is in the Lithuanian language. However, as we have understood,

tuition fees include expenses needed to pay wages to the teaching and research staff as well as to those who are related to studies, to purchase goods and services related to the teaching process and to grant various incentives to students. I do not have any further information in this sphere; therefore I cannot say anything about the opportunity to borrow this methodology.

I believe that the experience gained during the study visit to Lithuania, is beneficial and will help me to create a sustainable autonomy in the University I activate. The experience of Lithuania, a former Soviet country as well as Moldova is, should be catching for the RM. In about 20 years of independence they spend 33 million EUR to establish university libraries due to European Structural Funds, while we try to obtain funds to maintain our out-of-dated infrastructure and to pay wages to the teaching staff on time.

Experience report on the study visit to Vilnius, Lithuania
9-15 June, 2013
Nina Putuntean, State Agrarian University of Moldova
"Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova" project

The working visit of the Task Force Mission team to Lithuania that took place on June 9-15, 2013 followed a well thought and scheduled plan including meetings and discussions with various decision makers at the university level as well as public and/or governmental levels: Mykolo Romerio University, Vilnius University, MOSTA, SKVC, MITA, Ministry of Education and Science, Research Council of Lithuania, etc.

At present, there are 47 higher education institutions and colleges in Lithuania, and namely: 27 universities (14 public, 9 private) and 24 colleges (13 public, 11 private). Only 4 categories of academic staff activate in Lithuanian universities: Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer, Associate Professor and Professor. It should be mentioned that the teaching load is divided as follows: 50% is provided for teaching and 50% for the research activity. The scientific activity is also planned in hours, depending on certain achievements: publications in various scientific journals, elaboration of electronic courses, participation with presentations in scientific conferences and symposia, publication of books, monographs, etc. The teacher accumulates a number of points for each achievement corresponding to a certain number of hours. If the teacher exceeds the individual plan on the scientific activity he/she can get a pay raise. An informal policy of universities is not to accept that their teachers work at several institutions. Instead, these teachers are free to participate in numerous national or international bilateral or collaboration projects.

The concept of university autonomy in Lithuania is based on the ideas of Humboldt and Newman, who emphasized that in order to know the truth, just studies are insufficient, the research is also necessary, that is why the main emphasis of the university autonomy in Lithuania is put on the close collaboration between education and research. Another direction is focused on the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research. Autonomy, for them, means choosing the path of progress and knowledge (knowledge development). And the main purpose of higher education institutions is to prepare professionals or specialists for the labour market.

The radical changes which take place worldwide nowadays require important changes in higher education, and namely:
• We need to change the education system;
• We need to change the educational process;
• We need to change the structure of the education system;
• We need to really understand what we mean by education quality;
• We need to answer the question: what will universities do with so many graduates?, etc.

In these circumstances we should think very well what we mean by autonomy, because it could bring both success and failure. The education reform is very important, especially because in the past 10 years almost every country has started reforms in higher education. In Lithuania the education reform started in 2009 and had an important role despite the fact that it has caused many debates and discussions. More than 50% of projects

were transferred to the grant system and the competition and internationalization is encouraged.

It should be noted that in Lithuania the people with higher education earn 2-3 times more than those with no education. And this gap is one of the largest in Europe. During the economic crisis, the people without higher education were fired the first. The Lithuanians are among the most educated people in the EU. 93% of the population has secondary or higher education (compared to the EU average of 73%). About 34% of Lithuanians have higher education, the percentage exceeding the EU average.

Another strong point I would like to mention is that all the representatives we met during that week pleasantly surprised us by the fact that they spoke fluently at least one foreign language (usually English) or even more (Russian, German, Polish etc.). According to statistics, Lithuania is among the top six European countries with the largest number of people who speak at least one foreign language fluently. Almost 92% of Lithuanians can speak a foreign language (usually English, Russian or Polish) and this percentage exceeds much the EU average of 54%. And about 50% of Lithuania's population speaks two foreign languages.

The higher education system in Lithuania is evaluated as "medium low" regarding financial and academic autonomy, "medium high" regarding organizational autonomy and "high" regarding staffing autonomy. As for the organizational autonomy, there have been implemented regulations on the criteria of Rector's selection, dismissal and term in office. University's Council should include external members, who are appointed on the one hand by the institution and by the Ministry on the other hand. The universities are free to decide on their academic structures and to create legal profit or non-profit entities. Staffing autonomy is more developed. The law establishes only general guidelines on the selection procedure and criteria for university staff. Both the academic and administrative staff can be promoted only if there is a vacancy at the superior level. The dismissal of university staff is not regulated.

The Lithuanian Ministry regulates the number of places financed from public funds, while universities can decide on the number of students with tuition fees. The sum of tuition fee is different for each Cycle of studies. On average for the 1st Cycle (Bachelor's Degree/Licentiate) – 1000-2000 €, the 2nd Cycle (Master's degree) – 2000-3000 € and the 3rd Cycle (Doctoral studies) – 3000-5000 € for one academic year. This sum also varies depending on the university, but universities cannot exceed the limits fixed by the law, they can only oscillate between these limits.

As a consequence of the Education Reform, the „system of vouchers" for admission to higher education was introduced in Lithuania. It is a new model of education funding from the state budget. A student voucher covers 100% of tuition. The candidates can choose themselves the educational institution, whether public or private. Then, money follows the student. State funds for vouchers are divided into 11 areas of study in order to meet labour market requirements for different specialists. The 11 fields of study are: humanitarian, social, biomedical, technological sciences, arts and visual arts. Law, business, economics, pedagogy and medicine are separate from the first areas of study. Scholarships are awarded only to those students who have special merits and to those with disabilities or from socially vulnerable groups.

Before the reform the state funded only 47% from the cost per student, the fact which led to a lower quality of studies. Once the reform was implemented, the state allocates twice as much for a student as it did before the reform.

The achievements of the new system are the following:

- there was guaranteed the access to higher education (student vouchers can be applied both in public and private educational institutions, and since 2009 state funding is also available for part-time studies);

- there was improved the admission procedure to higher education institutions (admission forms can be completed and sent online and more vouchers are provided for less requested specialties but these specialities are very important for the development of the country's economy, thus motivating the candidates);

- there was established fair and transparent competition between higher education institutions (in order to attract more voucher students institutions were forced to focus on quality and improvement of the study programmes more);

- Besides state funding, universities were able to attract more funding sources from the students who are enrolled with tuition fees (based on a contract);

- Talented young people do not go abroad to study, they choose Lithuania to continue their studies;

- The places with state funding go to the best secondary school graduates;

- Smaller institutions have begun to reflect on merging opportunities, several universities have already merged (Lithuanian University of Health Sciences was founded as a result of two higher education institutions merging: Kaunas University of Medicine and Lithuanian Veterinary Academy);

- Candidates choose viable specialties. Compared to 2009, a larger number of candidates have been enrolled at technological studies funded by the state;

- A large number of unattractive specialties were not completed and thus it was necessary to renew or close them;

- The most successful universities are those that have reached a high degree of university autonomy.

Bachelor's and Master's degree study programmes are subject to regular accreditation and institutions are accredited by a national body of quality assurance every 6 years. HEIs can choose the language of instruction for the study programmes that are part of the internationalization strategy.

SKVC – (Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education) is a public authority operating independently, founded and funded mostly by the Ministry of Education and Science, which has the mission to contribute to higher education improvement, to enhance the degree of awareness regarding higher education quality and to create conditions for people's free mobility. The role of the centre is to evaluate higher education quality (by the university and study programme), the accreditations (higher education qualifications from abroad or the qualifications that offer access to higher education), disseminate information regarding the confirmation of the higher education systems and obtained qualifications, etc. The basic values of the Centre are: partnership, professionalism, transparency and quality.

According to the standard procedure, the Ministry of Education and Science initiates the external evaluation of higher education institution's activity once every 6 years. External evaluation of these activities should be organized by SKVC, while MOSTA (Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre) evaluates only the educational resources. A university can be accredited for 6 years when it receives a positive attestation, for 3 years when it receives a negative attestation and it isn't accredited at all if it receives a negative attestation twice.

SKVC also deals with study programme evaluation and accreditation. The main directions of study programme evaluation are focused on: goals and objectives of study programmes, curriculum planning, academic staff, educational facilities and resources, evaluation of the study process and students and study programme management. As a result a study programme could be accredited for 6 years, for 3 years or it can't be accredited at all. There is also an Appeal Commission for study programme evaluation when higher education institutions do not agree with SKVC's decision.

The Research Council of Lithuania was founded in 1991. It is the counselor of the Lithuanian Parliament and Government on issues related to research and researchers' training. It provides advice on formulating and implementing the policy on science, education, research and development. The Council actively participates in the program of research and development funding based on competitiveness, as well as promotes the development of the Lithuanian researchers' resources, encourages research activities of science and higher education institutions and enhances science prestige.

Most higher education institutions consider that it is important to stay away from authorities because, as they mentioned, the authorities change often with the danger that university governance will change too.

Mykolo Romerio University is the first university in Lithuania that offered the possibility to choose Joint Study Programmes; the graduates of these programmes receive double or even triple diplomas. These study programmes are offered in cooperation with the universities from the United Kingdom of Great Britain, France, Austria, Finland and even South Korea. Mykolo Romerio University is the unique Lithuanian university organizing two admissions per year: one in fall and another in spring.

Directions regarding the higher education reform:
• The status of higher education institutions: Public institutions;
• The right to buy or sell property;
• State property – the right to use it based on a contract (for 20 years);
• The right of the state to invest in higher education institutions;
• The right to get bank loans;
• The right to set up a company (as Joint Stock Company);
• The right to offer commercial services and consulting, etc.

NB!
• Students' opinions on the study programmes offered by the university, quality of studies, professionalism of the academic staff, etc., are posted online on the university website.

- The students who were unable to take an exam twice are entitled to the 3rd attempt if they pay a certain amount of money at the university's accounting department. A part of this sum goes to the teacher, the other remains for the university.

Experience report on the study visit to Vilnius, Lithuania
9-15 June, 2013
Lilian Saptefrati, State University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Nicolae Testemitanu"
"Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova" project

First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Romeo Turcan and Mrs. Larisa Bugaian, the project coordinators, for the opportunity to learn about the higher education system in Lithuania, as well as Mrs. Birute Mikulskienė for the excellent organization of the work activities during our visit.

The higher education system in Lithuania is a very good model for the Republic of Moldova for several reasons:
1.   It originates from the former USSR as the local education system does;
2.   Lithuania and its population can be compared with the Republic of Moldova;
3.   Lithuania, the EU member, has developed a well established education system during the years of independence.

In the Soviet Union era they spoke about the affordability of higher education, actually only 10% of the population had a university degree. Many people wonder whether it is necessary to study and graduate from the university. Employees with a university degree earn twice as much as those without it in the EU. Because of the economic recession in the EU, the GDP fell by 4%, while university graduates' incomes were increased by 0.5%. The rate of income increase of the people with a university degree is higher than that of those who have not graduated any higher education institution and this discrepancy becomes greater. People without a university degree are more often fired. Thus, the modern trend in higher education is the massification of education - for example, 90% of school graduates go to college in South Korea. The EU has set the goal to reach the figure of 40% of university graduates by 2020, Lithuania has already reached 47%.

Over the past decades both the society and the economy have fundamentally changed. Universities became players in the free market; there is a need for university marketing and diversification of financial resources. There is fierce competition in the process of research and education internationalization. Virtually all European countries face the demographic problem - population ageing, declining birth rates - for example, the number of local students will decrease by 20% in Lithuania by 2020. "I am a teacher, a specialist, I want a high salary, they need my course, I do not care how - be kind and provide me with these conditions" – this will no longer do. Highly experienced managers with less teaching experience hold senior positions (vice-rectors, heads of departments) at European universities. The above mentioned facts have led to the education reform in almost all the countries, including Lithuania.

The population of Lithuania is 3,043 million people; the number of students is about 200,000 at three cycles of university studies. The training is carried out at 23 universities (14 public and 9 private) and 23 university colleges (13 public and 10 private). The distinction between universities and university colleges is that the latter provide narrow (vocational) training

and do not do science. There are also 12 scientific research institutes in the country. 11,300 researchers work in Lithuania (9.7% of them work in the business and industry sectors), 7,800 of them have scientific degrees, annually 300-400 scientists defend their PhD theses. Universities provide their teaching staff with academic titles that are valid only at the university where they activate.

The priorities of the Lithuanian Government in the sphere of education and research is the affordability (creating favourable conditions for **all** potential students), quality of studies and viable research that will successfully fit the European research.

Universities in Lithuania function under the conditions of university autonomy. Therefore, there was a shift of the legal status from state to public institutions. The state owes nothing to the universities; the universities must solve their problems under the conditions of autonomy. After the reform was initiated, there were two years of suspense, and then the universities set to work, currently they consider that the reform is a breakthrough.

There was established the Coordinating Board for Higher Education (4 members are appointed by the Ministry, 5 – by the University) in the Lithuanian universities. The Board makes the most important decisions. The Rector and his/her vice-rectors are the executive body (the teaching process, research and international cooperation, strategic development, infrastructure and investment). The Senate is responsible for the teaching process and research. University's staff is selected on a competitive basis while the administrative staff is appointed without any competition. As for the election procedure – election of the Senate, Board, Rector and Deans - all of them are elected for a period of five years and if someone is replaced, it is only until the next election of the Senate.

The financial resources of the university: the state allocates money for vouchers (the amount of money depends on the number of students), social support is only for the students with disabilities and those who come from socially vulnerable families (scholarships), European structural funds, national research projects, international projects, paid services (continuing education, etc.). The university has restrictions as any other budgetary institution. Universities are granted concession for all their real estate objects.

University autonomy ensures freedom of thought and research. University autonomy means strategically the following: a strategic capacity (what do we want?), ethic standards (how to fulfil?), independence from central and local public authorities, internationalization, and the critical mass of employed people.

The quality of the educational process should be monitored by the state. The quality of higher education in Lithuania is assessed by means of both external and internal evaluation. Every six years the Ministry of Education initiates the procedure of the university accreditation. The quality assurance at the national level is carried out by an independent agency - the National Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) by the evaluation of the existing study programmes, accredited for 3-6 years. The evaluation and accreditation of new study programmes – from 3 to 6 years (the accreditation for 3 years is considered to be negative),

institutional assessment for 2-6 years (if the accreditation is for two years, it is considered to be negative, the institution may be closed after the repeated negative accreditation in two years). The Centre welcomes international evaluation too. There should be a special section which reflects the evaluation and accreditation process of study programmes, accompanied by students' opinions on the university web-page.

Another state agency (the Ministry of Education and Research is its founder), the Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA) is the ministry tool that has been established to monitor, analyze and evaluate the higher education system. The information is provided to decision makers, universities, research centres, business representatives and society. The Agency develops annual reports, reports on admission, abstracts, holds briefings and roundtables. MOSTA is the organization that studies which under-investigated research fields have both abilities and potential and which of them should be funded by the EU Structural funds. They do not prefer to afford little assistance to every study field. One of MOSTA's tasks is to monitor the admission process. The system of vouchers (basket system) was introduced in Lithuania in 2009. This idea - money is provided depending on the number of students – led to the liberalization of higher education, if there are no students, universities are closed. The admission limit for universities is a maximum of 10% more than in the previous academic year. The application is made *online,* and candidates' grades come from the national electronic register. The share of every mark is different in every study programme. The competition is carried out by priorities, without any competition categories or preferences for candidates with disabilities, orphans and those who come from socially vulnerable families. 53% of students are funded from the state budget, the rest pay for their studies. After a year of paid studies you can apply for budget financing if you have better grades. The parents who pay for their children's education benefit from lower income taxes. Students can take bank loans for studies and living. The interest is low, the reimbursement – when the young specialist earns the salary that is bigger than the minimum wage.

Research in Lithuania is funded by two state agencies. The Research Council of Lithuania (the Parliament is its founder) assigns to each institution a separate funding line. Money without any competition - 50% (core funding) is provided as a result of the scientific achievements in the previous years. The remaining 50% of funding is allocated on a competitive basis. The members of the Council are the Head of the Council, the presidents of the two committees (the Committee for social and human sciences and the Committee for natural and technical sciences), the Scientific Secretary, the Parliament representative (the Committee on Education, Science and Culture), the Prime Minister's representative, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, the Academy of Sciences. Project evaluation is based on the following principles: impartiality, transparency and confidentiality.

The second agency – the Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology (MITA) allocates funding for application-oriented projects (on a competitive basis). MITA's budget is 2 times lower than the one of the Research Council of Lithuania. The role of the Academy of

Sciences is to promote research prestige. When we asked why they needed two agencies responsible for research funding, they answered that the concentration of funds for science in a single structure was very dangerous for science.

As a result of our working visit to Lithuania one can make the following conclusions, statements and proposals (which do not necessarily claim to be true):

1. There is no ideal model of education and research system, which could be implemented in the Republic of Moldova. When you go deep, you notice that each system is unique.

2. The legislative framework (rules of the game), responsibility, university traditions and flexibility are very important under the conditions of university autonomy.

3. One needs an organic separate law for both research and higher education.

4. We cannot fully liberalize the admission procedure. It should be regulated by the state (50% of graduates apply for 10 specialties in Lithuania). There should be created special conditions for the specialities that are required by the society. The admission procedure must take into account only the principle of meritocracy – one should get rid of the admission categories in the Republic of Moldova (this Soviet practice is out-of-date now).

5. It is extremely necessary to establish an independent state agency for the accreditation of universities and study programmes in the Republic of Moldova. And ultimately, the mandatory evaluation of universities by international structures.

6. To adjust the qualification framework of the Republic of Moldova to the one of the EU.

7. To internationalize the training process, due to the European extremely tough competition and the demographic situation, signing of the visa liberalization agreement will inevitably lead to merging/disappearance of many universities in the country.

8. The qualitative education cannot be granted without research (especially the basic one) at universities. Thus, the Republic of Moldova is likely to remain without universities if it does not demonopolize research and create an/some independent state agencies.

9. To promote Doctoral Studies with international partners (joint supervision theses).

10. To merge domestic faculties with international ones, providing common management and study programmes and administration in the Republic of Moldova. To promote international study programmes and academic mobility for both students and university teachers.

11. To support students with disabilities, orphans, those who come from socially vulnerable families, etc. - social grants to cover the minimum consumer basket.

12. To support the parents and students who pay for their studies: low income taxes, low-interest bank loans.

13. To set tuition fees at the minimum level needed to assure the education quality.

14. To create national registers of both pupils and students.

15. To increase the number of international students by 10% per year. The proportion of domestic students gone to study abroad and the international students who have come to study in our country should be 1:2.

Experience report on the study visit to Vilnius, Lithuania
9-15 June, 2013
Angela Sirbu, the Ministry of Education, Republic of Moldova
"Enhancing University Autonomy in the Republic of Moldova" project

During the period June 9-15, 2013, I participated in the study visit to Lithuania within TEMPUS Project „Enhancing University Autonomy in Moldova/ EUNIAM" (530 740-TEMPUS-1-2012-1-DK-TEMPUS-SMGR)", funded by the European Union, which took place at Mykolo Romerio University in Vilnius, through lectures, presentations and many discussions.

The approach to the issue was focused on 4 subjects and namely:
- Organizational autonomy;
- Financial autonomy;
- Autonomy of human resources;
- Academic autonomy.

This study began with the elucidation of the university autonomy and governance in the legislative context of Lithuania, followed by the academic component of the University Governance, involvement of the governing bodies at the faculty level in planning study programmes and approving curricula. After that there was given an overview of autonomy in the teaching process and study programmes within the faculties.

I would like to mention that among the multitude of topics addressed during this visit, those that presented a greater interest for me were the ones related to the duties and rights of the university through the prism of financial autonomy, property management, allocations from the state budget and other financial sources, income and expense budgeting.

Analyzing the experience of my colleagues from Lithuania I can make the following conclusions:

✓ As in the Republic of Moldova, Lithuanian universities receive funding under the state control (about 24% of the total budget of the institution), but the big advantage is that money follows the student, i.e. the students who were selected to study with funding from budget can choose the higher education institution where he/she wants to continue the studies. This forms a competition between higher education institutions which also requires all universities to take steps in attracting students which leads to a higher quality of higher education.

✓ The number of universities in Lithuania is 23 (of which only 9 are private) and 24 colleges (of which only 10 are private), summing up a total of 200.000 students. Once passing to financial autonomy Lithuanian universities do not rely only on budget financing, but at the same time they are taxpayers.

✓ An advantage of the Lithuanian model, worth to be followed, is the internal management control system created within the higher education institutions, which would decrease the risk not only in the financial system but also in the entire activity of universities.

✓ Another advantage, worthy of being taken over from Lithuania is the method of scholarship payment to the students having an average grade higher than 8. Higher

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education institutions are free in taking decisions for scholarships, while in Moldova the allocation of scholarships is regulated by the Government Decision nr. 1009 of September 1, 2006.

✓ Once passing to financial autonomy, the Republic of Moldova has to become market demand-oriented, while the education quality and all higher education institutions have to be accredited by the Quality Assurance Agency.

✓ In Lithuania, the Quality Assurance Agency consists of international experts (about 47%), also since 2013, the external evaluation is mandatory. According to statistics from Lithuania, the number of people with higher education is irrelevant among the unemployed.

This study offered the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and experience on strengthening the university autonomy, contributing to its better understanding through the example of Lithuania in order to minimize the risk and negative impact.