

**Educational policy two years since the beginning of the European Union-  
Republic of Moldova Action Plan:  
A New Direction for 2008 - 2011**

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## Summary

The analytic research called „Educational policy two years since the beginning of the European Union-Republic of Moldova Action Plan: a new direction for 2008-2011” reflects the current situation in the national educational system and spotlights how stipulations 75 and 76 of the EUMAP were implemented during 2006-2007. In this regard, this paper contains several recommendations for educational policies which are intended to stimulate reforms in this area.

This analytic research does not examine all topics concerning the 75<sup>th</sup> and 76<sup>th</sup> stipulation of the EUMAP. Moreover the aim of the document was not to repeat the issues stated in the previous reports made by commissioned governmental institutions or other educational organizations. The paper examines primary and secondary data on methods and procedures applied when implementing the Action Plan as well as their impact. When elaborating this paper, the following reference topics on EUMAP were used: access rate to higher education, synergy between external and internal partnerships, institutional development issues. By considering these topics when conducting the research, the author made a clear evaluation of how certain EUMAP objectives were implemented. In the meantime, this paper contains examples of some practices (both positive and negative) which are either new in the national educational system or were mentioned in previous researches.

This paper consists of two parts:

- The first is the methodological part which includes Chapter 1. This section examines the following topics: objective and scope of this analytical paper, methods used and their limits.
- The second part of this paper represents the analysis made in Chapters 2,3 and 4. It examines several aspects concerning the functioning of the national educational system in Republic of Moldova. These elements correspond to the objectives of harmonization of the national education to the European standards.

Thus:

- Chapter 2 studies the reforms and changes in the legal framework for accomplishing the Bologna Process requirements;
- Chapter 3 contains an analysis of the issues concerning the access to the educational services;
- Chapter 4 examines the aspects regarding academic mobility in the context of Republic of Moldova.

The second part of this paper reveals an analysis about systemic cooperation between providers of educational service, public policy community, stakeholders and higher education authorities. Also, information presented in these chapters touches upon developing a public-private collaboration, etc.

In order to make the analysis comprehensive, the following structure is preserved throughout the chapters:

- Analysis of the current situation;
- Applied governmental policies;
- Potential risks from noninterference or abusive intervention;
- Policy recommendations.

Recommendations made in this document should facilitate the implementation of the EUMAP objectives in order to become actively involved in the European educational system. For this, it is necessary to adopt new laws, liberalize the educational system, make changes in the admission procedures, intensify regional educational cooperation, take advantage of the experience of the neighbor countries for elaborating and harmonizing legal and institutional policies, create a new partnership in the educational area with Romania.

The conclusion of this paper implies that institutions commissioned for implementing objectives 75 and 76 of the EUMAP do not fulfill their responsibilities and some of the practices contradict the Bologna Process stipulations. Even though future collaboration initiatives with EU will stipulate new areas, this will become possible only after stipulations 75 and 76 of the EUMAC will be implemented efficiently.

## Introduction

### **From alliance to the active participation in the European educational sector**

The implementation of the European Union-Republic of Moldova Action Plan (EUMAP) is coming to the end. At the first sight, the 80 objectives proposed for implementation were supposed to change the situation. However, at the final stage of this project, few changes can be noticed while the number of declarations remained big. Nevertheless, even though the number of objectives that were implemented remains low, it is obvious that the movement for Europeanization cannot be stopped. This irreversible process regards not only: (1) intense cooperation with EU institutions, but also (2) internal approximation of the legislative, institutional etc, framework.

Education is considered to be complementary to EU practices, where the task of the educational bodies in the union is to provide support and coordinate specific programs within the community. In this regard, the educational policies developed in the member states have a European orientation. Even though, at first sight, education does not appear to be a policy for integration, collaboration in this area with EU can stimulate mutual talks between Republic of Moldova and EU on integration or Europeanization topic of the country. It is clear that as Republic of Moldova attempts to join EU, it is willing to improve public policies under the EU supervision. Therefore, education, besides having the role to preserve and transmit scientific knowledge and experience<sup>1</sup>, it should prepare the citizens of Republic of Moldova for a more intensive cooperation or integration with EU. According to the stipulations of the Concept for reforming the educational system in Republic of Moldova, national education has to conform to the current tendencies of the European education. In this context, taking into account that European education bears an integrative character, Republic of Moldova has to make legislative, institutional, methodological and curriculum adjustments. This is the only way for the national education to become competitive in the European community.

While in 2004, the need for these improvements was obvious, especially from the political point of view, then in 2006-2007 there were attempts to avoid a stronger cooperation in education with EU member states and pan European institutions working in this field. Several political and systemic factors explain this course of actions. The main factor is the over centralization of education, which was taking place in the past years, while the civil society was demanding decentralization. The second factor is the poor knowledge of European cooperation and integration topics. Third factor: while the modernization of the national education requires significant resources, preference is given to other areas considered to be more important; *“education is given priority when elaborating these policies”* remains a pure declaration. In the meantime, it can be noticed that the outcome of these factors is the isolation of the national education.

Taking into account that a modern education in Republic of Moldova is a pre-condition for European integration, at least in the context of stronger cooperation with EU, several measures have to be undertaken to accomplish these tasks. One of these measures is to improve the legal, institutional and methodological framework of Republic of Moldova, so that it fits the stipulations and practices of the EU member states. Another requirement is to explore the human resources. The third task implies the need for stronger inter institutional and interpersonal contacts (according to the *people to people* principles), which would lead to both vertical and horizontal multilateral mobility. The next step implies achieving decentralization in education by liberalizing all educational services, so that institutions working in this area have secure basis concerning the functioning of the national education – this may imply establishing a system for governing education.

However, bearing in mind that the implementation of the Action Plan is done vertically (speaking about educational system: from central governmental institutions to providers of educational services), it has to be mentioned that the impact of the Action Plan will result only after new cooperation between Republic of Moldova and European Union will become applicable.

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<sup>1</sup> According to art. 5 of the law on “Educational Framework of the Republic of Moldova”

## CHAPTER 1

### General Concept of the Document

The implementation of the Action Plan, or at least stipulations concerning educational policies, should reform the educational system, so that it becomes decentralized, liberalized, accessible, sustainable and with equal opportunities for everyone. These are some reference points revealing how to make the national education consistent, comparable and competitive with educational systems of the EU countries. If the national education is not adapted to the EU requirements, then Moldova will have a reduced access to the extra communitarian, pan European and communitarian programs. For this reason, Republic of Moldova should take rapid measures for harmonizing and opening its educational system to the European education.

#### 1.1. Object of study

It has to be mentioned that this paper is a continuation of the “Aspects concerning approximation of the higher education to the EU standards: educational and youth policies” research.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to assert that after publishing this document, and implementing the Action Plan, the national education has approximated the EU standards and specific communitarian stipulations. Therefore, this document is a continuation of the monitoring of the Action Plan objectives concerning educational policies:

Objective 75: ***Bring education and training system closer to EU Member state standards and to the Bologna process.***

1. *Implement legislative reform and other measures that will facilitate Moldova's adherence to the Bologna process (promote greater autonomy of Universities; modernize curricula, introduction of a credit system).*
2. *Use participation in the program Tempus III to explore the possibility of fostering the development of human resources and human capital.*
3. *Involve civil society stakeholders and social partners in higher education and VET reform.*
4. *Further implementation of a national program to introduce IT in education.*

Objective 76: ***Enhance co-operation in the field of education, training and youth***

1. *Support exchange and study opportunities for Moldovans, in particular through their participation in the Erasmus Mundus program*
2. *Enhance Moldovan participation in the Tempus III program*
3. *Prepare for possible extension of the Tempus program to the areas of vocational training as well as adult education*
4. *Enhance youth exchanges and cooperation in the field of non-formal education for young people*
5. *Increase promotion of intercultural dialogue, youth exchanges and co-operation in the field of non-formal education through the YOUTH program*

The general idea of this analytical document is the approximation of the educational system of Republic of Moldova to the communitarian and pan European practices and principles, so that it can meet the quality and competition of the European education. Based on what has been written previously, the purpose of this document remains to ***monitor and evaluate the current state***

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<sup>2</sup> This paper was presented in May 2006 and was elaborated in the framework of the „European Union – Republic of Moldova Action Plan: A Document Accessible to Public (stage I)”. This project was implemented by Analytical Center EXPERT-GRUP and Association for Participatory Democracy ADEPT.

**concerning Actions 1, 2, 3 and objectives 75 and 76 from the Action Plan; elaborate recommendations for succeeding stage of cooperation between Republic of Moldova and EU; implement planning documents scheduled to be applied starting with 2008.**

Therefore the monitor and evaluation of the stipulations from the Action Plan concerning educational policies are based on the following:

- Means how objectives 75 and 76 in EUMAP will be implemented.
- The impact of these objectives on the education and other fields.
- Elaborate reasonable recommendations for 2008 – 2011, specific both for National Development Plan and other programs in the educational field, accessible for 2007-2013 financial periods.

In this regard, this research does not cover the entire educational system in Republic of Moldova, except from the higher educational system (bachelors', masters'). However, this study examines few aspects specific to the secondary and vocational secondary education, complementary educational subsystem and lifelong educational subsystem.

## **1.2. Applied methodology**

The purpose for evaluating how objectives 75 and 76 of the Action Plan are implemented was to collect and conduct a systemic analysis of the primary and secondary data. The reference period of collecting the data is March 2005 – October 2007. The following methods and instruments were used for conducting this evaluation:

- **Reviewing the documents.** In this report, the main analytical documents containing information on monitoring process, reporting, which were elaborated by public and non governmental institutions from Republic of Moldova and some communitarian and pan European institutions working in the educational field, were analyzed. In order to support the statements in this work and conduct a further analysis, several data sources were used from the National Bureau of Statistics of Republic of Moldova, which reflect the work of the national educational institutions.
- **Interviews and discussions.** In order to understand to what extent the decision and managerial factors in the educational system are perceived and followed the stipulations from the Action Plan for approximation and cooperation in the education field, several interviews and discussions were conducted in different institutions: universities, agencies and departments for international relations and European cooperation, units/departments for counseling and professional guidance, specialized non governmental organizations etc. In this context, a special interview guide was elaborated, for emphasizing the main positive and negative aspects when accomplishing objectives 75 and 76 of the Action Plan. The outcome of these interviews and discussions was considered when making the research as well as elaborating the recommendations for this study.
- **Case studies.** One of the goals of this research was to evaluate the current state concerning implementation of the stipulations from the Action Plan. This is why to better understand this process there were case studies included in this paper in order to get a better view on this issue. They describe the means how certain actions were undertaken for approximating the system and reveal the results.

Until present moment, there have been several organizations, specialized bodies, consulting and informational agencies established in Republic of Moldova working to promote the general idea for adherence of Republic of Moldova to Bologna Process and enhancing cooperation in educational field. Moreover there are examples, in this document of new practices and institutions in the national field which were not mentioned in the previous studies and analyses.

### **1.3. Limits of the research**

One of the limits of this document was the reticence of the central authorities to participate in an interview or meeting, even though they constantly criticize and under evaluate the quality of previous analyses and evaluations (elaborated by the public policy organizations) on how the Action Plan is implemented concerning structural harmonization of the national education. It has to be mentioned that both foreign and local institutions, organizations and other entities used these researches as an information source. This is why one of the main limits of this study is the poor cooperation with specialized governmental agencies.<sup>3</sup>

Another concern relates to difficulties for collecting quantitative data. Before completing this analytical document the official statistical data regarding the state of the national educational system for 2007/2008 has not been published yet. Some statistical references will contain only approximations, which result from the normative and methodological basis.

### **1.4. Structure of the analysis**

The analysis of the measures concerning objectives from the Action Plan comprises three distinct dimensions, which are interrelated:

- The analysis of the actions regarding the reform and approximation of the legislative framework to the requirements of the Bologna Process is made in the second chapter;
- The analysis on aspects concerning easier access to educational services is written found in the third chapter;
- Issues concerning the academic mobility in the current context of Republic of Moldova are examined in the fourth chapter.

From the transversal point of view, the three chapters of this research reveal aspects and practices on other areas specific to the system and professional development process such as: systemic cooperation between providers of educational service with public policy organizations and stakeholders, governance in the higher educational system, partner diversification such as public-private and others.

In order to follow the coherent criteria and uniformity of the study dimensions, the following structure is preserved throughout the chapters:

- Analysis of the current situation;
- Applied governmental policies;
- Potential risks from noninterference or abusive intervention;
- Policy recommendations.

In the end, it has to be mentioned that recommendations derive from the range of problems stated above and correlate with the stipulations of the National Development Plan for 2007 – 2008. In the meantime these recommendations were drawn by considering the findings made in previous public policy researches elaborated by specialized institutions.

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<sup>3</sup> One of the complaints in address to specialized governmental institutions is the lack of a dialogue, public communication and transparency of their decisions. For example, the official page of the Ministry of Education and Youth offers a small range of information concerning legal documents, or regulations. Moreover, the page does not provide the possibility to use electronic services for interacting with respective officials. There are certain sections on the web site that have not been updated since the page was launched (for example, the section with statistical data). Having this, the user (or users of electronic information services) has the impression that the Ministry of Education and Youth does not work properly, while its employees are out of tasks.

## CHAPTER 2

### Aspects of the legal reform

The approximation of the educational system of Republic of Moldova to the EU standards and stipulations of the Bologna Process can not be accomplished without reforming the regulating framework and other regulations which have implications over this system. This is why the first step of the objective 75 in EUMAP is: ***“implementing legislative reform and other measures that will prepare Moldova’s adherence to the Bologna process (promoting greater autonomy of Universities; modernize curricula, introduction of a credit system)”***.

However, objective 75 in the Action Plan does not relate to the entire educational system, but to some of its components (vocational secondary education and higher education). In order to accomplish this objective, it is required that the new legislation will cover the remaining educational systems, in other words ensure a systemic integrity. This is why it is necessary to change the structure of national education in order to avoid breaches and disparities between levels and study cycles. The system has to be continuous, inclusive, mobile, entitled with decision making power, institutionally proactive and other.

#### 2.1. Analysis of the current situation

The reform of the national education system appears to be a continuous process which creates new obstacles rather than bring changes to certain operational matters. Thus, the reforms were inconsistent, in the framework of a decreasing quality of education, erosion of institutional autonomy and self governance, over centralization of the decision making process. In the first years of independence there were contravening tendencies registered concerning the legal framework and curricula development, which can be described by the following:

- Commissioned government institutions, were promoting the idea that they are entitled to determine the educational policy, while higher education institutions can provide only educational services;
- The role of the commissioned government institutions was to monitor how educational policies are implemented, by creating specialized independent agencies, while higher education entities were given institutional autonomy in the background of a decentralized system.

These contravening stipulations, determined several trends in this sector: instruments for financing educational and research programs, institutional accreditation and evaluation, policy decision making procedures and others.

The current framework regulating the educational system in Republic of Moldova is determined by the Law on Education nr. 547 – XIII, adopted on July 21, 1995. After a decade several stipulations contained in this law, start to contradict the current tendencies of the European educational system. During the pre-adherence and post-adherence period to the Bologna Process, both the content and methodology of the laws governing education were revised in order to meet the requirements. The text which will follow reflects the reformation and approximation of the legislation to the objectives of the Bologna Process and to the EU standards.

#### 2.2. Applied governmental policies

In this context, the approximation of the legislation regulating the national education to the Bologna Process objectives was accomplished with a single political decision. Therefore the need did not come directly from the beneficiaries of these changes. On May 24, 2004 the Republic of Moldova Higher Education Strategy was adopted in the framework of the Bologna Process. This strategy stipulated:

- Adopting higher educational system based on 3 cycles degree system;
- Introducing a system of easy readable and comparable degrees;

- Adopt an evaluation strategy, based on the European Credit Transferable System, as a means to promote student mobility;
- Encourage teacher, researchers and administrative staff mobility for professional development, teaching, research;
- Promote European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies;
- Promote positive development practices to the entire educational system.

The Higher Education Strategy of Republic of Moldova in the context of the Bologna Process preceded the Action Plan and gave the possibility to accomplish successfully the first stipulations of objective 75. It is a paradox, but if the strategy was implemented entirely, it could have changed the entire national higher education system. Unfortunately, it can be stated that central authorities were not willing to apply the entire document, which they earlier ratified. This is an evidence of the existing gap between adopting and implementing certain measures.

On May 5, 2005, the parliament of Republic of Moldova, adopted the Law 71-XVI which modifies the content of certain articles of the Law on education. The general idea behind this was the implementation of the two cycle higher education (cycle I – bachelors' studies; cycle II – masters' studies). This measure helped Republic of Moldova to accomplish the minimal requirements of the Bologna Process. As a result, on May 19, 2005, Republic of Moldova joined the Bologna Process, which spurred the gloom in the national education.

#### **CASE 1. Disseminating information about Moldova joining the Bologna Process at the Technical University of Moldova<sup>4</sup>**

In order to disseminate information about the Bologna Process in the Technical University of Moldova (TUM) in 2004-2007, several measures were undertaken to inform about the changes, including trainings and exchanges with experience. One of the means was to directly inform the beneficiaries by elaborating an electronic page called **“Approximating the engineering education to the European standards: steps taken in TUM”**. This page offers useful information regarding Bologna Process and its implications on TUM. It also contains a collection of legal and methodological documents, archives of presentations, reports, communicates, analyses, etc and description of projects which were implemented.

Being actively involved in promoting the Bologna Process, TUM attempted to explore the experience of other European technical universities. Thus, TUM participated in several academic mobility and European cooperation projects, for approximating national educational and administrative experience to the European norms, especially concerning engineering fields.

On July 7, 2005, the parliament of Republic of Moldova adopted the Law 142 – XVI, which stipulates the application of the new Register of fields and departments in Republic of Moldova. This register was elaborated according to the stipulations of the International Standard Classification of Education –ISCED-97, and EUROSTAT. Starting with December 2005, commissioned government institutions were working on the National Regulation Guide for Education. It was elaborated according to the European Regulation Guide for Education. In the meantime, the Regulation Guide for bachelor studies was modified during the 2005-2006 academic year. This helped the legislation to meet the minimal requirements of the Bologna Process.

In the context of modernization and Europeanization of the national education, the government of Republic of Moldova adopted decision nr. 863 from August 16, 2005 called Program for

<sup>4</sup> When elaborating this case study, the author used information found in the section called Adherence to the Bologna Process “Approximating the engineering education to the requirements of the European education: steps taken in TUM”. Information can be accessed at the following address: <http://www.utm.md/edu/index.html>.

Modernizing the National Education. After this program was announced, the government elaborated the General Concept of a Modern Education in Republic of Moldova. Respectively, in August 2005, the state published a set of laws intended to govern the national education as a system (through National Regulation Guide for Education) and to govern separate components (Law on general secondary education, Law on intermediate general cultural education<sup>5</sup>, Law on higher education).

The set of documents is a true revolution for the national education, as it was mentioned previously and debated by the public policy organizations working in this field and other entities (academic medium, professional institutions working in the field of education). Generally this set of laws helped to move forward the educational field and general public debates on issues concerning the systemic reform of the area, curricula management, relations between professional training and future employment, etc. These laws were examined also by experts from the Council of Europe. As a consequence, in July 2005 – August 2005, these changes created a positive impression about strong intentions of the country to continue its efforts for Europeanization of the national education as stipulated in objective 75 of the EUPAM.

After adopting the decision nr. 981 from August 25, 2006, the state approved the Concept for Modernizing the Education of Republic of Moldova. This document, along with other sets of laws, was forwarded for examination to the parliament of Moldova. However, in September 2006 – August 2007, the document remained untouched in the bureaus. Moreover, the president announced his intention to elaborate a new law for regulating the entire educational system. This is a true evidence of attempts to accomplish institutional blending and over centralization of the education. As a consequence the laws can not be examined, debated and adopted by the parliament.

## **CASE 2. Causes and effects of improper legislation for governing the education, after joining the Bologna Process**

In 2004 it was considered that the European integration of Republic of Moldova can be accomplished easier if the country starts playing an active role in the European education. Therefore the Bologna Process became an important goal for the local administration. In this context, the idea to join the Bologna Process was not an outcome of the need to reform the national education. It was rather a political willing. This state of matters contradicts the basic principles of the Bologna Process (the government should promote the needs of the educational institutions and not the political intentions of its structures). To some extent a centralized and unilateral approach was used when joining the Bologna Process, which generated several failures to occur in the following period. These failures are characterized by the following:

- Institutions commissioned to supervise this process, did not perceive the essence of this reform, its impact and potential risks related to approximation to the European standards;
- The direct beneficiaries of the educational services (especially upper secondary education students) were not informed appropriately about the changes to be introduced in the higher education starting with 2005-2006 and the implications on the upper secondary education;
- Not having expertise and necessary information, several institutions applied inadequately the key legal and normative stipulations (for example, the implementation of the European Credit Transfer System - ECTS, general confusions about the transition to a 3 year program – for bachelor studies, especially this was an abash for law or engineering specializations);
- Direct beneficiaries of the educational services and their affiliates, without having properly informed the public about the transition to a new system, started to make changes in the legislation, alter institutional principles and develop a new curriculum. Moreover commissioned institutions did not manage to create an organization which would facilitate these changes and

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<sup>5</sup> After debating in public the set of laws and receiving reference notes from experts of the Council of Europe, this law was entitled „Law on vocational secondary education and postsecondary professional education”.

approximation to the European standards of higher education. For example, none of the student organizations managed to obtain the observer status by the *European Union of Students* – ESU (former ESIB). As a result, students from Republic of Moldova are not represented in the specialized European institutions, even though some of these organizations participate in the programs initiated by the European institutions (for example, participating when elaborating „Bologna With Student Eyes 2007” administered by ESIB);

- Exchange with experience and the use of good practices remains low. Local institutions that provide educational service can not extend their collaboration programs with partner institutions from Europe because of the legal restrictions (for example, faculty salary or payment allocated to foreign experts visiting national institutions);
- The masters’ curriculum has not been prepared yet, while Academy of Science of Republic of Moldova intends to supervise and coordinate the issues concerning the second cycle of the higher education;
- Further, the start of doctors’ and post doctors’ studies is not certain yet. Academy of Science of Republic of Moldova has the power to regulate the methodological basis for these degrees. This type of regulation has a negative impact on the tertiary educational system as well as on universities that are considered simple institutions that deliver educational services and not organizations that generate programs and programs for research and innovation. Therefore Moldova lags behind the European research and scientific potential.

The improper application of these reforms generated confusion among providers of educational service and their beneficiaries. In these conditions labor market force continues to be isolated. Thus, the informational campaigns concerning legal, institutional and curriculum reforms did not cover all beneficiaries. Even though there have been special teams created within universities to promote the idea of the Bologna Process, they continue to function only on paper.

The monitor report of the Parliament Assembly of the Council of Europe on progress of Republic of Moldova, published on September 14, 2007, reflects that the government lags behind with adoption of laws as it was scheduled according to the program<sup>6</sup>. As a result, the point 16.1.2 of the Resolution 1572, concerning the progress of Republic of Moldova on its obligations, adopted on October 2, 2007, implies the need for the country to adopt the set of laws concerning the educational field, taking into account the recommendations made by the experts of the Council of Europe.

It has to be mentioned that most of the legal reforms were made in 2005. After this dynamic period, the debates on these issues have decreased significantly, while the legal reforms came to a standstill. Legal and normative reforms were implemented according to the “step forward step backward” principle. For example, the set of laws intended to govern the education with stipulations for approximating to the European and Bologna Process standards were not adopted by the Parliament. According to the schedule, these laws had to be adopted during the 2007/2008 academic year.

### **CASE 3. Georgia – a successful model in implementing the Bologna Process objectives<sup>7</sup>**

Unlike Republic of Moldova, Georgia being a country that joined Bologna Process along with Moldova is considered to be a successful example of implementing the Bologna Process principles.

<sup>6</sup> For example, chapter 213 is dedicated to reflecting this aspect, while paragraph 15 makes reference to general accomplishments and missing points when honoring the obligations. According to: *Honouring of obligations and commitments by Moldova*, Doc. 11374 from September 14, 2007. This document can be viewed at: <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/WorkingDocs/Doc07/EDOC11374.htm>, last date the document was accessed is 11. 10. 2007.

<sup>7</sup> When elaborating this case study the author used the report called „Tendencies V: Universities shaping the European Higher Education” EUA, Brussels, 2007 and Report „Georgia’s Democratic Transformation: an Update Since the Rose Revolution”, Government of Georgia, January 2007.

It applied more efficiently the stipulations than some countries that initiated the process. The report called „Tendencies V: Universities shaping the European Higher Education”, elaborated by the *European University Association* – EUA was published on the eve of the Ministerial Conference of the Bologna Process. The report reveals that EUA researchers are pleasantly surprised with the progress and success registered in Georgia concerning the Bologna Process objectives.

According to this report, Georgia implemented several educational policies concerning: eradicating corruption in education, transition to a 3 cycle study program, continuous improving of educational services, academic mobility – especially the return of people who left, implementing the ECTS etc. Georgian institutions were well informed about aspects which need to be accomplished. As a consequence, these institutions were motivated to participate actively and assume responsibility when elaborating national legislation in this field, exploring positive foreign and local experience to its advantage. Opinions and recommendations of institutions that were involved in this process were all taken into consideration when elaborating and adopting the legislation and methodology.

Now, in Georgia there is a new law according to which higher education institutions receive full autonomy and a uniform system for accreditation based on university programs. Upon accomplishing this liberalization of the education, a new admission policy to higher education was adopted. The application of a Standard Admission Exam, helped to reduce corruption and create an efficient mechanism aimed at facilitating professional decision making process.

In addition to this, the Georgian government allocated grants to make connection between research and educational programs. This was later accomplished by extending the direct participation of the private profit and non profit institutions.

Today the Georgian government is willing to: educate and train the faculty and administration; improve the teaching and evaluation methods as well as study programs; create professional development centers; create the necessary infrastructure for delivering qualitative and competitive educational services.

In conclusion, Georgia represents a good example for Republic of Moldova, which can be used according to the recommendations of the EUA for exchange with experience on the regional level.

### **2.3. Potential risks from excessive intervention or non-intervention;**

In this context the most important risk is that the Republic of Moldova will remain an observer, rather than play an active role in shaping European education. If new legislation is not adopted, education in Republic of Moldova will continue to depend on centralized and authoritarian mechanisms. Moreover, national education may become isolated if to continue rejecting partnership programs with EU and other countries. This will be the outcome of lagging behind with approximation of national legislation to the EU requirements (institutional autonomy and independent of decision making process, decision making transparency, allocating financial resources from the state budget based on performance and relevance criteria etc.).

Certain strategic measures may not be accomplished or implemented with delay because the Bologna Process is a rapid moving program and as Moldova is geographically closer to the EU, the country makes significant efforts towards integration. As a consequence, national education, especially higher education, will lag behind, which will have a negative on higher education and research competitiveness in Europe.

If the new legislation is not adopted, this will diminish the capacity to absorb financial resources planned for 2008-2010. Therefore, in particular higher education institutions will not be capable to conduct projects and other activities, if there is no adequate methodological and normative basis. As a consequence, they will not be able to become pillar factors and promoters of the regional development, or competitive on regional and pan European levels. Higher education and research institutions will continue to receive funding from the state budget. The synergy between

professional development services and research will not be accomplished if universities are further considered to deliver only educational services.

The image of the Moldovan education will be harmed if the country continues to ignore participation in at least on the European level in some student organizations (such as *European Union of Students*). In the meantime, student organizations will be incapable to negotiate and to support their point of view, to generate new topics for public debate, to elaborate some large scale research (competitive with similar studies done by public policy institutions), express their view concerning social trends.

#### **2.4 Politicians' recommendations/ recommendations made by politicians**

- Adopt new laws (to govern the national education).
- Create an educational pact regarding liberalization policies of the higher education, vocational secondary education and intermediate general education; creating a comprehensive legal framework for accomplishing autonomy of the universities in such areas as institutional funding, management, elaborating curricula, establish admission policies, etc.
- Reform the legislation on funding measures for higher education, vocational secondary and intermediate general education institutions;
- Creating consortiums of higher education, vocational secondary and intermediate general education institutions according to special criteria, managerial and area of interest.
- Consolidating a viable national organization for students which could apply for *European Union of Students* member status.

## CHAPTER 3

### The paradox concerning the access to the educational services

Even if the Republic of Moldova – European Union Action Plan does not clearly address the education accessibility, this idea is stipulated by objective 75. One of the principles of the Bologna Process is the accessibility to education: the way a person can benefit from the educational system, and how the educational system works as a whole for the benefit of its participants. According to this principle, it is very important to analyze if people are assured with a transparent, reasonable, and continuous access to education (the education continuity should be assured when pursuing studies after the secondary professional level, or when pursuing a Master Degree after obtaining a Bachelor Degree). Therefore, the above-mentioned objective focuses mainly on the accessibility to educational system, and in some cases it refers to system continuity in regard to the professional training and career planning.

#### 3.1 The overview of the situation

Until 2007 the number of students has constantly increased despite a demographic decrease. Thus, in the 1997/1998 academic year, 65 525 students were doing their studies in the higher educational institutions, in the 2003/2004 academic year there were 104 029 students, in the 2004/2005 academic year – 114 552 students, in the 2005/2006 academic year – 126 132 students, and in the 2006/2007 academic year – 127 997 students.

In the last two years there have been registered a significant decrease of the number of students who entered higher education institutions. Due to a governmental intervention in the education, the access to education has been considerably restricted for some categories of people. For example, for the 2007/2008 academic year the number of enrolled students was 23 085 (17.2 % less than in 2006/2007), in 2006/2007 there were 25 854 enrolled students (25% less than in 2005/2006), in 2005/2006 - 34 553 students enrolled, while in 2003/2004 – 30 150 students. Until 2006 the number of students entering higher education was registering a slow but stable growth. During this period the governmental institutions responsible for regulating admission process, imposed few if any restrictions at all. In addition to this, analyzing the statistical data before 2000, we can conclude that the number of students almost doubled. For example, in 1997 there were 180 students per 10 thousands people<sup>8</sup>, while in 2005 according to statistical data, this ratio increased to 351 students.<sup>9</sup> This proves that until 2006/2007 there was a flexible and unlimited access to higher education. Practically every student after graduating from the high school could enter a university, without a considerable effort. By making an extrapolation it can be revealed that higher education became the cheapest public service. Having this, universities do not have proper tools for delivering quality services, and do not consider revising the real costs for education professionals. From the above-mentioned facts, it is obvious that a large number of students cannot ensure a sustainable economic and social development of the Republic of Moldova. Furthermore, it is obvious that the big number of students does not meet the real needs and absorption capacity of the labor market and results in brain drain. In this situation governments' intervention was absolutely necessary and justified.

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<sup>8</sup> According to statistical data published by the National Bureau of Statistics from the Republic of Moldova on the 27th of January 2005 in the „Education (1997/1998 – 2004/2005)” report. This document can be accessed at: [http://www.statistica.md/statistics/dat/742/ro/Invatamint\\_1997\\_2005\\_ro.htm](http://www.statistica.md/statistics/dat/742/ro/Invatamint_1997_2005_ro.htm), the website was last time visited on the 21st of February 2006

<sup>9</sup> According to the “The activity of the professional higher education institutions during 2006-2007” informative note published by the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. The content may be accessed at: [http://www.statistica.md/statistics/dat/896/ro/invatamintul\\_superior\\_2006\\_2007.pdf](http://www.statistica.md/statistics/dat/896/ro/invatamintul_superior_2006_2007.pdf), it was last time visited on the 25th of September 2007

However, this intervention was too drastic, and it has infringed on some citizens' rights, such as right to higher education.

### **3.2 The implemented governmental policies**

Starting with the 2006/2007 academic year, the number of students admitted to the higher education institutions has been limited. This method has been actually used in 2005, but only for the vocational secondary education. The admission process is very much similar with the practice used in the Soviet Union: the elaboration of a state plan that regulates the admission process for the vocational secondary education or higher institutions, according to the needs of the national economy that are planned for a few years ahead. Thus, the plan stipulates the number of students to be enrolled, both receiving a state scholarship and paying the tuition. This plan had an impact on the private education institutions, which have to comply with it. Thus admission to higher education, a certain quote for each specialization is applied. Having this quota, every higher education institutions (state owned or private) detains its own share, according to some evaluations of the quality indicators.

In this process The Ministry of Youth and Education is an executive institution concerning the admission process policy, and it does not take any decision by itself. The Ministry of Economy and Commerce was responsible for elaborating the policy, and further introduced the following documents: (a) National economy demand for graduates holding vocational secondary education for the period of 2007-2011, and (b) National economy demand for people holding higher education degree for the period 2007-2011. These forecasts are based on a demand analysis made by some central or local public institutions. Thus, the forecast did not take into the account the needs of the private sector concerning the demand of labor force. The Ministry of Economy and Trade has promoted through this policy a rigid, unilateral, and centralized planning of the educational system, while increasing the social inequality, especially in regard to the age of people and the field of specialization.

Therefore, the government did not run an informational campaign on explaining the arguments for having such an admission process. Even if the governmental institutions declared starting from November – December 2005 that such an admission can be applied, the decisions for having it was adopted with certain constraints, when potential students were busy with passing the high school exams, and had no time to debate it.

This policy was based on the following arguments:

- There is an excess of supply of graduates holding degrees in law, economics, international relations, and political sciences, while there is a high demand for faculty, agriculture, arts, and engineering graduates;
- The majority of the universities focus on enrolling a large number of students disregarding the quality of education (they do not provide enough rooms for studying and internships opportunities, there is a lack of skilled teachers, no adequate studying and recreational infrastructure, etc.);
- Bribing becomes more popular during the admission process. This is why the new admission policy examined students' general pre-university preparation, achievements in respective field and communication skills of the applicants.

Based on these arguments it can be concluded that the governmental institutions have decided to intervene on the market without debating the new admission process in public; without any feasibility studies elaborated by commissioned institutions working on public policies; without participation of the interested parties, or the opinion of the direct beneficiaries. Thus, the Government is fully responsible for this policy, and it can be considered as a failure to meet the modern requirements of our society.

Having met resistance from the public policy institutions, several associations in the educational sector, different student organizations, and some political parties, the governmental institutions did not want to debate or reconsider the respective policy. The institutions specialized in public policies tried to establish a dialogue in this field by providing analytical researches and policy recommendations, but without any effect. State institutions proved to be reserved and critical in this respect, especially concerning the experts and institutions that have analyzed the process and the outcome of this policy. Thus, the civil society representatives and the civil society were unable to contribute to reforming the vocational secondary and higher education. As a result, the principles of dialogue and cooperation in different sectors have not been respected, and the third part of the objective 75 of the Action Plan has not been honored.

**CASE 4: The admission plan for the 2007/2008 academic year: the application and admission processes.**

The admission plan for the 2007 / 2008 year has advantaged the applicants for the vocational secondary education institutions. For example, for the vocational secondary education level there were 7.5 % (19 035) more places than in 2006 / 2007 (17 710), while the number of places for the higher education was reduced by 17.2 %. For the 2007 / 2008 academic year it was planned to enroll 23 085 students, out of which financial aid was provided to 7 875 students (4.9 % more than in the previous year), and 15 210 students had to pay the tuition.

It can be observed some similarities that tend to become tendencies, between the first and the second year of policy implementation. They are as follows:

- the admission requirements have been introduced in a secret way and have been advertised shortly before the admission period (late May);
- the demand for specializations related to Marketing (international relations and political studies, law, economics, etc.) is still high;
- in some cases there was a second round of the application process (for the specializations of pedagogy, agriculture, etc.);
- the applicants were confused, unsure, and stressed due to the absence of relevant and reliable information;
- the educational institutions could not objectively promote their specializations due to the lack of certain and reliable information about admission period, entry requirements, and the number of available places.

After the Republic of Moldova joined the Bologna Process, the situation of some groups of students considerably improved. Thus, the Government Decision nr 1009 from the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2006, introduced the Regulation on granting scholarships to the students from higher education and secondary professional institutions, as well as to post-graduates. In addition to this, the size of the scholarships was gradually increased, and the range of students who can benefit from these scholarships increased. In order to stimulate high educational performances a big variety of scholarships have been introduced and advertised, including the Presidential Scholarship. Furthermore, it became possible to grant some scholarships based on educational merits on a bilateral and multilateral basis, like the scholarships offered by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and the German Bundestag within the *Internationales Parlaments Stipendium* program. However, the educational system still has a lot of deficiencies. Several social problems have not been solved due to the lack of the partnership in the field of education between the public and the private sector.

From 2006 some universities started career centers. Some of these centers opened on students' demands, others as a result of some external projects. For example, in the 2007-2008 such a center appeared at the Technical University of Moldova.<sup>10</sup> The State University of Moldova also has a career center, which has been functioning for many years, and focuses both on the EU-SUM cooperation, and on providing counseling and professional trainings to students.

### **3.3 The possible risks that may arise from a vehement intervention or non-intervention**

Analyzing the situation it is clear that the continuation of such a policy imposes some risks that may severely impact both the further economic and social development of the Republic of Moldova, and the country competitiveness in the European educational sphere. By limiting the number of students that pay tuition would represent one of the major risks for the educational system, which experiences a financial crisis at the moment. The higher education institutions do not have the proper mechanisms for gathering and managing financial resources, and they still depend on the state budget support and the money they collect from tuition fees. The higher education institutions are not allowed by law to run any other entrepreneurial activities. The commercial effect of the tertiary studies still persists, when the priority is given to issuing a diploma, rather than improve education quality. Implicitly, this has a severe impact on the sustainable and balanced economic development of the Republic of Moldova. If the government does not establish an autonomous institution for evaluating and accrediting the universities, this situation will work in favor to the politicians, without paying attention to the quality of education. By promoting such an admission method, the universities are converted into simple institutions that provide educational services – being entirely subordinated to the government. As a result, they cannot contribute to innovation and social progress, and their role in the sustainable development of the Republic of Moldova is insignificant.

A second major risk represents the forced orientation of the students to some specializations that are highly demanded on the market. However, after a short period of time, it will be obvious that in future the demand will rise for areas of study which have seen this restriction. This regulation is justified only when every individual is given the freedom to approve financial aid of the state. Through such a policy, it will not be possible to have a successful coordination between the higher education and the labor market. A state intervention will deepen labor market crisis. Because higher education institutions do not meet the labor market needs, they have to adjust to skills and preferences of their direct beneficiaries.

The third major risk is that low access to education, the continuous education services will remain underdeveloped. In this situation, students are not motivated to enroll in programs that are specific for the university level, especially the Master programs and the programs of continuous development. At the same time, it can be noticed that the participation of the Republic Moldova in the community actions within the Lifelong Educational Integrated Program, but also within other programs with a focus on the educational field, will remain reduced.

The fourth risk refers to the emotional-cognitive aspect of the applicants, and eventually of the beneficiaries of the educational services. The centralized, rigid, and coercive admission process encourages the development of an inadaptability spirit, confusion and social stress, which directly reflects on the quality of the educational system, but also on the integration in the educational process, and on the professional development. Thus, if the admission process will not meet the social needs, the students will show poor studying and professional results, mainly because they were imposed to learn something that they do not like.

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<sup>10</sup> According to :”TUM establishes a Career Center”, Info-Prim Neo news agency, 20th of October 2007. This information can be read online at : <http://www.info-prim.md/?x=&y=11016>, last time visited on the 20th of October 2007.

The fifth risk can directly affect the students and the labor force mobility. The educational system pays attention only to the demands and needs of the internal labor market, without considering the general trends on the regional and European level. In this situation, the internal educational system will remain isolated, and the absorption capacity of the foreign students will be insignificant. The Republic of Moldova will become a country of emigrants, not of immigrants. As a result, the labor market will welcome the students that will obtain their degrees abroad, while the graduates from the local institutions will be disadvantaged, even though some programs of professional development from Moldova are much better than abroad.

Taking into account all these risks, it can be concluded that such an admission method is harming the national economy, and it contradicts the principles of the Bologna Process, to which the Republic of Moldova is also part. Therefore, the attempt of adjusting the educational system of the Republic of Moldova to the European standards by implementing this policy of accessing the educational services can be considered a failure. Through this policy, the educational system from the Republic of Moldova differs radically from the principles of the Bologna Process, and the efforts of adjusting the legislation are compensated by the rigid and coercive access into the higher education institutions.

### **3.4 Policy recommendations**

- Reforming the admission process of the higher education institutions by creating an autonomous agency (at the level of Ministries), responsible for creating and monitoring the normative framework. Every higher education institution will implement its own framework according to its possibilities and students' needs.
- Ensuring the access to higher education for all people – by developing a lifelong educational program.
- Elaborating a quantitative and qualitative research on the evaluation of the admission process to the higher education.
- Creating a common research and experimental basis – by cooperating with and integrating the nongovernmental and non-for-profit sectors.
- Creating a network of centers focused on providing information, counseling, and professional orientation, as a virtual base for guiding and counseling.
- Active participation, on the community and regional level, in the programs and projects specialized in the higher education to which The Republic of Moldova is eligible.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Academic mobility: exploring the opportunities**

The objective 76 of the Action Plan is based on an intensified educational cooperation within the European educational area. In this respect, the intensified cooperation in education means the utilization of academic mobility of the students, teachers, and the management personnel. We can integrate faster and with more confidence in the European Union if the mobility will become a common issue, and if knowledge and skills accumulated as a result of it will be introduced in the daily life. This is why the objective 76 puts such a great emphasis on this type of interaction between people.

According to the provisions of the „National Indicative Program 2007 – 2010 for the Republic of Moldova”, elaborated by the European Commission, for academic mobility in the context of the Republic of Moldova to be fully explored to the benefit of the economic and social growth, it is necessary that these measures become:

- (a) become accessible for direct beneficiaries;
- (b) motivate students to return to their home universities.

The second condition it is not so easy to accomplish for the Republic of Moldova, because students prefer not to return to their home university or community, or maybe the home institutions do not offer these students all the needed opportunities in order to make their return really motivating and exciting.

#### **4.1 Analysis of the current situation**

Currently the mobility in the Republic of Moldova is perceived as an opportunity for the beneficiaries to leave the country, without returning back and disseminating their acquired skills and knowledge. The educational system is responsible for promoting such a reaction. This becomes possible to the following reasons:

- 1) insufficient capitalization of the students’ performance during the studying and researching process;
- 2) the opportunities for personal motivation and growth are insignificant, and the relation cost / quality is inconsistent;
- 3) the lack of the necessary infrastructure and resources for achieving high results in the field of education and research (laboratories, libraries, access to databases).

It is obvious that these arguments refer more to the personal growth than to exchange of experience, information, and culture, but unfortunately, this phenomenon has become a normal thing for the Republic of Moldova. The objective 76 of the European Union – Republic of Moldova Action Plan focuses on the intensification of all types of cooperation: academic mobility, professional mobility, intercultural mobility, mobility for the experience exchange, informational and documentation mobility, volunteers’ mobility, etc. Thus, the educational system from the Republic of Moldova should already comprise the mobility practices, which is not done yet.

In the last years, the Republic of Moldova receives greater benefits from mobility programs from the point of view of studies, researches, internships, or volunteerism. Some of these programs are developed by the European universities or associations of universities; others are implemented as a result of some community programs. It is a common thing for the mobility programs to be accompanied by different projects on research, information and documentation, experience exchange, etc. Thus, the value added by the mobility programs does not only reflect on the direct beneficiaries, but also on the institutions that participate in them.

The number of people that want to participate in programs of academic, research, and volunteerism mobility is constantly increasing. Insistent people obtain funding from different donor or educational institutions, and even from corporations and several institutions that work for profit. At the same time, the share of the Republic of Moldova in the Erasmus Mundus Program “External Cooperation

Window” has been considerably increased: in 2006 have been offered 6 scholarships, while in 2007 already 55 scholarships.

The uncertainty and the confusion expressed by the educational institutions (especially by universities) have a negative impact on the bilateral and multilateral partnerships. Because of the centralized system and viable university autonomy, the educational institutions cannot negotiate and sign partnership agreements with similar institutions from the neighbor countries. Even if the partnership agreements are signed, they can not be efficiently implemented, because of different bureaucratic and financial aspects that come out of the normative framework.

#### **CASE 5: The contribution of the Tempus Program for establishing partnerships between the higher education institutions from the Republic of Moldova**

In the last two years Tempus Program implementation, the selected projects have applied the principle of a gradual partnership (from national partnerships to community and extra-community partnerships, and vice versa). In order to receive funding for a project from the Tempus Program, the higher education institutions establish at the same time both external partnerships (from the community area), and internal ones – according to the fields of specialization and their needs. Even though this is not one of the most important goals of the Tempus Program, this double partnership scheme is working efficiently against institutional isolation and internal problems, and thus the program value added in the Republic of Moldova is the creation of a common basis, while attracting more funds and managing them more efficiently. As a result, this policy encourages:

- The creation of internal associations of universities based on common interests, academic and administrative needs;
- Exchange of experience and information between the institutions located in the capital city and in the regions (Balti, Cahul, Comrat, Taraclia);
- Implementation of the horizontal interuniversity mobility both on the internal and external level;
- Development of common programs for the Bachelor and Master studies, programs of continuous development, large research projects, entrepreneurial projects for the institutional development;
- Possibility to apply for other community programs sponsored by foreign donors or by internal programs (for example, specific regional development programs);
- Development of the regional institutions and boosting actions for regional development of the Republic of Moldova;
- Improvement of the quality of students’ education and internships;
- Interconnection between the central level (Chisinau), and the local one (districts);
- Improvement of the competitiveness of the national educational system on an international level;
- Multiplication and consolidation of the external strategic partnerships, and an active participation within the multilateral strategic projects.

As a result of this policy, the creation of university consortiums will be accomplished on a vertical scheme. Even though a community institution establishes the requirements, they are not mandatory, but just recommend the creation of partnerships on a national level. The applicant institutions perceive this situation, which helps to overcome the isolation and the internal problems. The fact that this policy will be implemented from the lower level of the educational system will have important and positive consequences on the revival of the social and economic life of the Republic of Moldova, and on its sustainable regional development. It is worth mentioning that as compared to other countries, the Republic of Moldova is one of the most active participants in the Tempus Program, especially when speaking about the quality of the implemented projects.

As it has been previously mentioned, today there is a one way mobility – from the Republic of Moldova to the neighbor countries or to the countries from the West. The number of foreign students that come to study in the Republic of Moldova remains small. The higher education institutions do not have the corresponding curricula, counseling, and housing infrastructure necessary for this type of activity (classes held in foreign languages, accommodation facilities, and career centers).

#### **4.2 Applied governmental policies**

The governmental policy was concentrated more on creation and development of a legal and normative infrastructure, than on creating a greater mobility. Thus, in 2004 the Republic of Moldova became a member of the ENI-NARIC network that facilitated the organization to establish partnerships and the exchange of information and knowledge between the member countries. The Department of recognition and validation of graduation certificates within the Ministry of Education and Youth (MEY) was reformed in order to facilitate the academic mobility, and on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2006 MEY has approved the Regulation on students' and teachers' mobility. At the same time, in March 2006 the Guide on the implementation of the National Credit System in the field of Education has been elaborated, so that ECTS will start efficiently function within the national educational system. However, the direct beneficiaries do not fully understand the way the credits are calculated or transferred, despite the fact that MEY carried out seminars and trainings with the with guests from higher education institutions, and functionaries that are responsible of the implementation and monitoring of ECTS. The students think that the allocation of credits is done on the basis of the course importance and the rank of the professor that is teaching the course, and that the obtained credits will not help them at all for their professional development. Thus, if from the point of view of the normative and institutional framework it can be said that the ECTS has been implemented, from the point of view of its application and utilization it still lacks many things, for example the distribution of credits, their transferability, etc.

Even now, state authorities firmly believe that the mobility is a way of „escaping” the country and never coming back. The inflexible position of the governmental authorities always favors some “traditional” and “political convenient” bilateral agreements, which do not actually reflect the population needs. These agreements are focused on some well pre-established categories of people (like for example, the scholarships for the Ukrainians), while other people cannot benefit from them. In some cases, the agreements that do not actually correspond to the official position are refused, although they might be more advantageous. This is the case of the bilateral agreement with Romania, which was promised to be signed, but in reality its implementation is delayed by the both parts.

Until recently, the Ministry of Education and Youth did not manage to implement the basic mobility programs from the South-Eastern part of Europe in the Republic of Moldova, like the CEEPUS program, or to become an initiator for a regional program of educational mobility.

Most of times, the selection process by the governmental authorities is done in almost no transparency, to the big dissatisfaction of the public opinion. Thus, the mobility is thought as a field totally controlled by the specialized governmental institutions. Because of this opinion, it has been created a situation when the other public institutions are directly dependable on the position of the Government.

#### **4.3 Potential risks from excessive intervention or non-intervention**

The lack of promotion of the mobility programs that the Republic of Moldova joined can have a negative impact over the students' motivation and performances. At the same time, the access restriction to the academic mobility programs, by refusing to sign some agreements or delaying the establishment of some bilateral or multilateral agreements in the field of education, can contribute to

a non-controlled academic migration with multiple social and economic results. As a result, people involved in the mobility process are prone to leave the country for good, and not of coming back and share the knowledge they acquired.

The inadequate application of the legislation will have a negative impact on the number of people participating in the academic mobility programs. The inadequate infrastructure (accommodation facilities), the absence of the adaptation services (informational and guidance programs), the study programs differences (the absence of studying programs offered in foreign languages largely accepted in the European Union), make the national educational system unattractive. In addition to this, the absence of the services and informational materials regarding the national educational system that should be available to any European citizen will add uncertainty when deciding whether to come to Moldova through the academic mobility programs or not.

#### **4.4 Policy recommendations**

- Initiate a regional mobility program through a multilateral partnership with EU or non-EU countries: Romania, Ukraine, and Poland; Moldova, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovak Republic, Georgia, etc. This program will be aimed at transferring the knowledge and skills from the EU member countries to the EU neighbor countries (potential EU candidates).
- Create an autonomous agency that will monitor and facilitate the implementation of the internal and external academic mobility programs.
- Conduct a comprehensive research on the academic mobility in the Republic of Moldova and the value added by this mobility to the social and economic development of the country.
- Improve the political situation between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Romanian Government; sign the bilateral agreement on education and intensify the academic mobility, the exchange of experience, and joined participation in some regional programs and projects, etc.
- Implement a program for stimulating Moldovan students who left to study abroad to return home (*brain gain*) – by offering consistent scholarships, tax facilities, and institutional warranty for becoming teachers.
- Explore the experience of the Erasmus Mundus program participants, by creating a webpage and online forum.
- Publish guidelines and informational materials that will help people stay informed about the mobility opportunities.
- Carry out a promotional campaign about the educational system of the Republic of Moldova.

## Conclusions

During the implementation of the European Union – Republic of Moldova Action Plan there have been introduced sound reforms, but also anti-reforms or policies which delay changes of the educational system. In such circumstances, the educational system was not able to address all the political, social, and economic challenges. While in 2004 it was considered that the Republic of Moldova could easier integrate in the European Union if it played a more active part in the European educational area, then today this statement of purpose is considered to be a pure declaration. The Republic of Moldova has become part of the European educational area, but through its policies it can be interpreted as a less active party, responsible for generating positive practices. It can be even said that the Republic of Moldova is a passive party, with certain failures in the background, as compared to other countries that have joined the Bologna Process at the same time (for example, Georgia).

As it has been previously stated in this analytic document, the legislative approximation, according to the objective 76 of the Action Plan, and especially in accordance with the first article of this objective, has been done partially. It appears that it was necessary to change the law only for joining the Bologna Process, while the system has not been changed, and there were no new mechanisms for enhancing competitiveness in the European educational area (the decentralization of the system, institutional autonomy and self-governance, reform of the curricula, intensification of the mobility process, etc.).

At the same time, changing the law was not transparent. By refusing to vote a set of laws concerning the education, there has been little attention paid to public discussions and debates. After what the hard work has been ignored, public policy community, and civil society stakeholders have been disappointed with the incoherence of the commissioned institutions, lack of interest from the parliament, and the incomprehensible interference from the state. If this very first action cannot be efficiently implemented, then also all other efforts of the active participation within the community programs cannot be realized.

As it has been mentioned in the paper, national education remains to be closed, rigid and promotes social inequity, rather than being open, flexible to social needs. This paper has showed that changing national education in order to foster the European integration contradicts the Bologna Process objectives.<sup>11</sup> This will have negative consequences on the academic mobility, greater cooperation within community programs, promotion of high quality education within the European educational area, etc. Thus, if commissioned state institutions continue to use a centralized, rigid, and biased policy during the admission process this will only isolate education of the Republic of Moldova. All together, the inconsistency and the incoherence of the policies promoted by the state institutions have only worsened the lamentable situation concerning funding issues, curricula and research programs development.

At the same time, the analytical paper outlines that the benefit from cooperation with public policy organizations, social and civil society stakeholders has not been explored yet.

In the end, taking into account the fact that the Republic of Moldova joined the Bologna Process and its intentions to play an active role in European education, as well as considering positive results registered when implementing the Action Plan, it can be stated that the Moldova educational system did not progressed, but it regressed. This is the reason why there should be a new stimulus for the national educational to compensate all the missing opportunities. At the same time, it is necessary to formulate more explicitly the future relations between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union, both from the point of view of the objectives and actions, and of performance indicators.

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<sup>11</sup> See „The strategy of the higher education system from the Republic of Moldova according to the Bologna Process”

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