PBLMD

PBL: UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINS AND IMPLEMENTING NEW TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

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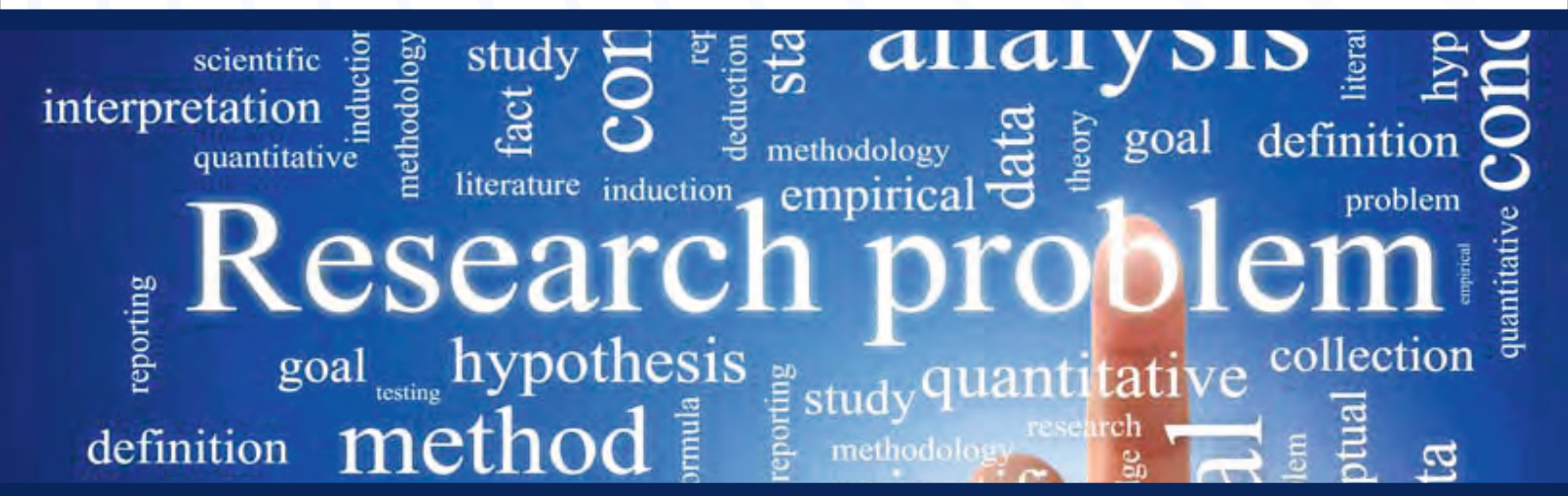

Erasmus+

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Ref: PBLMD project implementation: Derogation request

Dear Minister Corina Fusu

I am writing on behalf of the project management team and the external quality auditors of the PBLMD ERASMUS+ project which I coordinate to seek your support to ensure the successful implementation of the project. The project objective is to develop six *pilot* study programmes that will introduce innovative problem based learning (PBL) methodologies and methods from September 2017.

To achieve the project objective we request your permission to derogate from the current regulatory Framework to implement in full the innovative PBL teaching and learning methodologies in these six *pilot* study programmes: BSc in Business Administration (ASEM); BSc in Information Technology (UTM); BSc in Law (USM); BSc in Public Administration (BSU); BSc in Entrepreneurship and Business Administration (CSU); BA in Medicine (SUMPh).

During the first year of the project the local teams conducted benchmark analyses with EU project partners comparing learning and teaching methodologies and study programmes with approaches and structures in Moldova. The findings of this exercise were presented and reviewed last year at the project conference in October. We were pleased to have the opportunity to share these findings with you during your visit to Copenhagen.

The findings point to bottlenecks that will prevent the successful implementation of the *pilot* innovative study programmes. Consequently we seek your support to derogate from the current regulatory Framework in the following areas and *with specific reference only to the named programmes*:

1. Waive restrictions on curriculum content change and development
2. Waive restrictions on determining curriculum structure so that programmes may be developed on a modular basis
3. Waive restrictions on allocating ECTS credits in relation to the modular structure most appropriate for the programme and not restricted by the current Framework, and not be limited in the number of projects overall or in a semester. NB: In planning the curriculum the teams will pay close attention to the ECTS Guide 2015 in relation to student workload
4. Waive restrictions on allocation of hours to teaching and learning, allowing hours for semester project supervision to be counted as direct contact

The teams will be finalizing their pilot study programmes in February 2017 aiming to start promoting them immediately after to prospective students. In May 2017 EU project partners will be travelling to Moldova to work with local teams to fine-tune the study programme implementation. The above waivers are critical to the successful, effective and efficient implementation of these innovative, *pilot* study programmes. The implementation process is subject to peer evaluation and quality assurance. The implementation teams will report to the Ministry the evaluation results suggesting ways to further enhance teaching and learning methodologies and methods in Higher Education of Moldova.

Your support is highly appreciated on this quest of ours. Look forward to hear from you.

Sincerely yours,

Romeo V. Turcan

Copy of the letter sent to: ANACIP; ERASMUS+ National Office Moldova; John Reilly, project external quality auditor

Anexa: Derogare de la planul cadru: Proiectul ERASMUS+ PBLMD

Solicitare derogare PBLMD	**Actul Normativ**	**Prevederea**	**Propuneri derogari pentru 6 programe de studii PILOT din cadrul proiectului ERASMUS+ PBLMD**
Anularea limitărilor referitor la modificarea și dezvoltarea continutului planului de studii	**Plan-cadru pentru studii superioare, Anexa 1**	Anexa 1. Ponderea recomandată a unităţilor de curs în Planul de învătământ pentru ciclul I, licență și studii integrate (programe de 180, 240, 300, 360 ECTS)	De permis derogare de la Anexa 1 din Planul Cadru
	Plan-cadru pentru studii superioare, art. 28, e)	Un curs de Educație fizică pentru studenții anului I/II, care nu se cuantifică cu credite, dar a cărui evaluare cu calificativul ”admis” reprezintă o precondiție de admitere la examenul de finalizare a studiilor superioare de licență	Excluderea obligativității cursului de Educație fizică.
Anularea limitărilor referitor la posibilitatea alocării ECTS modulelor si proiectelor de semestru	**Plan-cadru pentru studii superioare, art.** 9.	Pentru un modul se recomandă alocarea a 4-6 credite de studii	De exclus limitarea numărului de credite alocate unui modul
Anularea limitărilor referitor la numărul de proiecte per semestru	**Reg. organizarea studiilor în baza SNCS, art. 82**	Pentru programele de 180 credite, se execută o teză de an, în anul II de studii. Pentru programele de studii 240 de credite, se execută câte o teză de an, în anul II și III de studii. Tipul tezelor/proiectelor este determinat de departamentul /catedra de profil în funcţie de specificul Programului de studii.	De exclus limitarea la un singur proiect per semestru. De permis alocarea de credite ECTS pentru fiecare proiect.
Anularea limitărilor referitor la alocarea de ore pentru predare și învățare, permițând ca orele pentru proiectele semestriale să fie considerate ore de contact direct	**Plan-cadru pentru studii superioare, art.** 9.	La ciclurile I și II, unitatea de curs /disciplina poate fi realizată prin activitate didactică auditorială (contact direct): ore de curs/ prelegeri, seminare, lucrări de laborator, lucrări practice, lucrări de proiectare, stagii didactice, clinice şi alte forme aprobate de senat	De atribuit la activități didactice auditorial si supravegherea studenților (individual si/sau grup), iar textul de expus în următoarea variantă: unitatea de curs /disciplina poate fi realizată prin activitate didactică auditorială (contact direct): ore de curs/ prelegeri, seminare, lucrări de laborator, lucrări practice, lucrări de proiectare, stagii didactice, clinice, **supravegherea studenților** (individual si/sau grup) şi alte forme aprobate de senat

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21.02.17 nr. 08/15-943

La nr. _____ din _____

Proiectul ERASMUS+ PBLMD
Dlui Romeo Turcanu, coordinator
În atenţia instituţiilor de învăţământ superior

Prin prezenta, Ministerul Educaţiei, în calitatea sa de partener al proiectului PBLMD, a susţinut şi susţine în continuare proiectele ERASMUS+ în derularea lor, fiind permanent prezent şi în cadrul vizitelor de studii, seminarelor etc.
La scrisoarea DVS privind cererea de derogare de la unele acte normative/legislative Vă informăm.

Orice proiect ERASMUS+ se dezvoltă şi se implementează în conformitatate cu legislaţia în vigoare a ţării. Ca participant al Spaţiului European al Învăţământului Superior ne conducem de Ghidul ECTS 2015 la care am semnat si noi la Erevan la conferinţa miniştrilor educaţiei EHEA.

Cu referinţă la Planul cadru, mai jos reiterăm cîteva articole importante, care vin să demonstreze că instituţiile de învăţămînt superior beneficiază de autonomie universitară şi libertate academică, care le permite să ia decizii asupra modificărilor planurilor de învăţământ. Astfel,

Art.45. În învăţămîntul superior (ciclurile I, II şi studii integrate), numărul de credite de studiu alocate fiecărei unităţi de curs/modul, numărul de ore prevăzut pentru activităţi teoretice, practice, de laborator, lucru individual etc., precum şi numărul de unităţi de curs /module într-un semestru se planifică de ***catedra/departamentul responsabil de programul respectiv de studiu****, în funcţie de tipul programului de studii superioare, finalităţile de studiu, specificul, complexitatea unităţii de curs/modulului. Determinarea consecutivităţii studierii unităţilor de curs, repartizarea numărului de ore pe ani de studii şi semestre se decide de către facultăţi, ţinînd cont de legăturile interdisciplinare.*

Art.61. Modificarea planurilor de învăţământ

În corespundere cu dezvoltarea sectorului socio-economic, instituțiile de învățămînt superior vor revizui/actualiza planurile de învățămînt o dată la 5 ani.

Planul de învățămînt poate fi modificat/perfectat cu condiția implementării din următorul an de studii. Pe durata studiilor unei promoții de studenți, de la înmatriculare pînă la absolvire, planurile de învățămînt nu pot fi modificate pe parcurs, acestea urmînd a fi realizate integral.

În cazul cînd cerințele pieței muncii vor dicta necesitatea introducerii schimbărilor în planurile de învățămînt pînă la termenul de 5 ani, versiunea nouă a planului de învățămînt pentru un nou an academic va fi aplicată persoanelor înmatriculate la studii în anul respectiv, cu condiția că modificările au fost operate în modul stabilit pînă la finele anului precedent de studii şi au fost făcute publice prin sistemul informațional al instituției cu cel puțin 3 luni pînă la începutul anului de studii.

Modificarea planurilor de învățământ se realizează la ***catedrele*** *organizatoare a programului respectiv și se aprobă de consiliul facultății.*

Revizuirea /actualizarea planurilor de învățămînt este validată de ***senatele universitare*** *și prezentată, o dată la 5 ani, spre coordonare, Ministerului Educației (precum și ministerelor de resort/asociațiilor profesionale, care au în subordine instituții de învățămînt superior). La exemplarul planului de învățămînt pentru ciclurile I, II și studii integrate este ataşat un extras din procesul-verbal al şedinței senatului la care au fost aprobate modificările.*

În anexă sunt prezentate comentariile la articolele menționate în conformitate cu legislația în vigoare. În concluzie informăm, că planurile de învățământ cu modificările preconizate în proiectul PBLMD, după aprobarea de către Senat, vor fi prezentate ministerului educației pentru coordonare pentru a asigura procesul de pilotare.

Viceministru **Vasile Marina**

D.Usaci, 233213

Anexă la nr. 03/15-943
din 21.02.17.

Anexa: Derogare de la planul cadru: Proiectul ERASMUS+ PBLMD

Solicitare derogare PBLMD	Actul Normativ	Prevederea	Derogări pentru 6 programe de studii PILOT din cadrul proiectului ERASMUS+ PBLMD
Anularea limitărilor referitor la modificarea și dezvoltarea continutului planului de studii	**Plan-cadru pentru studii superioare, Anexa 1**	Anexa 1. Ponderea recomandată a unităţilor de curs în Planul de învăţământ pentru ciclul I, licenţă şi studii integrate (programe de 180, 240, 300, 360 ECTS)	De permis derogare de la Anexa 1 din Planul Cadru **Nu se acceptă: ponderea creditelor este o recomandare cu o marja destul de largă, de ex., la programele de 240 ECTS, la cursurile fundamentale F avem de la 48 la 84 de ECTS; totodată cursurile de la G sunt obligatorii conform Codului educației si nu pot fi omise; cursurile la U sunt la libera alegere etc.**
	Plan-cadru pentru studii superioare, art. 28, e)	Un curs de Educaţie fizică pentru studenţii anului I/II, care nu se cuantifică cu credite, dar a cărui evaluare cu calificativul "admis" reprezintă o precondiţie de admitere la examenul de finalizare a studiilor superioare de licenţă	De exclus obligativitatea cursului de Educație fizică. **Nu se acceptă, conform Legii cu privire la educația fizica și sport - este obligatorie.**
Anularea limitărilor referitor la posibilitatea alocării ECTS modulelor si proiectelor de semestru	**Plan-cadru pentru studii superioare, art. 9.**	Pentru un modul se recomandă alocarea a 4-6 credite de studii	De exclus limitarea numărului de credite alocate unui modul **La pct. 9 – se recomandă alocarea respectivă pentru abordarea complementară și interdisciplinară, dar și pentru optimizarea numărului de examene la finalizarea unităților de curs / modulelor**
Anularea limitărilor referitor la numărul de proiecte per semestru	**Reg. organizarea studiilor în baza SNCS, art. 82**	Pentru programele de 180 credite, se execută o teză de an, în anul II de studii. Pentru programele de studii 240 de credite, se execută câte o teză de an, în anul II şi III de studii. Tipul tezelor/proiectelor este determinat de departamentul /catedra de profil în funcţie de specificul Programului de studii.	De exclus limitarea la un singur proiect per semestru. De permis alocarea de credite ECTS pentru fiecare proiect. 1. **Decizia aparține Senatului;** 2. **Fiecare proiect are alocare creditele care sunt parte componentă a compartimentului S1 sau S2; Anexa nr. 5 prevede un tabel recomandabil care conține compartimentul L/P unde, de regulă, instituțiile, în dependență de specificul programului de studii, își planifica și proiectele/tezele de an.**

Anularea limitărilor referitor la alocarea de ore pentru predare şi învăţare, permiţând ca orele pentru proiectele semestriale să fie considerate ore de contact direct	**Plan-cadru pentru studii superioare, art.** 9.	La ciclurile I şi II, unitatea de curs /disciplina poate fi realizată prin activitate didactică auditorială (contact direct): ore de curs/ prelegeri, seminare, lucrări de laborator, lucrări practice, lucrări de proiectare, stagii didactice, clinice şi alte forme aprobate de senat	De atribuit la activităţi didactice auditorial si supravegherea studenţilor (individual si/sau grup), iar textul de expus în următoarea variantă: unitatea de curs /disciplina poate fi realizată prin activitate didactică auditorială (contact direct): ore de curs/ prelegeri, seminare, lucrări de laborator, lucrări practice, lucrări de proiectare, stagii didactice, clinice, **supravegherea studenţilor** (individual si/sau grup) şi alte forme aprobate de senat **Componenţa activităţilor didactice auditoriale , neauditoriale ect. este stipula tă de art. 119 din Codul educaţiei, evident si de Planul-cadru, care conţine următoare sintagma: "şi alte forme aprobate de senat". Prin urmare, decizia aparţine Senatului!**

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Introducing Problem Based Learning in Moldova: Toward Enhancing Students (PBLMD)

www.pblmd.aau.dk

Work Package 6

Commentary on the Framework Plan for Higher Education

Prepared by

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September, 2017

Chisinau

Executive summary

The purpose of this Commentary is to review and evaluate the Moldova Framework Plan for Higher Education (Framework) published on October 29, 2015 in the context of the commitment to University Autonomy expressed in the Moldova Education Code.

This Commentary has been written as part of the European Commission funded project 'Introducing Problem Based Learning in Moldova: Toward Enhancing Students' Competitiveness and Employability (PBLMD)'. The objective of the PBLMD project is, through the introduction of Problem Based Learning (PBL) in 6 new study programs, to improve the quality of learning and teaching, and relevance for the labour market and for disadvantaged groups.

This Commentary was commissioned because the PBLMD project teams have been obstructed in the realisation of their objectives by the restrictive nature of the Framework.

Although it could be argued that the Framework respects the right of the University to design the content of courses, the detailed, prescriptive, bureaucratic nature and content of the Framework, which governs the approval process, effectively constricts the University and acts as an impediment to change and innovation. The defined structure of the academic year in the Framework is potentially constraining, as is the requirement to hold formal examinations at the end of each semester. The Framework circumscribes and prescribes, in mechanistic ways, requirements for the Codification of course units/modules, which are inimical to innovative and changing curriculum development and new pedagogical approaches. The annual workload is stated to be 1800 hours over 30 weeks. In each 5 day week *"a total number of 25-30 hours of auditory contact"* is prescribed, which implies a further 30-35 hours of 'private' work, producing a weekly workload of 60 hours, which prima facie breaches the EU Working Hours Directive!

Overall, the Framework dictates the structure and organisation of programmes and reduces complex academic curriculum to a formulaic approach through indicating the percentage which it is expected will be devoted to each of the intersecting components. While this may be appropriate for Primary and Secondary education it suggests a lack of trust in the ability and the expert knowledge of the academic staff of the Universities to manage and quality assure curriculum planning and development. It undermines the commitment to university autonomy and reduces curriculum planning and development to a bureaucratic exercise in conformity. Above all it distracts from and fails to emphasise that the objective, as indicated in the EHEA QF and the EQF, needs to be outcome rather than input focused.

In practice strict adherence to the Framework will prevent the effective implementation of the outcomes of the PBLMD project. It is recommended that the six University Rectors who have signed commitments with the European Commission to implement the PBLMD project should join the PBLMD project management team in seeking ways to ensure that the project outcomes can be implemented. It may also be the case that the ERASMUS+ office in Moldova having received the Commentary and advice from the project team will wish to remind Rectors and the Ministry of their obligations under the terms of the project grant.

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1. Introduction

The objective of the PBLMD project is, through the introduction of Problem Based Learning (PBL) in 6 new study programs, to improve the quality of learning and teaching, and relevance for the labour market and for disadvantaged groups.

This Commentary was commissioned because the project teams have been obstructed in the realisation of their objectives by the restrictive nature of the Framework Plan for Higher Education published on October 29, 2015 (Annex 1) (henceforth the Framework).

The purpose of this Commentary is to review and evaluate the Framework in the context of the commitment to University Autonomy expressed in the Moldova Education Code. In identifying ways in which the Framework inhibits curriculum change and reform and from which the six programmes might be offered relaxation, it is designed to facilitate the implementation of the PBLMD project and enhance an understanding of University autonomy in practice in Moldova. This review focuses principally on those aspects of the Framework relating to the First Cycle.

When it recognised the incompatibility of aspects of the Framework with the project intended outcomes, the PBLMD project team approached the Ministry of Education, asking for a derogation from the Framework limited to and specifically for the six pilot study programmes that are to be redesigned to employ new methodologies, and forms of learning and teaching, to be implemented from September 2017 (Annex 2). The Ministry of Education declined the request referring back to the Framework suggesting that the Framework would allow the achievement of the project objectives (Annex 3).

The Framework has to be read in the context of the Education Code dated July 2014. The EUniAM, European Commission funded, project undertook a detailed review of the Code in 2015 and suggested that there appear to be anomalies, inconsistencies and ambiguities in the Code (Annex 4). The EUNIAM project, which was concerned with the reform and development of Higher Education in Moldova, considered how University autonomy might be developed. It raised questions and made a series of recommendations about the understanding and implementation of University autonomy in Moldova (Annex 4). It does not appear that the Ministry of Education has responded to the review or that the recommendations in the EUniAM final project report have been implemented.

2. The autonomy context

2.1 The Framework (First cycle: Bachelor, second cycle: Master, Integrated Studies, third cycle: Doctorate) is designed to establish the basic requirements for the draft of the Learning Plans (programme specifications) in different fields of training/specialties, Master programs, PhD programs.

2.2 Learning plans are to be prepared and submitted to the Ministry for approval every five years and have to conform to the detailed specifications laid out in the Framework.

2.3 The Education Code of the Republic of Moldova (No. 152 dated July 17, 2014) states in **Article 79 University Autonomy**:

(1) The higher education institutions shall have the status of university autonomy.

(2) The university autonomy is the right of the university community for organization and self-management, exercising the academic freedoms without any ideological, political or religious interferences, assuming a set of competences and obligations in line with the national strategies and policies for the development of the higher education.

(3) The university autonomy shall encompass the areas of management, structuring and functioning of the institution, teaching and scientific research activity, administration and financing, and shall be mainly performed through:

a) organizing, conducting and improving the educational and scientific research process;
b) establishing specialties;
c) developing curriculum and analytical programs *in line with the state educational standards;*
d) organizing admission of students, taking into account the specific criteria to the profile of the higher education institution;
e) selecting and promoting the teaching, scientific-teaching and scientific staff, as well as the other categories of personnel in the educational institution;
f) establishing the assessment criteria for the teaching and scientific activity
g) awarding teaching degrees;
h) eligibility of all management bodies by secret voting;
i) solving social problems of students and staff;
j) ensuring order and discipline in the university;
k) finding additional sources of income;
l) establishing cooperation relationships with various educational and scientific institutions, centre and organizations in the country and abroad.

2.4 Under the definitions section headed 'Basic Notions' the Framework reiterates the statement on autonomy contained in Article 79 of the Code. As the EUniAM commentary suggested the requirement for ***state educational standards*** might be considered to be in conflict with the principle of curriculum autonomy. Indeed the European University Association which has developed a European 'Tool-scorecard' to measure University Autonomy (EUA – University Autonomy in Europe) states unequivocally in relation to Academic Autonomy that:

- "*The capacity to introduce academic programmes without outside interference and to select the language(s) of instruction enables a university to pursue its specific mission in a flexible way.*

- *A free* choice *of teaching language may also be important in the context of institutional internationalisation strategies.*

- *The* ability *to design the content of courses**,** except for the regulated professions, is a fundamental academic freedom"*.

2.5 It could be argued that the Framework respects the right of the University to design the content of courses, but **the detailed, prescriptive and bureaucratic nature and content of the Framework, which governs the approval process, effectively constricts the University and acts as an impediment to change and innovation**.

3. Contemporary context for HE and need to change and update curriculum

3.1 Universities need to operate in a dynamic knowledge world which has to respond, reflect and critically evaluate constant and rapid changes and incorporate these in their curriculum if they are to prepare graduates adequately for the contemporary economic, social, political and employment world.

3.2 The **Framework** defines State Education Standards as:

> "*the **mandatory** conditions for the fulfilment of educational programs for all learning levels and cycles in both public and private institutions, as well as the minimum mandatory requirements to the content of the educational programs, the maximum work volume of the student and of the teaching staff, to the infrastructure and the endowment of the educational institution, to the training level of students and the organization of the educational process. The state educational standards are the basis for the objective quality and level of instruction and qualification of graduates' evaluation, regardless of the form of studies"*

3.3 The use of the term 'mandatory' relating to curriculum content weakens and undermines the concept of academic autonomy.

3.4 This is compounded by the requirement that 'Learning Plans' are for a **five** year period, a period which is essentially incompatible with the need constantly to revise, update, adapt and change curriculum to respond to new research findings, learner responses, economic, social and political developments and the demands of the labour market. Such changes may even occur during a semester but should be expected on an annual basis.

3.4.1 Article 61 of the Framework effectively discourages and actually forbids curriculum change stating that:

> *"For the duration of studies of a student class, from enrolment till graduation, learning plans **cannot** be modified; they are to be accomplished entirely*."

3.4.2 This is qualified in the subsequent sentence:

> *"If labour market demands impose the need to change learning plans during a 5 year period, the new version of the learning plan for a new academic year shall be applied for persons enrolled to studies in the respective academic year, provided that the changes were carried out* ***as established****, until the end of the previous academic year and at least 3 months before the beginning of the academic year they were posted on the information system of the institution."*

3.5 The translation may partly obscure the meaning of this sentence, but it surely cannot be in the best interest of learners if new relevant material arising from scientific, social, economic, political change which challenges current understanding and knowledge is not introduced as soon as it is available. This would apply equally to new 'labour market demands', where rapid change will be equally imperative.

3.6 Such curriculum development should not require the cumbersome, bureaucratic and time consuming process envisaged in the Framework. Indeed, if the change has to conform to the processes described in the Framework it is doubtful if it could be achieved in less than an academic year or, indeed, if it will be possible to reconcile the expectations of a PBL curriculum with the restrictions of the Framework.

4. Annex 1 and Annex 5 of the Framework

4.1 The level of detail prescribed in the Framework is constricting and perverse. Hence, Annex 1 in the Framework indicates an arbitrary percentage of 'Mandatory' and 'Optional' courses which seem quite out of place for a University degree.

4.2 It might be expected that to obtain professional recognition in, for example, engineering or medicine or law virtually all courses will be mandatory, whereas in Humanities and Social Sciences much wider discretion may be allowed with the learner leading on the choice of courses, subject to appropriate academic requirements.

4.4 Similarly in Annex 5 of the Framework Universities are required, in the Five year Plan, to indicate a range of detail about internships which are, in practice, most likely to be initiated, negotiated and changed on an annual basis. **The requirement alone, that detail on internships is included in a forward looking Five Year Plan, will inhibit the establishment of internships, which are increasingly regarded by employers as a critical component in the preparation for employment**.

5. Prior learning and experience

5.1 Universities are severely constrained in the accreditation of prior learning by Articles 18 and 19 which limit the credit transfer/recognition (Article18) to a maximum of 30 ECTS credits with no recognition of the need to evaluate the achieved learning outcomes and or experience which may, in an individual case,

represent significantly more than 30 credits. The university is given no discretion and in effect no autonomy.

5.2 Article 19 appears **even more restrictive** requiring that graduates with a first degree starting a new field may be permitted a "*reduction of the duration of the studies [can be conditioned] by the recognition of a certain number of credits accumulated for the first specialty, on the condition that the duration of the studies shall be at least 3 years".*

5.3 Since in practice the majority of first cycle degrees are three years full-time, this seems to amount **to no concession and defeats the objective of encouraging credit recognition and transfer**.

6. Workload and structure of the academic year

6.1 The defined structure of the academic year is constraining, as is the requirement to hold examinations at the end of each semester. Both of these may be regarded as norms but in different fields of study and for a range of reasons Universities may wish to have flexibility in the structuring of the year and timing of examinations while respecting the overall duration and workload.

6.2 The Framework partially acknowledges this by stating (Article 20): *The academic calendar, the* period *of holding the classes and the duration of examination sessions, the duration of the vacations, shall be established by the senate of the higher education institution.*

6.3 This offer of flexibility is severely constrained by the prescriptions in Article 22, which are not expressed as normative and which state that each semester '*shall be'* 30 ECTS credits and that: "*The structure of the week for the **first cycle – Bachelor** is 5 days with a total number of 25-30 hours of auditory contact".*

6.4 As the annual workload is stated to be 1800 hours over 30 weeks this implies a further 30-35 hours of 'private' work which produces a weekly workload of 60 hours, which prima facie **breaches the EU Working Hours Directive**!

6.5 Further-more the requirement for 25-30 hours of '*auditory* (face to face) *contact'* is not only constraining it could be argued to be excessive for University level learners in all three or four years of their degree who should be expected to take increasingly more responsibility for their learning.

6.6 It is also difficult to align with Problem Based Learning which expects learners to engage in group and personal work with less formal instruction and with the teacher more in the role of facilitator.

6.7 In the final year the 'face to face' (*auditory*) contact may be significantly less than 25-30 hours.

6.8 The critical point is that, instead of these detailed load prescriptions the focus should be on the requirement that the learner (student) has to demonstrate at each stage that

she/he has achieved the **learning outcomes**. The route to this may vary considerably from programme to programme and depend on the pedagogical approach adopted.

7. Second cycle/Master programmes: Workload and level descriptors

7.1 This commentary is essentially concerned with the provisions in the Framework for first cycle programmes. However, it should be noted that the statements relating to the degree of Master seem even less appropriate asserting in Article 23 that:

> "*The weekly program of **Master** training is 14-20 hours of auditory contact, which on the decision of the institution can be varied and at least 50% of the program must be allocated to practical activities and research*"

7.2 The Framework might perhaps more appropriately reflect on the **EHEA Qualifications Framework** (EHEA QF) level descriptor for the second cycle:

> *Qualifications that signify completion of **the second cycle** are awarded to students who:*
>
> - *have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or*
> - *opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context;*
> - *can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study;*
> - *have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgments with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments;*
> - *can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously;*
> - *have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.*

and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level 7 descriptors which emphasises the level of knowledge, skills and competence which a student is expected to achieve emphasising that the learning outcomes achieved are the essence of the qualification.

8. Structure and organisation of programmes

8.1 Articles 24 and 25 dictate the structure **and organisation of programmes and in the related Annex 1 and Annex 4 of the Framework reduce complex academic curriculum to a formulaic approach through indicating the percentage which it is expected will be devoted to each of the intersecting components**:

a) *mandatory;*
b) *optional;*
c) *on free choice.*

with a coding formula with further impositions on the flexibility and autonomy of the institution and the teachers:

a) *fundamental component (code-F);*
b) *general abilities and competences training (code-G);*
c) *socio-humanities component (code-U);*
d) *specialty component – basic and secondary, in case of same time instruction of two related domains (code-S*).

8.2 While this may be appropriate for Primary and Secondary education it suggests a lack of trust in the ability and the expert knowledge of the academic staff of the Universities to manage and quality assure curriculum planning and development.

8.3 It undermines the commitment to university autonomy and reduces curriculum planning and development to a bureaucratic exercise in conformity.

8.4 Above all it distracts from and fails to emphasise that the objective, as indicated in the EHEA QF and the EQF, needs to be outcome rather than input focused.

9. Codification of course units/modules

9.1 The *'*Codification *of Course Units/Modules'* Articles 26 – 32 continues to circumscribe and prescribe in mechanistic ways which are inimical to innovative and changing curriculum development and new pedagogical approaches.

9.2 Similar points **could be made about Article 34 relating to the second cycle Master programmes and Article 36 which limits the optional component of a second cycle degree to 30%, an arbitrary limit for which there is no justification**.

9.3 In marked contrast to the prescriptive detail elsewhere Article 40, relating to **Internships**, is highly permissive stating that:

> "*Students Internships represent one of the **mandatory** forms of training of highly qualified specialists*", the Framework proposes a liberal/laissez faire approach to internships in which "*their terms, stages, field/branch, place are to be established by the higher education institution"* and "*The coordination and evaluation of the Bachelor/Master internship is to be made by the project coordinator …. The appreciation criteria of the internship are to be stipulated in the internal regulation of the institution".*

Notwithstanding the assertion that '*Internships represent one of the **mandatory** forms of training'* there is no suggested duration or recommendation for the award of ECTS credits for Internships or how they are to be fully integrated in the curriculum. This flexibility is more in keeping with the commitment to University Autonomy expressed in the Code but is out of keeping with much of the rest of the Framework.

10. Assessment

10.1 Section D Article 46 deals with Assessment and distinguishes between 'Current' assessment and 'Final' assessment. 'Current' and 'Final' are not defined under 'Basic notions' but the drafting suggests that 'Current' may relate to 'formative' assessment and 'Final' to 'summative' assessment.

10.2 **As with other parts of the Framework the distinctions are limiting and not appropriate.** Some of the components listed under 'Current' might be equally appropriate as part of the 'Final' summative assessment and vice a versa.

10.3 Moreover**, in listing forms of assessment, there is a danger that valid forms may be omitted**, for example group or team work does not appear under Article 47 (b) final assessment but may be highly appropriate.

10.4 If a form of assessment is not listed it may be considered to be excluded. As, in this particular sub-paragraph 'etc.' is not used, whereas elsewhere in the Framework it is used frequently, this conclusion (i.e. if it is not listed it is not permitted) might appear to be justified.

10.5 Apart from **the sense of laziness which the use of 'etc.' conveys it is not appropriate in a formal legal document especially one which is overall prescriptive and detailed**.

10.6 The possible ambiguity in the use of the term 'Current' is perhaps partly resolved in para. 50 which states:

> "*The quota of current assessment from the final mark to the course unit within higher education cycles is to be established by the higher education institution in their own regulations".*

10.7 Although this in part clarifies an understanding of 'Current' it leaves open the important distinction between summative continuous assessment and formative assessment.

10.8 The section on assessment does not convey the important message that assessment is intrinsically linked to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and needs to be appropriate to the learning outcomes.

10.9 The reference **to marking does not suggest that the criteria for marking need to be clearly articulated**.

11. Learning Plan approval

11.1 Article 57 describes the process for the approval of a '*Learning Plan'* for a new degree. It is protracted and involves several layers of approval and seems not to follow a logical pathway – for example the *self-assessment report* is required after approval by the Faculty Board, the Senate and the Institutional Strategic Development Council.

Subsequently in the same paragraph the *self-assessment report* is conflated with the learning plan (see highlighted phrase below).

11.2 The Learning Plan process starts at the departmental level. It then has to be approved by the Faculty Board, followed by the Senate and then by the Institutional Strategic Development Council. At this stage – after approval by the Department, the Faculty, the Senate, and the Institutional Strategic Development Council – a *self-assessment report* for further **provisional** authorization has to be submitted to the vice-chancellor for teaching activity, and 'checked by a committee appointed by the subdivision responsible for quality management'. **This seems to be a perverse approach to quality assurance which should be embedded in the curriculum planning process**.

11.3 Notwithstanding the detailed internal process the proposals are subject to two further stages of scrutiny. Six months '*before the beginning of the study program, the self-assessment report, **implicitly the learning plan**, is submitted to the Ministry of Education which, after the assessment of the learning plan, advance it to the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education for an external assessment and **provisional** authorization'*.

11.4 The Framework does not attempt to assess the total time which this whole process will take but a simple extrapolation form the six month requirement suggests that the process will need to start early in the previous academic year and could take up to eighteen months

11.5 This cumbersome**, bureaucratic system does not suggest that the University is autonomous in academic matters, especially as the National Agency only issues 'provisional' authorisation**.

11.6 Article 61: *Modification of Learning Plans* specifies that: "Once in 5 years, higher education institutions shall review/ update learning plans, according to the development in social and economic sectors". The details of this paragraph are commented on in the introductory section 3 above.

12. PBLMD project implementation

The PBLMD project teams are encountering serious obstacles in developing and introducing the six new innovative programmes of study. These obstacles may in part stem from a highly conservative academic environment which is resistant to change, but they are given substance by the argument that the Education Code and the Framework for Higher Education will not permit the proposed programme development in the time period allotted for the project. It should be apparent from the Commentary above that the Framework is restrictive and inimical to rapid change and innovation.

The project management team has written to the Minister to request a small number of circumscribed derogations from the Framework. The Minister has rejected their request arguing that the Framework must be respected and that it allows and provides a procedure for change. Extracts from the correspondence are given below.

Extract from the letter to the Minister, January 2017

The letter (Appendix 2) requested that the Minister:

1. *Waive restrictions on curriculum content change and development*
2. *Waive restrictions on determining curriculum structure so that programmes may be developed on a modular basis*
3. *Waive restrictions on allocating ECTS credits in relation to the modular structure most appropriate for the programme and not restricted by the current Framework, and not be limited in the number of projects overall or in a semester. NB: In planning the curriculum the teams will pay close attention to the ECTS Guide 2015 in relation to student workload*
4. *Waive restrictions on allocation of hours to teaching and learning, allowing hours for semester project supervision to be counted as direct contact*

Extract from the reply from the Minister, February 2017

With reference to the framework plan, we reiterate below a few important articles that come to demonstrate that higher education institutions benefit from university autonomy and academic freedom, allowing them to make decisions on changes in their educational plans. Thus,

Art. 45. In higher education (cycles I, II and Integrated Studies), the number of credits distributed to each course unit/module, the established number for theoretical, practical laboratory, individual activities etc. as well as the number of course units/modules in a semester is planned by the ***department responsible of the respective study program****, depending on the type of the study program, the educational output, the specific, the complexity of the course unit/module.*

The distribution of the course units, the distribution of the number of hours per years of study and semesters, taking into account the interdisciplinary bonds, is done by faculties.

Art. 61. Modification of Study Plans

Once in 5 years, higher education institutions will review/update study plans, taking into account the development in social and economic sectors.

The study plan can be modified/improved only if it is implemented the following academic year. For the duration of studies of a student class, from enrolment till graduation, study plans cannot be modified; they are to be accomplished entirely.

If the labor *market demands the need to introduce changes in the study plans within a 5 year period, the new version of the learning plan for a new academic year shall be applied for persons enrolled to studies in the respective academic year, provided that the changes were carried out as established until the end of the previous academic year and made public at*

least 3 months before the beginning of the academic year via the information system of the institution.

The modifications *in the learning plans are carried out by the departments responsible of the respective study programs and are approved by the Faculty Board.*

The review/ update of study plans are validated by the ***University Senates*** *and it is presented once in 5 years for the coordination to the Ministry of Education, as well as to the relevant ministries/ professional associations which cooperate with higher education institutions). An extract from the minutes of the Senate meeting, where the modifications were approved, shall be attached to the copy of a study plan for the first and second cycle, and integrated studies*.

In the Annex there are presented the comments to the articles referred to in accordance with the legislation in force. In conclusion we inform that the educational plans with the expected *changes* in the PBLMD project, after approval by the Senate, will be presented to the Ministry of Education for coordination to ensure the piloting process.

Comment

The reply from the Minister refers to Articles 45 and 61. However, these Articles have to be read in the context of the Framework as a whole as described in the Commentary above. The Framework simply does not accommodate expeditious and innovative change in curriculum but places hurdles in the way and ensures that the whole process is time consuming. Articles in the Framework which appear to offer some flexibility and institutional autonomy are countered by Articles which impose further constraints.

In practice strict adherence to the Framework will prevent the effective implementation of the outcomes of the PBLMD project.

Articles 41 and 61, to which the Minister refers, have to be juxtaposed with the restrictions imposed by the requirement to adhere to the State Educational Standards which impose mandatory conditions; the extended process for the approval of changes in Learning Plans described above (Articles 61 and 57); the arbitrary percentage of 'Mandatory' and 'Optional' courses set out in Annex 1 of the Framework; Article 22 *stipulating 25-30 hours of auditory* (face to face) *contact* which is not appropriate for Problem Based Learning in all years of study and even less so for the degree of Master which prescribes *14-20 hours of auditory contact* and *at least 50% of the program allocated to practical activities and research;* Articles 24-32 which reduce curriculum to a formula; Articles 34 and 36 which relate to Masters programmes and in Article 36 limit optional course to 30%; Articles 46-49 which determine and could be argued to limit forms of assessment and finally Article 57 which sets out the lengthy process for approval of Learning Plans.

In the light of the Minister's categorical rejection of the project Directors' request it is difficult to see a way forward. However, the project teams may wish to consider, in the light of the commentary above, whether it may be possible to present precise examples of what they wish to introduce in their PBL curriculum and how the Framework is preventing this work.

In view of the difficulties which the project is facing, as indicated in this commentary, the six University Rectors who have signed commitments with the European Commission to implement the project should join the project management team in seeking ways to ensure that the project outcomes can be implemented. It may also be the case that the Erasmus + office in Moldova will wish to remind Rectors and the Ministry of their obligations under the terms of the project grant.

13. Recommendations

The project teams, Rectors, Ministry of Education and Erasmus+ office are invited to consider the recommendations below which indicate specific and limited actions to enable the project to deliver the six new programmes.

13.1 Learning plans

The requirements for Learning Plans for the six new programmes be relaxed in the following ways:

- The relevant Faculty Board and the Senate at each PBLMD project University should be allowed by the Ministry to quality assure and approve the introduction of the six new programmes within a maximum time period of three months for scrutiny and approval e.g., by the end of April 2018.
- Each project team should submit its detailed new PBL based programme proposal together with a self-assessment report by end of January 2018.
- The Ministry should waive the requirement for further submission to the Ministry and the National Quality Assurance Agency but the Senate of the University should forward the approved proposals to both bodies for information.
- The new PBL based programmes should be introduced for students starting in September 2018.

13.2 Content and structure of programmes

- In reviewing the six proposals the Faculty Boards and the Senates of the respective Universities should not require adherence to the Framework requirements relating to Mandatory and optional course units/modules.
- The requirement to code all course units/modules on the basis of the formula specified in the Framework should be waived
- While expecting the programmes to respect the broad structure of the academic year Faculty Boards and Senate should allow deviations justified by the requirements of individual programmes. Each programme will provide details for the structure and organisation of the programme to enable the Faculty Board and the Senate to evaluate the need for a deviation.

- Each programme submission should specify the formal contact and workload expectations on the understanding that the Framework requirement for a defined number of '*auditory(contact) hours'* each week should be waived for the six programmes.

13.3 Assessment

- The assessment prescriptions of the Framework should be waived for the six programmes, subject to the review of fully documented assessment arrangements proposed for each of the six programmes in the context of their relevance to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and the EHEA QF and EQF level descriptors.

13.4 Internships

- The six programmes should make every effort to include and integrate assessed work placements (internships) and award ECTS credits for these placements.
- Subject to reporting the placements to the Faculty Board and the Senate the programmes should be permitted to negotiate and award placements on a regular non-time limited basis.

13.5 Monitoring and review

- Each programme should submit its proposals for on-going monitoring, annual review and report. These should include student and staff evaluation and the basic data to be collected to support the monitoring and review.
- In the light of the monitoring and review the programmes should be allowed and encouraged, subject to report to their Faculty Board and Senate, to amend and develop the curriculum for current and new students.
- The time requirements and procedures specified for the amendment of Learning Plans should be waived.

Appendix 1: Framework Plan for Higher Education

Appendix 2: Derogation letter to the Ministry of Education

Appendix 3: Ministry of Education response to the derogation letter

Appendix 4: EUniAM recommendations for restructuring HE in Moldova

Project 530740- TEMPUS-1-2012-1-DK-TEMPUS-SMGR

Enhancing the University Autonomy in Moldova (EUniAM)

www.euniam.aau.dk

Restructuring Higher Education Sector in the Republic of Moldova: Draft Legislative Proposals

(Work Package 4: Consolidated Report)

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Chisinau, 2015

Executive Summary

This report proposes legislative proposals for restructuring and modernization of Higher Education (HE) in Moldova. It is based on (1) the analysis of the institutional university autonomy in Moldova; (2) the benchmark analysis of institutional university autonomy in Denmark, Lithuania, Romania, Scotland and Sweden; (3) the on-going analysis of the current situation of institutional university autonomy in Moldova, including the on-going analysis and review of the Code of Education; and (4) the European Commission agenda for the modernization of higher education.

This report has been developed by the EUniAM Lead Task Force team: Ala Cotelnic, Vice-Rector Academy of Economic Studies, Angela Niculita, Vice-Rector State University of Moldova, Daniela Pojar, Head of HR and Planning Department Balti State University, Petru Todos, Vice-Rector Technical University of Moldova, Larisa Bugaian, Vice-Rector Technical University of Moldova, and Romeo V. Turcan of Aalborg University.

The report identifies the *objectives* of the legislative proposals; discusses *risks and challenges* that HE in Moldova faces today and in the next 10-15 years; identifies expected *outcomes*; identifies *basic principles* on which the process will be founded; proposes a *new structure for the HE sector*; offers an example of a *rationalization process*, incl., a *road map*, recommending that there should be 7 universities in Moldova: 3 regional universities and 4 universities in Chisinau (capital); following the principle of clear demarcation between state regulation and institutional university autonomy, specifies *universities powers and responsibilities*; suggests a distinct separation between *governance and management*; suggests *teaching and research funding formulae* based on inputs and outputs; and outlines a new *National Qualifications Framework*.

The urgency of the situation in HE in Moldova dictates that the restructuring and modernisation process should commence in 2015. The road map put forward in the report identifies key activities, milestones as well as key outputs in relation to the rationalization process, integration and modernization processes. It suggests a 3-4 year implementation plan, in three periods: (1) preparing rationalization (max 9 months), (2) implementing rationalization (max 12 months) and (3) integrating and modernising (24-30 months).

It is expected inter alia that the restructuring, rationalization and modernization of the higher education sector will produce larger, stronger public universities, which will provide a basis for more multi and interdisciplinary learning and teaching in all cycles; strengthen regional and national links with employers; reinvigorate public universities with effective, new governance and management structures committed to relevant student centred education; and ensure fuller more cost effective utilisation of capital resources releasing funds for learning and teaching, research and knowledge transfer.

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Glossary

Academic refers to teaching, research and knowledge transfer activities performed by academic staff

Academic work-load is the amount of teaching, research and knowledge transfer work that is performed by a member of academic staff in a given period (e.g., semester). When a member of academic staff takes on an administrative position (e.g., head of department or head of faculty), teaching, research and knowledge transfer loads are reduced to ensure the amount of overall work-load is maintained.

Chair (of the university board) chairs the meetings of the university board, provides leadership for the board and has to ensure that the governing body operates effectively and efficiently.

Competence (defining learning outcomes) means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and methodological abilities in work or study situations and in professional and/or personal development. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy (http://goo.gl/q1qMvA).

External member (of the university board) is a member who is external and independent of the Institution.

Governance (in Higher Education) refers to and is concerned with the decision making structures and processes for the direction and control of a higher education institution. It answers the questions - who is in charge and what are the sources of legitimacy for executive decision making?

Because of the context in which Higher Education Institutions operate, a distinction may be made between 'internal' governance (the definition above) and 'external' governance which broadly defined relates to the Higher Education rules, regulations, policy and strategy of the Government of the country.

Knowledge (defining learning outcomes) means the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices related to a field of work or study. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual (http://goo.gl/q1qMvA).

Knowledge transfer involves the processes for capturing, collecting and sharing explicit and tacit knowledge, including skills and competence; it includes both commercial and non-commercial activities such as publication, research collaborations, consultancy, licensing, spin-off creation, and researcher mobility (EUR 22836 EN) (http://goo.gl/Jf7WJw).

Learning outcomes are defined as statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do upon completion of a learning process. In the EQF, learning outcomes are therefore defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence (http://goo.gl/q1qMvA).

PhD researcher is the term used to describe those registered for the third cycle (Bologna) Doctoral qualification. They are also referred to in the European Union as 'Early Stage Researchers'

Rector is the senior manager or the chief executive of the Higher Education Institution and is responsible to the University Board for the executive management of the institution.

Research-based learning and teaching is about developing students' independent research skills as well as their ability to reflect on their research-based experience; underpinning study programs with latest research, including that produced by own academic staff.

Skills (defining learning outcomes) mean the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, skills are described as cognitive or practical skills (http://goo.gl/q1qMvA).

Student-centred learning and teaching is not limited to certain methodology; it is rather a cultural shift in the institution. Student-centred learning requires empowering individual learners, new approaches to teaching and learning, effective support and guidance structures and a curriculum focused more clearly on the learner in all three cycles (http://goo.gl/aRWzEE).

Technical staff is non-academic staff that provides support for teaching and research, e.g., secretariat, IT, library, and genitors.

Tenure is to safeguard academic freedom through a permanent appointment which can only be terminated on the basis of 'just cause'. Academic staff who over a period of between two and seven years have demonstrated their teaching and research competence at a high level should be granted 'tenure'.

University Board is the Higher Education Institution Governing body 'which is unambiguously and collectively responsible for overseeing the Institution's activities'.

University Management is concerned with and responsible for the implementation of the policy and strategy approved by the Governing Body; the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of the services provided for internal and external stakeholders; the day-to-day functioning of the institution.

1. METHODOLOGY AND FRAMEWORK

1.1 Data collection and analysis

These legislative proposals have been agreed by the project Lead Task Force team:

Ala Cotelnic, Vice-Rector Academy of Economic Studies, Angela Niculita, Vice-Rector State University of Moldova, Daniela Pojar, Head of HR and Planning Department Balti State University, Petru Todos, Vice-Rector Technical University of Moldova, Larisa Bugaian, Vice-Rector Technical University of Moldova, who is the national coordinator of the EUniAM project.

These legislative proposals have been evaluated by the EUniAM external expert, John Reilly and the EUniAM project coordinator, Romeo V. Turcan. The feedback from the EUniAM project partners has been taken into consideration in developing the final draft of these legislative proposals.

The legislative proposals are based on:

- The analysis of the institutional university autonomy in Moldova (see WP2 deliverables: http://www.euniam.aau.dk/work-packages/wp2/wp2-deliverables/)
- The benchmark analysis of institutional university autonomy in Denmark, Lithuania, Romania, Scotland and Sweden (see WP3 deliverables: http://www.euniam.aau.dk/work-packages/wp3/wp3-deliverables/)
- The on-going analysis of the current situation of institutional university autonomy in Moldova, including the on-going analysis and review of the Code of Education (http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&lang=1&id=355156)

  Note: In part the EUniAM project proposals reinforce and complement the Code of Education; in part they introduce new concepts and structures. The report "The relationship between the EUniAM proposals for structural change and reform of Higher Education and the Code of Education" considers in detail the concordance between the two, as well as examines the internal consistency of the Code and the effectiveness of key elements.

- Modernization of higher education/European Commission

  - The European Commission 'Agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems' (COM (2011) 567 final) stresses that "to maximise the contribution of Europe's higher education systems to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, **reforms are needed in key areas:**
    - to increase **the quantity** of higher education graduates at all levels;

- to enhance **the quality and relevance** of human capital development in higher education;
- to create **effective governance and funding** mechanisms in support of excellence; and
- to **strengthen the knowledge triangle** between education, research and business.
- Moreover, the international mobility of students, researchers and staff, as well as the growing **internationalisation of higher education,** have a strong impact on quality and affect each of these key areas."

The recommendations from the EUniAM project seek to address these key points.

- The Communication from the Commission identifies critical policy objectives for Member States and Higher Education Institutions and the EUniAM project team has been mindful of these in developing its recommendations for Moldova. They include:
  - Encouraging the use of **skills and growth projections** and **graduate employment data** (including tracking graduate employment outcomes) in course design, delivery and evaluation, adapting **quality assurance** and **funding mechanisms** to reward success in equipping students for the labour market.
  - **Encouraging a greater variety of study modes** (e.g. part-time, distance and modular learning, continuing education for adult returners and others already in the labour market), by adapting funding mechanisms where necessary.
  - **Better exploiting the potential of ICTs** to enable more effective and personalised learning experiences, teaching and research methods (eg. eLearning and blended learning) and increase the use of virtual learning platforms.
  - Enhancing the capacity of labour market institutions (including public employment services) and regulations to match skills and jobs, and develop **active labour market policies** to promote graduate employment and enhance career guidance.
  - Introducing **incentives** for higher education institutions to invest in continuous **professional development** for their staff, recruit sufficient staff to develop emerging disciplines and **reward excellence** in teaching.
  - Link funding for doctoral programmes to the **Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training**
  - Stimulating the development of **entrepreneurial, creative and innovation skills** in all disciplines and in all three cycles, and promote **innovation in higher education** through more interactive learning environments and strengthened knowledge- transfer infrastructure.
  - Strengthen the knowledge-transfer infrastructure of higher education institutions and enhance their capacity to engage in start-ups and spin-offs.

- Encouraging **partnership and cooperation with business as a core activity of higher education institutions**, through reward structures, incentives for multidisciplinary and cross-organisational cooperation, and the reduction of regulatory and administrative barriers to partnerships between institutions and other public and private actors.
- Promoting the systematic involvement of higher education institutions in the development of integrated local and regional development plans, and **target regional support towards higher education-business cooperation** particularly for the creation of regional hubs of excellence and specialisation.
- Encouraging a better identification of the real costs of higher education and research and the careful targeting of spending, including through funding mechanisms linked to performance which introduce an element of competition.
- Targeting funding mechanisms to the needs of different institutional profiles, to encourage institutions to focus efforts on their individual strengths, and develop **incentives to support a diversity of strategic choices** and to develop **centres of excellence**.
- Facilitating access to **alternative sources of funding**, including using public funds to leverage private and other public investment (through match-funding, for example).
- Supporting the development of strategic and professional higher education leaders, and ensure that higher education institutions have the **autonomy to set strategic direction**, manage income streams, reward performance to attract the best teaching and research staff, set admissions policies and introduce new curricula.
- Encouraging institutions to modernise their **human resource management**

- In all its work the EUniAM project has been conscious that Moldova is a signatory to the Bologna process, wishes to play an active role in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and is seeking eventual membership of the European Union. Its recommendations are designed to help in the full implementation of the Bologna process and to address the European Union expectations for the modernisation and reform of Higher Education. It is conscious too of the statement by Ministers in the Bucharest Communique in 2012 that:
  - "Higher education is an important part of the solution to our current difficulties. Strong and accountable higher education systems provide the foundations for thriving knowledge societies. Higher education should be at the heart of our efforts to overcome the crisis – now more than ever."

- At the EHEA Bologna Process meeting in Yerevan in May 2015 Ministers will be invited to:
  - "Include short cycle qualifications in the overarching framework of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) based on the Dublin

descriptor for short cycle qualifications and quality assured according to the ESG".

The EUniAM recommendations respond to this development by recommending that in the restructured (merged) sector of Higher Education in Moldova, the six (+1) universities should incorporate all cycles of higher education including the short first cycle. In our view this will strengthen the HEIs, facilitate educational pathways for students with more qualification exit points, improve links with the employment world and encourage HEIs to develop more innovative, relevant, student-centred curriculum based on learning outcomes.

- The development of the Doctoral cycle and doctoral schools requires a viable critical mass of Doctoral candidates as well as qualified and motivated doctoral candidate supervisors. Larger more integrated universities will facilitate this and provide a larger pool of staff to act as supervisors, synergies in the training of Doctoral candidates across subject fields, more interdisciplinary opportunities for doctoral research, and the integration of doctoral candidates in the research mission of the institution. In this context, we see the full incorporation of the current Academy of Science Institutes in the reconfigured universities as vital both for the revitalisation of university research and for doctoral education.

- We have noted that the '**Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training'** Directorate-General for Research & Innovation Brussels, 27/06/2011) **are based on:**
  - *Research Excellence; Attractive Institutional Environment***;** *Interdisciplinary Research Options; Exposure to industry and other relevant employment sectors; International networking; Transferable skills training;* (Business involvement in curricula development and doctoral training); *Quality Assurance*

Commenting on Doctoral education the EHEA Bologna process Structural Reform working group in its report for Ministers in Yerevan state:

- "From the perspective of doctoral candidates, the issue of employability is also at stake, even if from a different point of view. Only a small number of future doctorate holders can expect a career in academia, while the majority should be equipped to be employable in research–intensive labour market fields or to be self-employed. This is even more of a challenge for economic systems where small and medium sized enterprises, often not based on research and innovation, are the prevailing actors in the market. It is not enough to ensure that doctorate holders have adequate resources to be employable. In some countries, there is a problem of awareness in society of how doctoral candidates can contribute to social progress, to the advancement of knowledge, and to innovation and productivity across sectors. …employers, both public and private, should consider the competences and skills acquired as well as the time spent to

achieve them as doctoral candidates and/or in postdoctoral fellowships as a part of applicants' professional experience and could also take this period of time into account for the purpose of calculating seniority"

The EUniAM team consider that this is particularly relevant in Moldova and that one of the objectives of the reconfigured (merged) universities proposed in this report will be to strengthen regional and national links with employers in their development of Doctoral education in ways which are not only relevant to academia but also, as the report quoted above indicates, to the wider employment market.

- As well as addressing national structural change and reform the EUniAM project recognises that universities in Moldova need themselves to initiate urgent internal reform and review with particular emphasis on curriculum reform and methods of learning and teaching designed to invigorate **student-centred learning based on learning outcomes**. Learning outcomes are commonly understood as describing what learners know, understand and are able to do at the end of a unit of learning and a qualification. As the Bucharest Communique indicated:
  - "We reiterate our commitment to promote **student-centred learning** in higher education, characterised by innovative methods of teaching that involve students as active participants in their own learning. Together with institutions, students and staff, we will facilitate a supportive and inspiring working and learning environment"
  - "To consolidate the EHEA, meaningful implementation of **learning outcomes** is needed. The development, understanding and practical use of learning outcomes is crucial to the success of ECTS, the Diploma Supplement, recognition, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance – all of which are interdependent. We call on institutions to further link study credits with both learning outcomes and student workload, and to include the attainment of learning outcomes in assessment procedures."

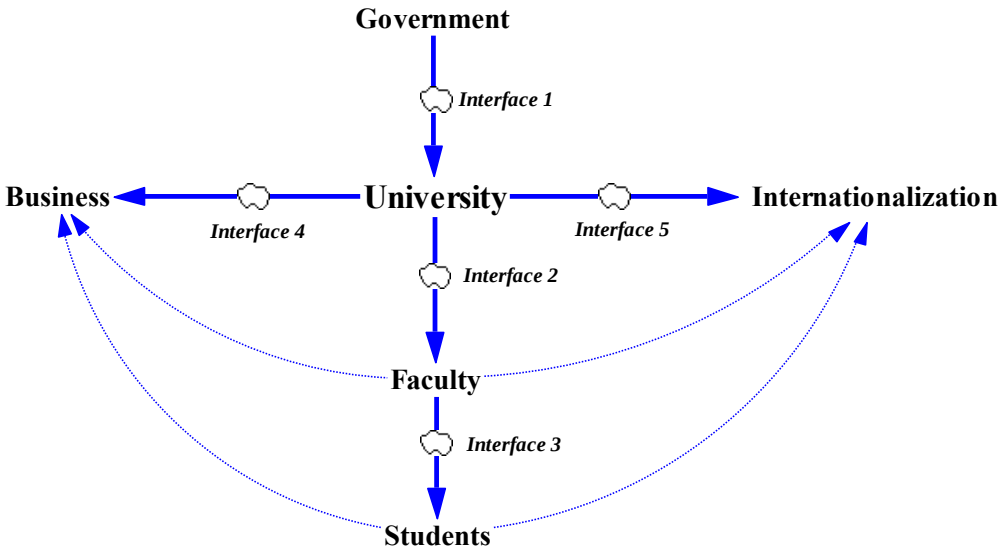
  The stimulus provided through the proposed integration of the higher education sector in Moldova into fewer (6+1) but stronger Universities will be a basis for promoting a universal adoption of student-centred learning and research-based teaching in which the best practices from Moldova and other European countries noting especially the Tuning methodology will play a part.

1.2 Framework

These legislative proposals are based on the framework of institutional university autonomy (Figure 1) that brings together the traditional four pillars – organisation, finance, human resource, and academic – and five interfaces:

- Government–university
- University management–university staff
- Academic staff–students
- University–business
- University–internationalisation

Figure 1: Institutional university autonomy framework



Each of these interfaces that characterize external and internal points of interaction between modern universities and their key stakeholders not only map on to the four pillars, but also relate to and influence one another, hence reinforcing and equally pulling in opposite directions.

Government – university interface is about state policies towards higher-education; role of central and regional governments in issuing regulations for the structure of university governance; governance vs. management: are governance structures fit for purpose, effective, accountable (to whom); advocacy of higher education institutions; need and role of accreditation; models of financing research and teaching; accountability and public responsibility; implications for the mission of an university; understanding the interface vs. practicing the interface; role in the appointment or approval of senior staff; policy on admissions and curriculum; external accreditation and Quality Assurance.

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

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

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

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

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

1.3 Legislative proposals outline

The rationale for legislative change is considered under the following headings:

- Objectives
- Risks and outcomes
- Basic principles
- New structure of HE sector
- University rationalization, including the process of rationalization
- Universities powers and responsibilities
- Organizational autonomy
- Financial autonomy
- Academic autonomy
- HR autonomy
- Road map

2. OBJECTIVES

The *objectives* of these legislative proposals are:

- The development of a stronger, integrated, relevant, quality assured higher education sector focusing on student centred learning in all cycles
- Continued implementation of the EHEA and the Bologna reforms
- Reform and modernization of the higher education sector through increased autonomy in line with communications from the European Commission and the Council of Ministers
- Contributing to the case for Moldova to become a member of the European Union
- Strengthening the research base of Moldova Universities to help support the development of doctoral schools and doctoral education and in line with the Bologna process and Communications from the European Union
- Quality assurance and enhancement
- Collaboration with business and industry
- University internationalization

3. RISKS AND OUTCOMES

3.1 Risks:

- Dramatic decline in student numbers (www.demografie.md):
  - in 2014 the number of students had declined by 25%, compared with 2009, on average by over 4% % per annum; this trend is forecast to continue
  - in 2014 35% of the planned places in all Universities were not filled; this trend is expected to continue unless radical steps are taken to halt the decline
  - From 1995/1996, the number of 18-19 year olds has been constantly decreasing; in the last 10 years (as of 2014), the number of 18-19 year olds decreased by 45,000
    - By 2016, the number of 18-19 year olds is expected to fall to 90,000 compared with 103,000 in 2014.
    - In 2020, the number is predicted to be 75,000, a drop of c.27% in six years.
  - A number of factors drive this decline, increasing the pressure for urgent action now before HE sector goes into terminal decline:
    - Demographic - the birth-rate in 1996-1997 was 50% lower than in the 1970s
    - c.1 million people have emigrated since 1992, and emigration continues
    - c.5000 scholarships a year for students from Moldova to study abroad funded by other countries;
    - Dual citizenship, e.g., Romanian, allows access to **tuition-free** high quality EU education
    - Increase of high-middle class parents who can afford (and prefer) to send their children to study in EU
    - Visa liberalization (with short-medium term impact)
    - Accession to EU (with medium-long term impact, 5-7 years)
    - Non returning students who go on work-travel (500-600 per year)
- Lack of understanding of the mission of a modern university by key stakeholders
- Ageing academic staff (on average more than 60-65% of academic staff are over 60 years)
- Low quality and employability of graduates; according to IMF 2013 Country Report No. 13/269, only 22% of young people found a job immediately after graduation in 2010Low European and international competiveness
- Poor research, development and innovation in universities

- Inefficiency:
    - Over- capacity which means wasteful, inefficient and ineffective use of capital resources (buildings, laboratories) and staff arising from the decline in student numbers
    - Duplication of programmes of study with low numbers of students and consequent impact on quality and performance
    - The need to develop high quality research and doctoral schools
    - Low level of funding for teaching and research
    - Inefficient use of resources
    - Lack of economies of scale in e.g. in administration
    - Poor teaching/research infrastructure
    - Lack of integrated university platforms, both teaching and research
    - Low impact research due to thinly spread funding
- Competition with businesses (private sector) for academic and high level technical, administrative and other support staff
- Low quality and insufficient quantity of high level technical, administrative and other support staff, that constitute 55-60% of staff of a modern university
- Speed of technological change
- Week regions and regional development
- General and effective resistance to institutional change by university management, academic staff, students, other key stakeholders

3.2 Outcomes: if status-quo is maintained

Maintain the status quo - 20 public universities, 11 private universities, and 15 research institutes - with research and research funding still monopolized by the Academy of Science of Moldova, with the following results in public HE institutions:

- by 2020 the number of students would drop to c.50,000-55,000 - an average of c.1,700 students per university;
- Closure or bankruptcy of universities, academic and technical staff dismissal, student and parent revolt;
- no effective student centred, research-based learning and teaching and continuing low quality of majority of graduates;
- low rate of employment after graduating;

- virtually no research;
- no effective knowledge transfer;
- marginal contribution to the social and economic life.

Our strong recommendation is that to maintain the status quo is **NOT** an option and that the only route possible in the current crisis is to implement the EUniAM plan.

3.3 Outcomes: if EUniAM proposals are implemented

The following *outcomes* are expected if the legislative proposals are implemented:

- The funding for public universities will be fully maintained
- The funding will be used in more efficient ways by the restructured (merged) public universities (6+1) to develop institutions committed to modernisation and improvement in learning and teaching, research, and knowledge transfer
- Ensure full more cost effective utilisation of capital resources releasing funds for learning and teaching, research and knowledge transfer
- The restructuring of the higher education sector will produce larger, stronger public universities, which will provide a basis for more multi and interdisciplinary learning and teaching in all cycles
- The integration of the ASM research institutes in the restructured (merged) public universities will help to establish a research culture which will imbue research based learning and teaching in all cycles, strengthen doctoral education and enhance doctoral schools, and enhance knowledge transfer
- End inappropriate subject duplication and provide a critical mass of students and staff for key subjects allowing wider student choice in electives
- Strengthen regional and national links with employers
- Reinvigorate public universities with effective, new governance and management structures committed to relevant student centred education
- Provide a basis for inter-institution collaboration through a more effective Rectors' Council
- Incentivise the autonomous (merged) public universities to develop human resource strategies and policies which focus on professional development and recognition of high quality success in learning and teaching, research and knowledge transfer.

4. BASIC PRINCIPLES

The legislative proposals are based on the following principles:

- A clear distinction between the roles and responsibilities of the Government and the Universities reflected and enforced through regulation and institutional university autonomy
- Clear separation between university governance, leadership and management
- The mission of a contemporary university is:
  - Student-centred, research-based learning and teaching based on learning outcomes
  - Research - fundamental and applied
  - Knowledge transfer
- An **integrated** Higher Education sector in which public universities offer programmes in all cycles, including the short cycle
- Full cost, performance-based funding:
  - for research and knowledge transfer
  - for learning and teaching
- The government funds public universities on the following basis:
  - 100% funding for learning and teaching in the form of a block grant allocated on the basis of a transparent, published performance driven formula
    - Universities are free to allocate the block grant in ways determined by the university Governing Body subject to the requirements of the contract with the Government and respecting principles of accountability
  - Funding for research should be allocated on the basis of a transparent, published formula in the form of 'core' funding to cover basic institutional research infrastructure
- The Government provides maintenance scholarships to all students who are citizens of Moldova and enrolled in public universities. Maintenance scholarships are differentiated according to students' place of residence
- Quality assurance of teaching and learning and research and knowledge transfer – which is subject to periodic external independent review
- The details of data to be collected and reporting requirements will be determined by the Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation in consultation with the sector and other relevant stakeholders. It is expected that as well as the standard range of student, staff, research and financial data the Ministry and universities will be

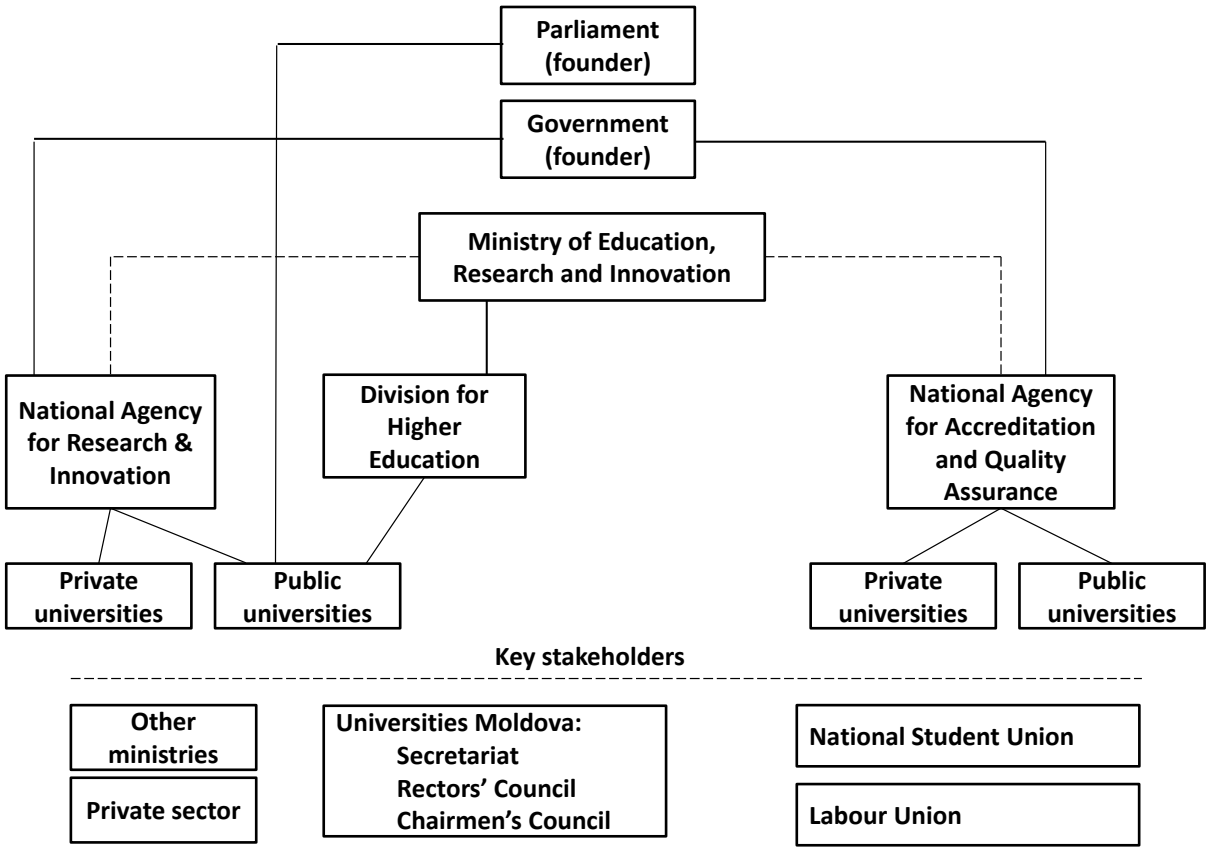
mindful of the recommendation in the Bucharest Communique that: “data collection and referencing against common indicators, particularly on employability, the social dimension, lifelong learning, internationalisation, portability of grants/loans, and student and staff mobility” will constitute part of the data to be collected.

- Universities will be required to report, in a common format, solely to the Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation on all aspects of their work at times and for periods determined by the Ministry and respective agencies after consultation with the sector. Such reporting will include inter alia -finance, student numbers and outcomes, staff, teaching, research and other areas such as those indicated above
- Distribution of academic work-load between (i) learning and teaching and (ii) research and knowledge transfer to support the mission of university
- Student-centred learning based on learning outcomes (knowledge, understanding, ability), research based teaching, employability competences
- Student admission managed by the universities

5. STRUCTURE OF HE SECTOR

The proposed structure of HE is presented in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: proposed structure of HE sector



Explanation of the proposed structure of the HE sector:

- The **Parliament of the Republic of Moldova** becomes the founder of public universities
- The Ministry of Education becomes: **The Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation** (MERI) to reflect the mission of the Ministry
    - MERI shall be the sole ministry for relations with universities relating to learning and teaching, research, and knowledge transfer
    - All funding for higher education and research to be managed by MERI
    - MERI to establish a high level Higher Education Division (as part of MERI) with terms of reference/responsibilities as set out below

- The Division for Higher Education must be provided with adequate (number, quality, level) staff resources to manage the range of responsibilities.

- The **Higher Education Division** will be responsible inter alia for:

  - The development of a five year strategic plan for higher education in Moldova
  - Consultation with the Higher Education sector on a systematic and regular basis
  - The allocation of recurrent and capital funds for learning and teaching to public universities on the basis of contracts and a transparent and published funding formula based on student numbers and outputs (see Figure 3);
  - The definition of consistent and coherent Higher Education data fields.
  - Collection, collation, analysis and publication of management and performance data,
  - The commissioning of a high level, integrated MIS (student/learning and teaching /FTE and academic and technical staff)
  - The establishment of financial and audit report requirements for public universities
  - Arranging for periodic audit and review visits to universities to test the quality, effectiveness reliability of financial and data management systems
  - Review of university strategic plans and other matters to be determined by MERI
  - Establishing sector performance indicators related to learning and teaching
  - Seeking reimbursement of any unused funds resulting from under recruitment of students and/or lower student outputs than specified in the contract with the university or in the event of the detection of misuse of funds

- **National Agency for Accreditation and Quality Assurance:** the Government to establish an autonomous and independent National Agency for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (NAAQA) which shall be subject to external periodic review.
  - The twin roles of the National Agency for Accreditation and Quality Assurance to be clearly distinguished
  - **Both state and private HEIs will be subject to the requirements of NAAQA**
  - **Accreditation** will involve:
    - Responsibility for establishing and publishing criteria for the recognition of HEIs
    - Recognition shall grant the HEI the right to offer higher education programs in all cycles and award qualifications which will be recognized nationally.

- Normally accrediting the HEI as a whole but partial accreditation may be awarded to a named program or programs if the HEI as a whole is judged not to meet the criteria for institutional accreditation.
- Periodic review of HEIs to ensure that they continue to satisfy the national accreditation criteria

- **Quality Assurance** will entail:
  - The establishment and publication of standards and codes of practice for Quality Assurance in HE in Moldova in conformity with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA endorsed by the Bologna meeting of Ministers in Yerevan in May 2015.
  - Procedures for the periodic external review of University Quality Assurance in conformity with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA.
  - Policy and procedures for the quality assurance and enhancement of its work.
  - Registration as a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA) at the earliest opportunity

- **External Examiners Secretariat**
  - To guarantee/safeguard the quality of performance in final examinations at public universities the MERI in consultation with the NAAQA will establish an External Examiners Secretariat (EES).

  - EES will establish standards and guidelines for external examiners
  - EES will be responsible for recruiting, training and certifying and reviewing a national team of external examiners
  - External examiners may be recruited from academia, business and/or public sectors
  - External examiners will be selected on a random basis by the EES
  - The external examiners will have the following duties:
    - Reviewing the requirements for the degree programme examinations, including where appropriate reviewing question papers for written exams, to ensure that they are consistent with the learning objectives and outcomes defined in degree regulations/curriculum
    - Ensuring that exams are conducted in conformity with current rules
    - Ensuring that the assessment and grading of examinations is consistent, equitable, conforms to best practice and respects the published assessment and grading criteria. This may involve random selection of examination scripts for review,

attending meetings of internal examiners, arbitrating in the event of a dispute between internal examiners

- Providing an evaluation report on standards and procedures at the end of the examinations for which they are appointed

- Overseeing that students are given a fair and uniform treatment and that their performances are reliably assessed in conformity with the assessment rules

- **National Agency for Research and Innovation:** The Government to establish a National Agency for Research and Innovation (NARI, see Figure 3)

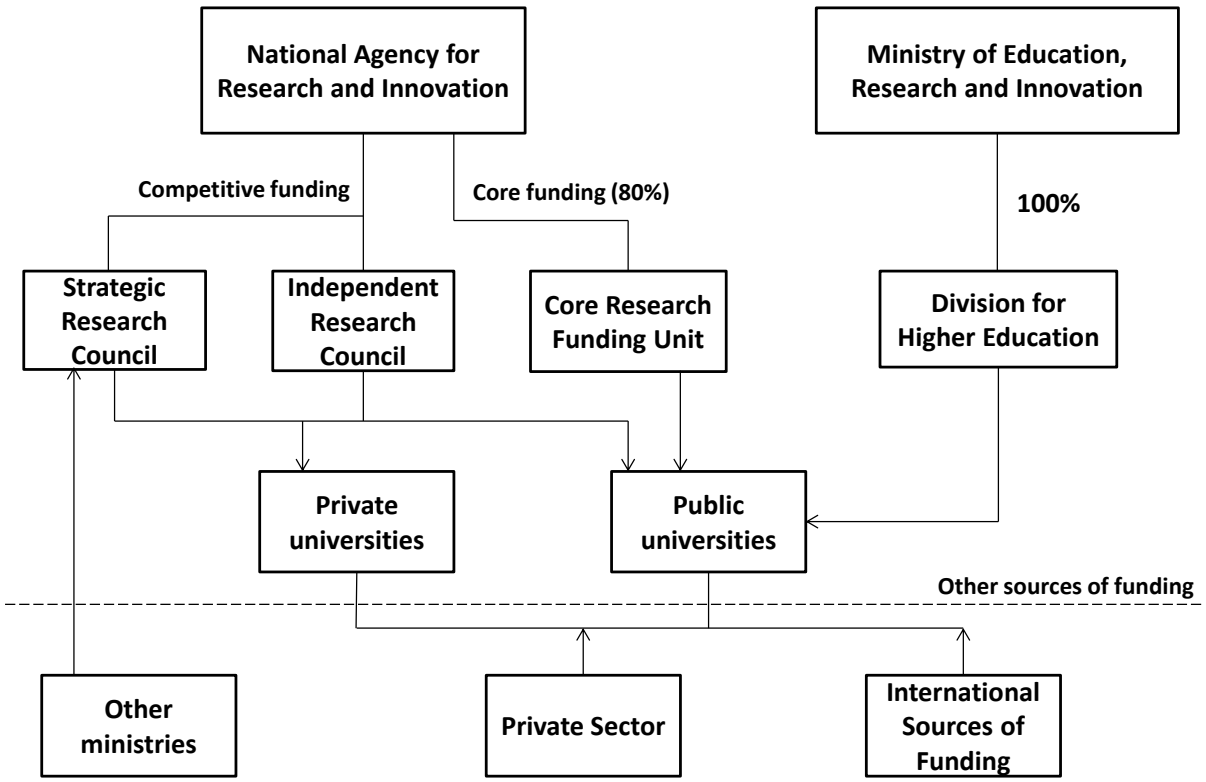
    - The Government to **disestablish the Academy of Science of Moldova** and allocate **ALL** its research institutes to appropriate public universities

- NARI will be responsible to MERI for:
    - Allocation of core and competitive research funding based on objective published criteria
    - Instituting calls for research proposals
    - Establishing eligibility and evaluation criteria
    - Organization of external objective and quality assured evaluations of applications
    - Organization of audit of research grants
    - NARI would have three major units: for Independent Research, for Strategic Research, and for Core Funding:
        - The **Unit for Core Funding** provides core research funding for public universities;
            - Allocations of funding will consider doctoral training (number of PhDs), publications and external funding as key performance indicators
            - The collection of management and performance data (staff, publications, grants, doctoral students, funding), requiring a high level, integrated MIS (VBN, VPN) across the sector
        - The **Unit for Independent Research** provides research grants on the basis of a competitive Call for applications in all fields that are based on the researchers' own initiatives, subject to a high quality objective assessment of applications, including international assessment
            - To support independent research based on the researchers' own ideas, within and across all main fields of science, the Independent Research Unit of NARI will have five research councils (see Appendix 1), offering funding for respective disciplines on a competitive basis

- The **Unit for Strategic Research** funds strategic research on the basis of a competitive Call for applications in the fields specified by MERI, subject to a high quality assessment of applications, including international assessment
- Private universities may apply for competitive-based 'independent' and 'Strategic' research funding

- NARI will provide a separate budget for investment in high-cost equipment on a competitive basis for public universities

Figure 3: Proposed funding structure of HE sector



- Key HE sector stakeholders:
  - **Other ministries** may initiate research projects, allocating earmarked research funding to the Strategic Research Unit of NARI;
    - In consultation with NARI other ministries may publish Calls for research applications, and establish relevant and equitable eligibility and evaluation criteria. The evaluation/assessment of other Ministry

applications will be conducted in close consultation and cooperation with the NARI

- **Private sector organizations** may initiate research projects directly with universities
- Establish **Universities Moldova** (UNIMD) as a not-for-profit organization brings together the universities aiming to:
    - Advocate the best possible environment for Universities to carry out their mission of: research, learning and teaching, and knowledge dissemination with politicians, ministries and other key stakeholders
    - Enhance their cooperation, visibility and impact
    - UNIMD will have an effective secretariat that will facilitate public hearings and inform the Rectors' council and Chairmen's council inter alia on issues related to university autonomy, government-university relationships, university-business relationships, and university internationalization
    - UNIMD will be financed on the basis of subscription paid by the member universities
- **National Student Union**: an effective and active involvement of students in the fulfilment of university mission is key to the success of HE sector
    - It will be financed by the Student Unions of universities

6. UNIVERSITY RATIONALIZATION

6.1 Rationalization principles

The process of rationalization and institutional mergers is based on the following principles/needs:

- That it should produce a dynamic restructured higher education sector which will be committed to a more effective, efficient, productive, quality driven use of all the current resources in the sector
- That the total resource allocated to higher education should be maintained and increased on an annual basis at least in line with other public budgets and as circumstances in the economy permit at a higher level in recognition of the fundamental role of higher education in economic growth and development
- That the process of rationalisation and merger should be based on the principle of safeguards for individuals – recognising that the natural wastage occurring in the system will provide opportunities for restructuring.
- That research institutes transferred from the Academy of Sciences of Moldova and integrated in universities will be strengthened in the process and play a key role in the transformation of the universities' research base
- That any capital funds which may be realised through the sale of buildings, land or other assets will be retained by the sector for investment which may including buildings, infrastructure, facilities and staff
- That there is a need to strengthen the university profiles and mission (student-centred, research-based learning/teaching, research and knowledge transfer)
- That there is a need to establish strong regional universities which will be major direct contributors to the economy and will work with public and private employers in the development of the regional economy
- That there is a need to establish strong competitive, viable sized universities comparable in size to peers in other European countries (benchmarked size: 10,000-15,000 students);
- That subject areas should be strengthened by increasing their range and depth and thus offering students a wider choice of modules
- That there should be Increased opportunities for interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary programmes

- That wasteful duplication (duplication of subjects - non-sustainable in small economy)should be reduced
- That a critical mass is essential for high quality doctoral programs (larger integrated institutions can offer better facilities and training and critical mass for doctoral school education)
- That research-based learning and teaching should be integrated in all cycles
- That inefficient use of public funding, which has resulted in low quality teaching, ineffective low quality research, ineffective utilization of facilities/buildings; small HEIs with a high ratio of management costs to student numbers, should be eliminated
- That efficiency savings should be used to improve and develop, effective, adequate services to students
- That failure to reform, modernize and to grant universities real autonomy will compromise the implementation of the Bologna process and application for EU membership

6.2 Rationalized number of universities

Based on the principles above, and the benchmark data (see e.g., WP3 and Appendix 2), it is recommended that there should be 7 (6 + 1) universities in Moldova: 3 regional universities and 4 universities in Chisinau:

- *Regional* universities*:*
  - Balti State University (BSU)
  - Cahul State University (CSU)
  - Tiraspol State University (TSU) [for political reasons, TSU is not considered in this report as part of rationalization process of]

- *Universities in Chisinau*:
  - University of Economic and Business Studies (UEBS)
  - Medical University of Moldova (MUM)
  - State University of Moldova (SUM)
  - Technical University of Moldova (TUM)

Why 2 + 1 regional universities*:*

- Effective regional development needs dynamic, relevant, effective universities of sufficient scale to make an economic impact and with a sufficiently wide subject spread to cater for the needs of the region
- Universities of significant size which themselves will be major players in the regional economy will be in a position to influence and collaborate with regional stakeholders to boost economic and social development
- An aspect of the wider European agenda is to strengthen and boost regional development, in which universities play a key role
- In the Moldovan context, this means having a strong, viable university in the North, South, and East, namely BSU, CSU, and TSU

Why these 4 universities:

- Specialized universities
  - TUM and MSU
- Focus on social and business/economic studies
  - UEBS
- Comprehensive university (broad generalist university), offering basic sciences, humanities, pedagogical science
  - SUM

6.3 Rationalization and integration process: A road map

A road map is presented in Appendix 3. It identifies key activities, milestones as well as key outputs in relation to the rationalization, integration and modernization processes. It is divided into 3 major periods:

- Period 1: Preparing rationalization process
- Period 2: Implementing rationalization process
- Period 3: Integrating and modernising process

Period 1: The aim of period 1 – max 9 months – is to prepare legal and regulative ground to commence major restructuring and rationalization of Higher Education sector. The new structure of the sector, new funding principles, including teaching and research funding formulae, the rationalization and integrating and modernising processes will be part of a new, higher education restructuring law.

The urgency of the situation (see section 2) dictates that the rationalization process should commence within a short time frame – 9 months, during which inter alia the necessary legal framework to support the rationalization process will be developed and approved.

To support and facilitate the process, the Rectors' Council and Chairmen's Council should immediately establish:

- a small working group with appropriate administrative and clerical support to facilitate the process and the project management and report on the progress to the Minister on a monthly basis, and
- two small working groups to identify Management Information Systems student/teaching and learning/FTE data and research data (e.g., publications, research grants, number of PhDs and respective performance), and implement an integrated Management Information System/Virtual Business Network system across the sector.

By the end of this period (max 9 months), the following *key* outputs are envisaged:

- New HE sector restructuring and rationalization law is published in 'Monitorul Oficial'
- HE funding formulae (for research and teaching) is approved
- Division for Higher Education is up and running
- NARI is up and running
- NAAQA is up and running
- Universities Moldova is up and running
- Governance and management are clearly separated
- Academy of Science of Moldova is disestablished

Period 2: The aim of period 2 – max 12 months – is to commence, implement and finalize the rationalization process. 20 public universities and 15 public research institutes of Academy of Science of Moldova will be subject of the rationalization process following the rationalization principles identified in section 6.1 above.

Ministry of Finance will allocate funding to MERI to facilitate and support the process of rationalization and integration. Funds from the sale of assets will go to newly merged universities to support their integration and modernisation.

These public institutions concerned: 20 public universities and 15 research institutes of Academy of Science of Moldova should be invited to negotiate and agree integrated mergers within 10, maximum 12 months. If the institutions do not agree the Minister of Education will impose a new merger and structure plan

If there is an evident lack of progress or unwillingness to engage in meaningful negotiation the Minister should intervene at an earlier stage than envisaged above.

It is expected that by the end of this period (max 12 months), the following *key* outputs are envisaged:

- Mapping is finalized leading to the formation of 6 universities
- Data needs for teaching are formalized

- Software integrating all sector teaching data is purchased (through a public tender)
- Data needs for research are formalized
- Software (VBN) integrating all sector research data is purchased (through a public tender)
- Accreditation criteria and procedures are established
- Quality assurance criteria and procedures are established

Period 3: Following the rationalization process, there will be an integration process of 2 years (max 3 years), during which the organizational and operational structures of the newly formed universities will be established. Further rationalization may take place as necessary.

In parallel the newly formed universities will undertake a comprehensive review of study programs in all cycles "to promote **student-centred learning based on learning outcomes** , characterised by innovative methods of teaching that involve students as active participants in their own learning in a supportive and inspiring working and learning environment" (Bucharest Communique)

It is expected that by the end of this period (max 24 months), the following key outputs are envisaged:

- New internal structures are established
- Study programs are modernized
- Doctoral schools are established
- Internal quality assurance criteria/procedures are established
- MIS for teaching are installed, integrated, and operational
- VBN for research are installed, integrated, and operational

6.4 Rationalization mapping: An example

As of 2015, there are 20 universities and 15 research institutes of Academy of Science of Moldova (ASM). These 35 public institutions will be subject of the rationalization process following the rationalization principles identified in section 6.1 above.

The Academy of Science of Moldova will be disestablished and its research institutes (15) allocated to appropriate universities.

Appendix 4 provides an example of mapping, of how the merger – rationalization process might operate, but it should be understood as an example which will be subject to development in the period of negotiation between the institutions. We reiterate that the process must be instituted immediately.

7. UNIVERSITIES POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Following the principle of clear demarcation between state regulation and institutional university autonomy, universities will be responsible for:

- Fulfilling the requirements of MERI
- Establishing effective internal organizational and management structures and keeping these under review to ensure that they remain fit for purpose
- The admission of students
- Once an institution has been formally accredited by the National Agency for Accreditation and Quality Assurance, it shall establish degree programs in all three cycles (short cycle/Bachelor, Master and Doctoral), which are student centred, based on learning outcomes and develop competences for employability .
- Such degree programmes and other qualifications shall be subject to rigorous quality assurance procedures established by the institution and formal approval by a designated university committee but shall not be subject to any further external scrutiny or approval
- Establishing and publishing a policy and procedures for quality assurance, enhancement and periodic review of programmes of study in conformity with National and European Guidelines
- Developing, encouraging, promoting a variety of modes of study including distance and blended learning, part- time study, work based learning, continuous professional development and other forms of life- long learning
- Recognition of prior formal and informal learning and experience
- Effective student involvement in management structures and decision-making including the curriculum and teaching/learning process
- The appointment, review and evaluation of academic and non-academic staff
- Establishing titles, levels, career path, including procedures for tenure, and conditions of appointment including remuneration subject to national legal requirements for all staff (academic and technical)
- Deciding on the normal workload distribution between teaching-learning and research/knowledge transfer
- Establishing effective staff development and training programs
- Quality Assurance and Enhancement of all University procedures and work

- International relations: partnership and other cooperation agreements, mobility (staff/students), joint programs in all cycles, joint research, consortia/networks, international students, branch creation
- Effective liaison with business and industry: internships, work-based learning, consultancy, knowledge transfer, R&D, funded research, industrial PhDs, long life learning, consultation on curriculum
- Supporting regional economic and social development
- The promotion of research (applied and fundamental), innovation and knowledge transfer
- Developing an effective research strategy and encouraging and supporting staff to undertake research
- Promoting knowledge transfer, the development of innovation hubs, science parks, spin-off companies and appropriate entities to support the university mission
- The allocation of funds to its subdivisions on a transparent basis, based on processes and methods arising from the strategy and policy, which apply in each university.
- Diversifying income generation from sources in addition to public funding (e.g., tuition fees, R&D contracts with businesses, European project and research funding, training, entrepreneurial activities, spin-offs, renting, interest rates)
- Establishing tuition fees for certain categories of students and programs: foreign students, students wishing to obtain a second degree, MBA, joint programs
- Managing university financial accounts, as well as accumulating an operating surplus
- The Government will transfer the land and real estate to universities
- Universities will have the power to purchase property, and to sell real estate/assets with the consent of the Ministry
- Universities will have the power to invest revenue from the sale of real estate for the development of the university
- Subject to the approval of the Minister (the Division for Higher Education) to borrow money to facilitate the development process, in accordance with the university's mission and purpose
- If applicable, select an international Quality Assurance Agency listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education to undertake an external audit.

8. ORGANIZATIONAL AUTONOMY

Implementing the principle of a clear separation between university governance and management the University will establish an effective organizational and management structures, which will include a university governing body and the appointment of the Rector.

The University will keep the organisational and management structures under review to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.

University governing body (University Board):

- Composition 9 -15 members internal and external (majority external)
- Chaired by an external member
- Rector member ex officio
- Clear terms of reference
- Subject to external periodic review
- Code of practice and training for members
- Period – 4 years (members could be re-elected for second term of 4 years)[
- The process should ensure a rotation of membership to ensure continuity, i.e., this would mean that normally 25% of the members would retire each year

University Board (governing body) is unambiguously and collectively

- Responsible for overseeing the university's activities and will ensure that the responsibilities and powers outlined above are exercised in accordance with the contract with the Division of Higher Education and Core Research Funding Unit and to fulfil the mission of the university
- It will establish a code of practice and ethics for its members
- It will establish a medium term – four year strategic plan and monitor the delivery of the plan
- It will establish a system for risk management and control which will include the prevention and detection of all forms of corruption and action which undermine the integrity of the university

- It will ensure that there is an effective annual external audit of the university accounts
- It will ensure that the university has established procedures to ensure the quality of learning and teaching, research and knowledge transfer
- It will establish appropriate performance indicators for all aspects of the university work
- It will monitor performance and value for money

University Board is responsible to MERI for the sound performance, financial management, and operation of the university and for ensuring that the terms of the contract with the Division for higher Education are fulfilled

- It will provide an annual financial report in the form and at the time specified by the Higher Education Division
- It will provide annual data reports and management information in the form and at the time specified by the Higher Education Division
- It will present its strategic plan to the Division of Higher Education
- It will present the annual report of the external auditors to the Division for Higher Education after it has been reviewed by the Governing Body
- It will report to the Division for Higher Education any cases of fraud or corruption that are detected with a statement of the action to be taken
- On a three (four) year cycle, it will provide a comprehensive review report to the Division of Higher Education on the achievements of the university with particular reference to the strategic plan
- It will ensure that the university complies with all agreed audit and financial reporting
- It will ensure that the university estate is developed, enhanced and maintained for the benefit of the whole university community

Appointment of the rector:

- Rector is the Chief Executive appointed in open competition by the University Board
- Fixed term appointment - five years term renewable for a further three years term (maximum 2 terms eight years per HEI)

- Clear job description and performance criteria
- The Rector is responsible to, reports to and is evaluated by the University Board

Rector is responsible to University Board for:

- Establishing the internal management and academic structures agreed by the Governing Body
- The overall leadership and management of the university
- The implementation of the strategic plan throughout the university
- Ensuring the development and sustainability of the academic, organizational, financial and human resource autonomy of the university
- The management of all the university resources
- The development and public presentation of the university and all aspects of its work
- Representing the university and promoting its interests nationally and internationally
- Establishing and leading a high quality, performance driven, senior management team
- Ensuring that the Governing Body is provided with detailed accurate timely data on university performance in all areas of its work
- Providing an annual performance report
- Developing effective communication and integration of students and staff in the work of the university
- Diversifying the sources of income and generating an operational surplus
- Appropriate delegation of responsibilities and authority
- Leading the preparation of the University strategic plan for submission to and approval by the Governing Body

9. FINANCIAL AUTONOMY

Following the basic principles of HE sector as well as universities powers and responsibilities (for more details see sections 3 and 6), funding of HE shall be transparent and published based on formulae that are based on inputs and outputs.

9.1 Funding higher education

Higher Education Division will implement the following performance- and outputs-based formula (1) for funding learning and teaching (higher education):

$$T_{i,t} = \sum_{j=1}^{6} (Nsf_j \times k_1 + \frac{C_j}{60} \times k_2) \times P_j, \;\; j = 1, \dots, 6 \quad (1)$$

Where $T_{i,t}$ teaching and learning budget for HEI 'i' in year 't'

j number of study domains (see Table 1)

k_1 price ratio as a function of number of physical students

k_2 price ratio as a function of number of FTE (3),

$$k_1 + k_2 = 1 \quad (2)$$

C_j total number of ECTS accumulated at HEI 'i' in the domain 'j'

60 number of ECTS needed to be accumulated per year

$$FTE_j = \frac{C_j}{60} \quad (3)$$

Nsf_j number of physical students per domain 'j' in HEI 'i'

$$Nsf_j = Nlf_j + 0.5 \times Nlfpt_j + 1.25 \times Nm_j \quad (4)$$

Where Nlf_j number of full time students of cycle 1 in domain j

$Nlfpt_j$ number of part time students in cycle 1 in domain j

Nm_j number of full time students of cycle 2 in domain j.

0.5 & 1.25 benchmarked coefficients and shall be adjusted based on new (after rationalization), actual historical data

P_j price per Nsf student per domain j

Table 1: Draft configuration of study domains

Domain	Composition	Adjustment Coefficient*
Domain 1	humanities, social sciences, business and economics, law, services (hotel), educational/pedagogical sciences	1
Domain 2	natural sciences, computer science and mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, mathematics, molecular biology, biochemistry and -physics, biology, geology, software development, as well as the natural science aspects of geography	1.65
Domain 3	Engineering, ICT (excluding software development), manufacturing technologies, agriculture, pharmacy, sport	1.75
Domain 4	Medical sciences, architecture and design, and construction	2.5
Domain 5	Art, musicology (excluding opera singing), dramaturgy	3.0
Domain 6	Theatrical arts, opera singing, visual arts	6.0

* These are benchmarked adjustment coefficients and could be adjusted based on newly emerging historical data

9.2 Funding research and innovation

The Funding Unit within ARI will implement the following performance based formula (5) for funding research and innovations in state universities:

$$Rit \quad = Fc \quad + Fb \qquad (5)$$

Where: Fc - competitive funding and Fb - basic, core funding, aimed to cover inter alia salary for technical staff in labs, equipment maintenance, supplies and services procurements

Funding Unit within ARI will provide 80% for base funding and allocate up to 20% of the research budget on a competitive basis based on the following performance criteria:

- Publications
- External research grants
- Number of PhD students

State and private universities may apply for research and innovation funding on a competitive basis to the Independent Research and Strategic Research units.

10. ACADEMIC AUTONOMY

In conformity with the basic principles of the HE sector and the powers and responsibilities of Universities defined above (for more details see sections 3 and 6) University Academic Autonomy:

- Will grant – subject to formal accreditation - the power to award degrees in all cycles, (short cycle/Bachelor cycle, Master and Doctoral), which are student-centred, based on learning outcomes and develop competences for employability, established by universities in line with Quality Assurance and Enhancement guidelines set by NAAQA
- Will grant the power to manage the Admission of students
- Will grant the power to regulate Academic work-load between (i) learning and teaching and (ii) research and knowledge transfer to support the mission of university
- Will establish internal quality assurance of teaching and learning, and research and knowledge transfer

10.1 National credit and qualifications framework

The proposed national credit and qualifications framework is presented in Table 2 and explained below:

- **'Short cycle' qualification**: higher education study programs lasting 1-2 years/60-120 ECTS. The learning outcomes correspond to the qualification level 5 of EQF and ISCED-2011.
- **Bachelor degree**: a first cycle degree should be an acceptable and normal exit qualification equipping graduates for the labour market. It may be 180-240 ECTS (3-4 years of full-time education), depending on the general field of study. Studies are finalized with the granting of the bachelor's degree diploma and title in the scientific field defined in the program. Programs correspond to the qualification level 6 of EQF and ISCED-2011 (see also EHEA QF and the Dublin descriptors).
  Graduates may also be awarded a certificate of practical training.
- **Master degree**: these study programs may be 90-120 ECTS. The total credits for study programs in cycles I and II will not normally be less than 300 ECTS. The programs correspond to the qualification level 7 of the EQF and ISCED-2011, containing elements of scientific research (see also EHEA QF and the Dublin descriptors).
- **Doctoral degree**: these study programs correspond to cycle III of higher education, corresponding to the qualification level 8 of EQF and ISCED-2011. The duration of studies is normally three years- 180 ECTS.

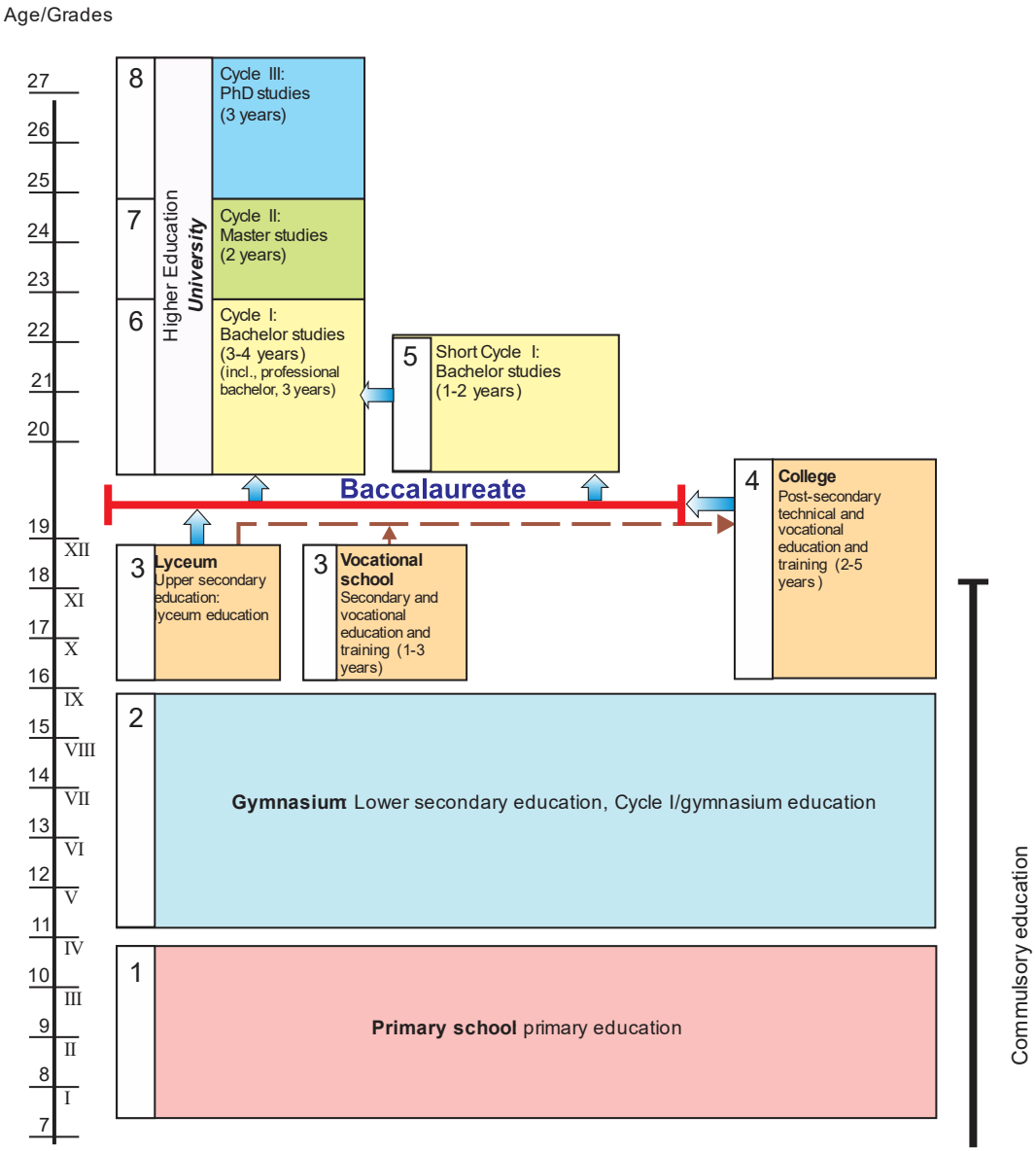
- **Integrated study programs** are provided by universities in fields regulated at European level (medicine, veterinary medicine, architecture), normally these will amount to at least 300 ECTS, and are finalized with the granting of the diploma and title equivalent to the master's degree.

Table 2: National credit and qualifications framework

Studies	**ISCED- 2011, EQF NQF OF RM Qualification level**	**Institution offering the programme**	**EHEAQF (Bologna)**	**Duration in ECTS**	**Education document, title offered**
Primary education	1	Primary school			Certificate
Lower secondary education, cycle I	2	Gymnasium			Certificate of gymnasium studies, Certificate of profession
Upper secondary education, cycle II (lyceum education) or secondary technical and vocational education and training (2-3 years)	3	Lyceum, vocational school			Baccalaureate diploma; Certificate of vocational secondary education
Non-tertiary post-secondary technical and vocational education and training	4	Colleges			Diploma of vocational secondary education
Higher education „short cycle"	5	Universities	Short cycle	120	Short cycle
Bachelor's studies	6	Universities	Cycle I	180 -240	Bachelor's degree
Master's studies	7	Universities	Cycle II	90-120	Master's degree
Doctoral studies	8	Universities	Cycle III	180	Doctoral (PhD) degree

The General Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Moldova will be changed with regard to qualification levels 3, 4 and 5 and brought in line with the European Qualifications Framework and ISCED 2011.

Figure 4: Access to different levels of education



10.2 Education level progression and exits

The education levels 1, 2, and 3 are obtained through primary, gymnasium, and lyceum education or secondary technical and vocational education and training (vocational school). In college the duration of studies is 4 -5 years after gymnasium or up to 2 years after lyceum or vocational school of 3 years. Baccalaureate examinations can be also passed in the college. Studies are finalized with a diploma of qualification of vocational secondary education, corresponding to the qualification level 4 of ISCED-2011.

Holders of Baccalaureate diplomas or other equivalent documents have access to higher education (short cycle, bachelor's degree degree).

Candidates may apply to several study programs simultaneously in several universities.

- One of the requirements for admission to doctoral programs will be the advanced knowledge of English.
- The Nomenclature of doctoral training areas will be brought in line with the classifier ISCED-F-2013 and the approved Nomenclature for bachelor's and master's degree studies.

11. HR AUTONOMY

Following the basic principles of HE sector as well as universities powers and responsibilities (for more details see sections 3 and 6), public universities are free to:

- Appoint, review and evaluate academic and non-academic staff
- Establish titles, levels, career path, including criteria for tenure, and conditions of appointment, including remuneration subject to national legal requirements for all staff (academic and technical)
- Establish effective staff development and training programs

Appendix 1: Independent research councils

Council	Disciplines
Humanities	Art history, architecture and design, media science, musicology, ICT in the humanities, comparative literature, dramaturgy, philology, linguistics, communication research,, anthropology, ethnology, archaeology, history, philosophy, history of ideas and science, theology, comparative religion, educational theory, psychology and other related research disciplines within the humanities, such as library research, museology, as well as humanistic research within sports science, public health, urban and physical planning.
Social Sciences	Economics, sociology, political science and legal theory, as well as the societal aspects of various interdisciplinary subjects (e.g. communication studies, development studies, gender studies and cultural geography).
Natural Sciences	Natural sciences, computer science and mathematics, with an epistemological, but not necessarily an applied scientific objective; astronomy, physics, chemistry, mathematics, computer science, molecular biology, biochemistry and -physics, biology, geology as well as the natural science aspects of geography.
Medical Sciences	Basic, translational, clinical and socio-medical research in relation to human health and disease
Technology and Production Sciences	Basic research within technology and production sciences which is: a) motivated by a specific problem or having a clear application-oriented perspective; and b) aimed at solving a specific problem, developing new technologies and production systems or new ways of meeting the needs of society. Epistemological research without any application oriented perspectives and development activities will not be supported by TPS.

Source: Danish Council for Independent Research (http://goo.gl/zEhQ8d)

Appendix 2: Case study of rationalization of HE in Denmark

- In 2002, the new law on universities is approved in Denmark. One of its main features was the introduction of Governing Boards to enhance accountability, check and balance, and efficiency.
    - It was recommended the formation of a Chairmen's Council; Anders Knutsen, Chairman of Copenhagen Business School, being elected as the first Chairman of Chairmen's Council. The Chairman of Chairmen's Council will meet the Minister once a month , and once a quarter with the Chairman of Rectors' Council to discuss inter alia the implementation of legislation, financing of HEIs, and study program implementation.
    - In addition to the audit conducted by the state, the newly formed boards asked for independent, private audit of university accounts. The latter allowed identifying a number of inefficiencies in organizational and financial management.
    - A number of board formation principles were institutionalized: majority of members shall be external; the composition of board members (external) should reflect the Danish society, not only business, but also public (central and local) administration, public institutions and governmental structures, renowned international scholars, business persons or public figures from other countries; students, academic and technical staff shall be also members of the boards, respecting the gender principle.
    - As of 2002, rectors will have max 2 terms with same university (irrespective of future changes in legislation); first term of 5 years; second term of 3 years (before 2002, rectors and deans were appointed for unlimited terms).
- In early 2000s, a Globalization Council was formed aimed to address globalization and internationalization pressures/challenges, and identify possible responses to these challenges. This council met with the Prime Minister once a month. One of the outputs of this research/consultation process was that Danish universities need to become more efficient, competitive, and better reflect the needs of business and society at large.
- Following that emergent need to reform/rationalize the higher education sector, in January 2006, the Minister of Higher Education wrote letters to 11 universities and 15 research institutes/centers, asking them to discuss/examine the possibility of merger. Chairmen's and Rectors' councils, as well as academic and technical representatives of universities took part in discussions/rationalization process. The negotiation and rationalization process took place without an external negotiator. Universities were given 12 months to merge; after this period the Ministry would

step to finalize the process for universities/research institutes (this did not happen as the merger/rationalization process was finalized voluntarily in time).

- The first merger took place between University of Pharmacy, University of Agriculture and University of Copenhagen. University of Pharmacy and University of Agriculture were disestablished and joined University of Copenhagen that strengthened its position as a classical university. Some of the rectors of absorbed universities have become deans of faculties.

- Regional universities such as University of Southern Denmark (Odense) and Aalborg University (Aalborg) stayed. A number of research institutes and a research center from Danish Technical University wanted to join Aalborg University (AAU) – located in the Northern part of Denmark – which led to the creation of a large campus of AAU in Copenhagen.

- There was an instance when a university remained unchanged as no perfect merger match was found.

- The Minister suggested that the Pedagogical University (in Copenhagen) mergers with the Copenhagen Business School (CBS); but the Pedagogical University decided to merge with Aarhus University (located app. 200 km north-west of Copenhagen).

- CBS proposed a merger with the IT University or the Aarhus Business School, but the two turned the proposal down. The Minister would prefer a merger between CBS and the University of Copenhagen, but CBS turned that down and in the end stayed independent. So did the IT University; the Aarhus Business School merged with Aarhus University.

- As a result of rationalization/merger process, 8 universities were formed.

- Out of 15 research institutes, 2 stayed independent and the rest joined the newly formed/rationalized 8 universities.

- The rationalization/merger process was finalized in 12 months.

- It went without any bad publicity; Students and labor unions had no objections to the merger/rationalization process, because neither employees (there were no dismissals) nor students were affected, it had only a positive effect.

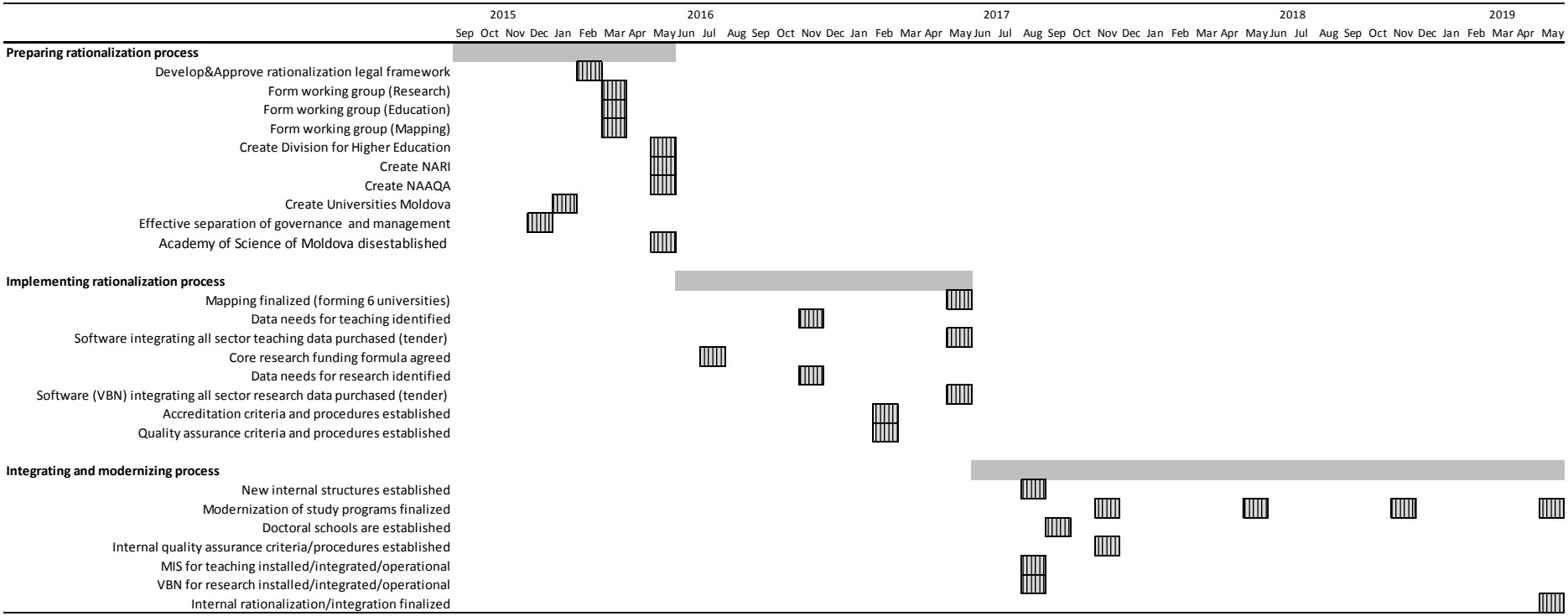
- The integration process within the merged universities took app3 years.

- In the process of rationalization, state funding was not reduced; in fact constantly increased, including additional 1% of GDP for research.

Key rationale for merger/rationalization:

- Danish universities were becoming less competitive internationally and globally, being constantly ranked low in international standings;
- Inefficient, scattered use of public funding (higher education is publicly funded)
- Lack of synergy in research and low level of research impact
- Growing gap between university and real, business/society world
- No attractive to international scholars (for many reasons explained above)

Appendix 3: Road map



Deadline for specific outputs

Appendix 4: Rationalization mapping: An example

	Academy of Economic Studies	**Moldova State University**	**State University of Medicine and Pharmacy**	**Technical University of Moldova**	**Balti State University**	**Cahul State University**
1. Academy of Economic Studies	**Specialization in Business and Economics**	Law		Cybernetics and Computer Science		
2. Moldova State University	International Relations, Political and Administrative Sciences Economics	**Specialization in Pedagogy, Education Sciences, Law, Journalism, Art**		Computer Science		
3. State University of Medicine and Pharmacy "N. Testemitanu"			**Specialization in Medicine**			
4. Technical University of Moldova	Economics			**Specialization in Technology and Engineering**		
5. Balti State University					**Regional University**	
6. Cahul State University						**Regional University**
7. Agrarian State University of Moldova	Economics Accountancy	Law	Veterinary medicine	Technology Auto/Transport Cadaster		
8. Institute of International Relations of Moldova	1. International Relations, Political Sciences 2. World Economy and International Economic Relations	1. Law 2. Foreign languages				
9. University of Academy of Sciences of Moldova		1. Natural Sciences 2. Exact Sciences 3. Socio-humanities		Computer Science		

	Academy of Economic Studies	Moldova State University	State University of Medicine and Pharmacy	Technical University of Moldova	Balti State University	Cahul State University
		Sciences				
10. State University of Physical Education and Sports			Kinetotherapy	Protection, Safety and Security	Pedagogy	Sport (Pedagogy)
11. Academy of Music, Theatre and Fine Arts		Instrumental art, composition and musicology Vocal art, directing and music pedagogy Theatre, film and dance Plastic arts				
12. State University of Comrat						Subsidiary of Cahul State University
13. State University of Taraclia						Subsidiary of Cahul State University
14. State University of Tiraspol (based in Chisinau)		Physics Mathematics Biology and Chemistry Geography		Information Technologies	Pedagogy Philology	
15. State Pedagogical University "I. Creanga"		Plastic Arts and Design Exact Sciences History and Geography Psychology and Special Psychopedagogy		Information Technologies	Pedagogy Foreign Languages and Literatures Philology	
16. Institute of Continuing Education	Economics Business	Foreign Languages Law Psychology		Information Technologies		Economics Business
17. Institute of Education Sciences		Mathematics and Sciences Psychopedagogy and Education Management			Preschool Education and Primary Education Language and Communication	Preschool Education and Primary Education (Social, Artistic and Technological

	Academy of Economic Studies	Moldova State University	State University of Medicine and Pharmacy	Technical University of Moldova	Balti State University	Cahul State University
					Social, Artistic and Technological Education Psychopedagogy and Education	Education Psychopedagogy and Education)
18. Academy "Stefan cel Mare" of the Ministry of Internal Affairs		Criminal Sciences Special Investigation Police and Society Legal Sciences			Sport: Physical Training and (Special) Tactics	
19. Military Academy of Armed Forces "Alexandru cel Bun" If these relates to technology (education), they could be placed at TUM: Infantry Artillery Transmissions Border Guard Carabineers (alternatively – in regional universities)						
20. Academy of Public Administration	Management International relations ICT Management in public administration	Constitutional law Public administration law Anticorruption Public administration			Public administration	
21. Research institutes of the Academy of Sciences	National Institute of Economic Research	Central Scientific Library ,,A Lupan" Legal and Political	Institute of Physiology and Sanocreatology Microbiology and	1. Institute of Power Engineering 2. Institute of		

	Academy of Economic Studies	**Moldova State University**	**State University of Medicine and Pharmacy**	**Technical University of Moldova**	**Balti State University**	**Cahul State University**
of Moldova		Research Institute Institute of Chemistry Institute of Ecology and Geography Institute of Philology Institute of Applied Physics Institute of Geology and Seismology Institute of History Institute of Mathematics and Computer Science Institute of Cultural Heritage Institute Botanical Garden Institute of Genetics, Physiology and Plant Protection Institute of Zoology	Biotechnology	Mathematics and Computer Science (Informatics) 3. Institute of Electronic Engineering and Nanotechnologies		

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Introducing Problem Based Learning in Moldova: Toward Enhancing Students (PBLMD)

www.pblmd.aau.dk

Work Package 6

Proposal for the Framework Plan for Higher Education

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February, 2018

Chisinau

Executive summary

This Proposal arises out of work carried out within the European Commission funded project – Introducing Problem Based Learning in Moldova: Towards Enhancing Students (PBLMD).

As part of PBLMD project a Commentary on the Framework Plan for Higher Education in Moldova was undertaken. This Commentary suggested that the prescriptive nature of the current Framework Plan poses serious obstacles to the realisation of effective university autonomy in the development and approval of new programmes.

The Commentary proposed that the Ministry should grant derogation from the Framework Plan procedures for the six subject areas and degrees which are being developed in the PBLMD project and identified the specific requirements of the Framework Plan which should be waived.

However, following the Commentary and full discussion with colleagues at the Ministry of Education in Chisinau, it was agreed that it may be timely for a radical revision of the policy and the requirements and procedures set out in the current Framework Plan to apply to all recognised and quality assured Higher Education Institutions in Moldova.

The Proposal presented in this report is meant to replace the existing Framework Plan for Higher Education in Moldova.

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1. Background

This proposal arises out of work carried out within the European Commission funded project – Introducing Problem Based Learning in Moldova: Towards Enhancing Students (PBLMD).

As part of PBLMD project a Commentary on the Framework Plan for Higher Education in Moldova was undertaken (Annex 1). This suggested that the prescriptive nature of the current Framework Plan poses serious obstacles to the realisation of effective university autonomy in the development and approval of new programmes.

The Commentary (Annex 1) proposed that the Ministry should grant derogation from the Framework Plan procedures for the six subject areas and degrees which are being developed in the PBLMD project and identified the specific requirements of the Framework Plan which should be waived.

However, following the Commentary and full discussion with colleagues at the Ministry of Education in Chisinau, it was agreed that it may be timely for a radical revision of the policy and the requirements and procedures set out in the current Framework Plan to apply to all recognised and quality assured Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Moldova.

Universities need to operate in a dynamic knowledge world which has to respond, reflect and critically evaluate constant and rapid changes and incorporate these in their curriculum if they are to prepare graduates adequately for the contemporary economic, social, political and employment world. Consequently the process for approval, redesign development or adding to a programme needs to be reasonably streamlined and responsive to change. At the same time it has to ensure proper scrutiny and quality assurance.

The proposal below is developed in the context of the Education Code of the Republic of Moldova (No. 152 dated July 17 2014), which states in

Article 79 University Autonomy:

(1) The higher education institutions shall have the status of university autonomy.

(2) The university autonomy is the right of the university community for organization and self-management, exercising the academic freedoms without any ideological, political or religious interferences, assuming a set of competences and obligations in line with the national strategies and policies for the development of the higher education.

(3) The university autonomy shall encompass the areas of management, structuring and functioning of the institution, teaching and scientific research activity, administration and financing, and shall be mainly performed through:

- *a) organizing, conducting and improving the educational and scientific research process;*
- *b) establishing specialties;*
- *c) developing curriculum and analytical programs in line with the state educational standards;*
- *d) organizing admission of students, taking into account the specific criteria to the profile of the higher education institution;*
- *e) selecting and promoting the teaching, scientific-teaching and scientific staff, as well as the other categories of personnel in the educational institution;*
- *f) establishing the assessment criteria for the teaching and scientific activity*
- *g) awarding teaching degrees;*

h) eligibility of all management bodies by secret voting;
i) solving social problems of students and staff;
j) ensuring order and discipline in the university;
k) *finding additional sources of income; establishing cooperation relationships with various educational and scientific institutions, centre and organizations in the country and abroad.*

It should be understood that the implementation of Article 79 on University Autonomy at an institutional level entails Universities accepting and taking full and effective responsibility in effect replacing the external oversight explicit in the Framework with rigorous institutional quality assured procedures with an appropriate Governance structure.

Exercising University autonomy in curriculum design and approval in a wider national and international context requires embedding the broad principles established in a number of critical documents. These include guidance provided in:

- Education Code of the Republic of Moldova Chisinau 2014
- Moldova 2020 National Strategy
- Moldova National Qualifications Framework Chisinau 2016,
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG),
- European Commission Qualifications Framework (EQF),
- EHEA Qualification Framework
- ECTS Guide 2015.

Account should also be taken of work undertaken by the European Universities Association in the development of the European 'Scorecard' to measure university autonomy (EUA – University autonomy in Europe) which states unequivocally what Academic Autonomy means:

- Academic autonomy refers to a university's ability to decide on various academic issues, such as student admissions, academic content, quality assurance, the introduction of degree programmes and the language of instruction.
- The capacity to introduce academic programmes without outside interference and to select the language(s) of instruction enables a university to pursue its specific mission in a flexible way. A free choice of teaching language may also be important in the context of institutional internationalisation strategies.
- The ability to design the content of courses, except for the regulated professions, is a fundamental academic freedom".

It also states that:

- Although quality assurance mechanisms are essential accountability tools, related processes can often be burdensome and bureaucratic. Universities should therefore be free to select the quality assurance regime and providers they consider as appropriate

The proposal below is meant to replace the existing Framework Plan for Higher Education in Moldova.

2. The Proposal for the Framework Plan for Higher Education

2.1 Institutional Accreditation and Recognition

Institutional accreditation and recognition is a prerequisite for the exercise of autonomy in the development of curriculum and approval of degrees and programmes of study which will be recognised nationally and internationally. The Moldovan Government will need to have a published procedure for the formal approval and accreditation of institutions with degree awarding powers.[1]

In this Proposal a distinction is made between institutional accreditation and quality assurance although it is recognised that procedures for external quality assurance may overlap with those for formal institutional accreditation. **A key distinction inherent in this Proposal is that accreditation relates to the HEI as a whole and does not cover individual programmes of study**.

2.2 Principles

The Proposal is based on the four principles enunciated in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, page 8):

- *HEIs have primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance;*
- *Quality assurance responds to the diversity of higher education systems, institutions, programmes and students;*
- *Quality assurance supports the development of a quality culture;*
- *Quality assurance takes into account the needs and expectations of students, all other stakeholders and society.*

2.3 Governance

The successful exercise of institutional autonomy requires effective institutional governance arrangements which are transparent and open to review and scrutiny.

HEIs' governing bodies must develop and be responsible for a quality assurance and enhancement culture represented in published written processes and procedures for the design, approval, monitoring and review of curriculum in all faculties.

In shaping their processes and procedures HEIs in Moldova should take account of and be guided by the documents listed above, in particular the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*. They should ensure that external stakeholders and students are fully involved in the structures and processes.

2.4 Policy for Quality Assurance

Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders [ESG].

[1] It may indicate whether these powers are to be limited – for example it may wish to accredit institutions which may only award first cycle qualifications.

2.5 Suggestions for Structural Arrangements

- Universities should adopt an outcomes and student-centred approach to all programmes of study.
- In establishing procedures for the approval of programmes universities should place an emphasis on innovation and creativity.
- Universities should ensure that all programmes appropriately reflect the level descriptors in the National Qualifications Framework, the EHEA Qualifications Framework, and the EQF.

2.6 Design and Approval of Programmes

Following ESG:

- *Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes.*
- *The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes.*
- *The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.*

While each HEI should be free to develop structures and processes relevant to its mission, it is suggested that they may wish to take into account the following basic proposals amended as appropriate for their specific situation.

2.6.1 Level

Normally the first stage in the development of new programmes of study or the substantial revision of an existing programme should be at the subject/departmental level. The process should always be through a formally constituted and approved curriculum team and documented throughout. The team should include students and external stakeholders.

2.6.2 Business case for new and revised programmes

Universities may wish to require that before detailed curriculum work is undertaken on either of a new or a redesign of an existing programme a brief business case should be presented for approval to a senior University management committee with the endorsement of the initiating School/ Department.

The business case should inter alia indicate the title and level of the programme, the objectives and how these may relate to institutional and/or national or international strategic objectives, the resources which will be required, the intended outcomes, evidence of demand and anticipated employment and the timetable for implementation.[2]

[2] This is only an indicative list and each University should develop a template for the business case which will be used throughout the University.

2.6.3 Template for curriculum proposals

HEIs should develop a template for curriculum/programme/degree proposals – new and re-designed to be used by all Schools/Departments.[3]

This should normally include the title and level of the programme/qualification, overall programme objectives, potential employment areas for graduates, the number of credits, duration, intended programme outcomes, programme structure with details of the educational units/modules with their outcomes, resources, assessment procedures, student engagement, learning and teaching methodology, monitoring and review arrangements, procedures for student complaints and appeals.

Details of the teaching staff who will have primary responsibility for the programme and the resources which will be required should be given.

The minimum and maximum number of students for viability should also be specified.

If external advice has been sought this should be noted.

2.6.4 Quality assurance scrutiny

Following development of detailed curriculum proposals by the curriculum team they should be subject to independent and objective scrutiny on the basis of published criteria, normally at a Faculty level. This would probably be best managed through a Learning and Teaching Committee with delegated authority from the Faculty Board.

After approval at the Faculty level, the proposal should be submitted for formal review and approval at University level – normally again by a committee of experts with delegated authority from the University Senate. The University may wish to seek comments and advice from external experts in the field.[4]

2.6.5 Fast track arrangements

HEIs may wish to consider appropriate arrangements for fast track proposals to meet a demand for specific scientific, industry, commercial, professional, policy needs for new or revised programmes and/or the amendment of existing programmes for similar reasons. Such procedures should not compromise on quality assurance but should require that the relevant reviewing bodies/committees should be convened at short notice and subject to the executive body or a delegated member of the executive body – e.g. a Pro Rector agreeing that there is an urgent need.

[3] This is an indicative list, each institution will need to determine the content and form of its template

[4] These are indicative suggestions. The actual process, committee structure and timing will be the responsibility of the University. It may be that a University structure will suggest that proposals should proceed direct from the School/Department to a University level committee. The key point is that the process should be documented and published, that the criteria for approval should be published and operated in an open and objective manner and that the 'approval' committee should provide a brief report explaining its decision.

2.6.6 Formal contact and workload expectations

Each programme submission should specify the formal contact and individual student workload expectations, including independent work. The University may wish to specify normal expectations for formal contact,[5] independent: individual and group. These should be flexible and non-prescriptive.[6]

2.6.7 Structure of the academic year

As indicated in 2.6.6, each programme description will indicate the individual student workload.

Universities will need to publish an annual calendar of key dates which may vary between institutions.

They will need to specify the normal structure and workload of the academic year, which will respect the national norms but recognise the need for flexibility in responding to the particular pedagogical approach of each programme.

2.7 Learning and Assessment

2.7.1 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach [ESG].

2.7.2 Monitoring student progress

All programme proposals should make clear the arrangements for student progression and include transparent methods for monitoring student progress and providing effective support and advice.

2.7.3 The learning environment

The University should encourage a diversity of research based learning environments and methods designed to equip graduates with the skills and competences for their further development and employment.

The University should indicate its expectations in relation to assessment, recognising the need for assessment to be embedded and integral to the specified learning outcomes and the learning and teaching methodology adopted for each module.

The University should encourage and establish expectations for innovative and creative assessment which will allow students to demonstrate in a variety of ways their knowledge, understanding and ability.

[5] Defined in the current Framework Plan as 'auditory contact' hours.
[6] And certainly not at the level of detail prescribed in the current Framework Plan.

As proposed in the ESG "*The criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published in advance*"; and "*Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process*"; and "*Where possible, assessment is carried out by more than one examiner*".

As suggested in the EUniAM project report (Annex 2), universities should wherever possible engage external examiners for all programmes, subject to the provision of adequate resources.

2.7.4 University credit framework

In the context of the national credit system and the use of ECTS, each university should develop a credit framework as suggested in the ECTS Guide. It is suggested that the university should consider establishing level descriptors relating to the year of study and the minimum and/or maximum number of credits at each of these levels for the award of a first cycle and second cycle degree.

A University credit framework facilitates flexibility and the development of multi and inter-disciplinary programmes by (a) establishing a standard and shared number of credits for a unit to be used throughout the university; (b) by defining level descriptors and minimum and maximum numbers of credits at each level, for the award of a degree, it further facilitates a diversity of programme pathways while ensuring that each programme contains sufficient credits at an advanced level.

2.7.5 Internships and work placements

Universities should encourage all departments to make every effort to include and integrate assessed work placements (internships) in programmes of study awarding ECTS credits for these placements.

2.8 Monitoring and Review

2.8.1 Information management

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

2.8.2 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned [ESG].

Each programme should be subject to ongoing monitoring and annual review and report which should include student evaluation and the collection of basic data to support the monitoring and review.

In the light of the monitoring and review the programme should be encouraged, subject to report to the relevant university committees, to amend and develop the curriculum for current and new students.

In addition to annual monitoring and review each university should institute procedures for periodic review of each programme normally during the fifth year. Periodic review should normally involve a self-assessment evaluation, at least one preferably two external assessors, the evaluation of graduates, data on graduate employment and an assessment of comparability with equivalent programmes in Moldova and in selected other countries. The university committee for programme approval should receive and comment on the periodic reviews.

2.9 Recognition of Prior Learning

Each HEI should establish procedures for the formal recognition of prior learning and/or experience and award credits at the appropriate level towards a qualification of the university. This should be documented and potential students should be given help and guidance in the preparation of a portfolio for submission in support of their application for approval of their prior learning and/or experience.

2.10 Public information

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible [ESG].

Each university should publish details of all programmes of study with their profile and intended learning outcomes.

Each university should develop an ECTS course catalogue which is publicly available.

2.11 Students

Students are fundamental and adult partners in university education and are the future generation of workers and leaders in all spheres of life. They should be expected and encouraged to play an active and developmental role in the work of the university and in assuming increasing responsibility for their learning. Active and engaged students are vital to the university mission and their engagement should be regarded as an integral aspect of their personal development and preparation for the work environment.

Universities should have transparent and published procedures for ensuring the effective engagement and motivation of students both in their learning journey and in their effective involvement in processes of curriculum development and quality assurance and enhancement.

Universities may wish to consider whether it would be appropriate to establish and support some form of student charter or union specifying rights and responsibilities.

This should not be a substitute for effective and active engagement of students in the university committee structures and the processes of curriculum development and quality assurance and enhancement. The university expectations and the ways in which students are participants should be manifest and specified in published documents. These should include appropriate structures within which students are represented at all levels within the university. The arrangements should ensure that whatever form the representation takes, it effectively represents all students.

2.11.1 Student feedback

All HEIs must have in place effective arrangements for student feedback at all levels and monitor the responses to the feedback so that it becomes part of the institutional quality enhancement process and students understand that their feedback is integral to this process.

2.11.2 Appeals and complaints

As an aspect of their quality process and enhancement universities should have robust procedures for responding to and dealing with complaints and appeals in ways which assist the resolution of complaints and appeals in a non-confrontational manner. These procedures must be transparent and published and make clear what the formal process is and whether any time limits may apply.

The procedures must ensure equity, objectivity, timely resolution and not result in risk to the student.

2.12 International context

As well as the European documents referred to above, institutions should have regard for international models of good practice which may include:

- subject benchmark statements,
- national and international professional requirements and/or regulations
- examples of high quality curriculum development on a global basis.

2.13 External Quality Assurance

2.13.1 Cyclical external quality assurance

HEIs should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis [ESG].

2.13.2 Consideration of internal quality assurance

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.

If universities in Moldova are to be given freedom to implement the Autonomy granted in the Education Code quoted above it is to be expected that they should be subject to external review.

As the ESG makes clear this review is to address their internal processes and procedures and the records of action and not the detail of individual programmes, although it will be evident that if the procedures are not satisfactory questions will undoubtedly be raised about the quality of the programmes.

3. Summary

It is proposed that each university should:

- Be responsible for the approval of programmes without further report to the Ministry or other external body.
- Review its governance structures to be confident that they are fit for purpose in the context of the effective realisation of their autonomy
- Establish rigorous quality assured procedures for the approval of new or revised outcomes based programmes. these procedures should respect the standards and guidelines established in a number of relevant national and international documents listed and principally the ESG
- Establish standard templates for curriculum proposals and use them through the university. Each proposal should be subject to rigorous quality assurance scrutiny and wherever possible and practical external expert advice should be sought
- Put in place a 'Fast track' route for approval to respond to urgent needs but only with the approval of a member of the senior management team
- Specify its expectations for contact and workload but do so in a flexible and non-prescriptive way
- Specify the normal structure of the academic year in a similar way allowing flexibility for individual programmes
- Ensure that learning, assessment and the learning environment is student centred
- Consider formulating a credit framework as suggested in the ECTS Guide in the context of the national credit system and the use of ECTS
- Encourage the integration of credit bearing internships and work placements in all programmes
- Ensure that all programmes should be subject to annual and periodic monitoring and review
- Establish procedures for the approval of prior learning and/or experience
- Publish full and timely information about all their programmes
- Ensure that students as stakeholders and partners in higher education should pay a full role in all the processes
- Be subject to external quality review of its procedures on a cyclical basis

Appendix 1: Commentary on the Framework Plan for Higher Education in Moldova

Appendix 2: EUniAM Legislative Proposals

Draft

FRAMEWORK-PLAN

for Bachelor's degree (Cycle I), Master's degree (cycle II) and integrated studies

I. General provisions

1. The framework-plan, part of the State educational standards in higher education, lays down basic requirements for the development, review and modification of educational plans developed by the higher education institution for Bachelor's degree studies, Cycle I, Master's degree studies, Cycle II, and integrated studies.
2. The framework-plan shall be developed for the purpose of quality assurance in higher education, improvement of educational management, modernisation of higher education in view of integration into the common European area of higher education; improvement, streamlining and compatibility of educational plans at national and European level; creation of conditions for real academic mobility and the mutual recognition of periods and study documents.

1) Normative framework

a) Education Code of the Republic of Moldova No. 152 of 17 July 2014;
b) Nomenclature of professional training areas and specialties in higher education, Government Decision No. 482 of 28 June 2017;
c) National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Moldova, Government Decision No. 1016 of 23 November 2017;
d) Regulation on the organisation of the Cycle II – Master's degree studies, Government Decision No. 464 of 28 July 2015;
e) Framework regulation on academic mobility in higher education, Government Decision No. 56 of 27 January 2014;
f) The methodology for external quality evaluation for provisional authorization and accreditation of study programmes and VET, higher education and continuous training institutions and the Regulation on the calculation of taxes on services rendered in the context of the external evaluation of the quality of study programmes and VET, higher education and continuous training institutions, Government Decision No. 616 of 18 May 2016;
g) Regulation on the organisation of Bachelor's degree (cycle I) and integrated studies, Order of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research;
h) Framework regulation on the organisation and conduct of distance higher education, Order of the Ministry of Education, No. 474 of 24 May 2016;
i) Framework regulation on the organisation of the examination of completion of Bachelor's degree studies, Order of the Ministry of Education No. 1047 of 29 October 2015;
j) Regulation on internships in higher education, Order of the Ministry of Education, No. 203 of 19 March 2014;
k) Order on the organization of studies in double specialties, No. 669 of 01 August 2017;
l) Order on the study programmes conducted jointly with educational institutions from abroad, No. 206 of 16 April 2017;
m) ECTS Users' Guide, 2015;
n) Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), 2015.

2) Glossary

Ability – capacity, skill, acquired by practice and exercise, which guarantees the effectiveness of an action in relation to a task.

Capacity – the individual's ability to perform a specific task or activity.

Competence – the ability of the individual to use the acquired knowledge and personal skills in different situations of life (work, study, professional and/or personal development); the competence is acquired by accumulating different knowledge and experiences for a long time.

Study credit – a conventional numerical value allocated to each separate activity in the educational plan and expressing the amount of effort needed by the student to achieve the minimum level of the programmed learning outcomes.

Knowledge – a result of assimilating information through learning; all the notions, ideas, information acquired by an individual in a certain field.

Educational plan – all activities designed uniformly in their development in time and content, designed to provide the knowledge, skills and competences required for the master's degree specialty / study programme, which are achieved through different content units / modules.

Learning outcome (expected result of learning) – intentions or goals with reference to the educational process.

Professional training – training process resulting in a qualification attested by a certificate or diploma issued under the law.

Student-cantered education – a process of qualitative transformation of the student, oriented towards strengthening autonomy, on the development of critical thinking skills and focusing on learning outcomes. The essential elements of this process are: active learning, critical and analytical learning, increased student responsibility, increased autonomy and reflective approach both from the student and the teacher.

Academic mobility – process of participation of students and teachers in study and research programmes conducted in institutions from the country and abroad.

Study module – ensemble of course units providing a set of interconnected knowledge, capacities and competences.

Study programme – all the activities of design, organization, management and realization of teaching, learning, research, artistic creation and evaluation that ensure training in an occupational and academic field in accordance with the normative framework and leads to a certified qualification by a competent body; the study programme is made up of the educational plan, curricula, including records, course units/modules.

European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) - is a student-cantered system based on the principle of transparency of the learning, teaching and evaluation process. The objective of the ECTS is to facilitate the process of planning, provision, evaluation of study programmes and mobility of students by recognising the results of learning, qualifications and study periods.

State educational standards – compulsory conditions for the achievement of educational programmes at all levels and education cycles in public and private institutions, as well as mandatory minimum requirements for the content of the educational programmes, the maximum amount of work required from the student and the teaching staff, the infrastructure and endowment of the educational institution, in relation to the level of training of graduates and the organisation of the educational process. State educational standards are the basis for objective evaluation of the quality and level of training and qualification of graduates, regardless of the form of conducting studies.

Course unit - basic training element of the educational plan. It consists of well-defined and structured learning activities, following a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes, expressed in terms of appropriate competences and evaluation criteria.

II. The components of the educational plan

3. The educational plan includes *four defining components*:

a) The temporal component;
b) The formative component;
c) The accumulation component;
d) The evaluation component.

3) The temporal component

4. The temporal component is the way of planning the professional training process in time, the primary unit of measurement being the study credit. The temporal component is reflected in the educational plan through the university calendar.

4) The formative component

5. The formative component represents the way of distribution of course units/modules per semester of studies.
6. The content units in the educational plan are classified according to the following aspects:

a) Formative category:

a. fundamental content units, developed and adapted to the fields of professional training, the purpose of which is the accumulation of knowledge and the formation of basic skills and competences, enabling the scientific approach of the given field, as well as understanding and creating new knowledge;
b. content units of acquiring knowledge, skills and general competences, which ensure the training of skills to learn, research, analyse, present and effectively communicate orally and in writing, including by means of information technology both in the field of professional training and in various cultural contexts;
c. specialized content units, which provide the distinctive element of professional training, based on the logic of field structuring, in line with labour market trends, thereby ensuring an increased level of relevance of studies and employment of graduates. In the case of concomitant training in two fields, the educational plan establishes course units/modules for the basic specialty and secondary specialty;
d. socio-human orientation content units, which ensure the formation of a broad horizon of culture (legal, philosophical, politologycal, sociological, psychological, economic, etc.), which would allow the future specialist to take responsibility in a free society and to adapt operatively and efficiently to changes in society.

b) Degree of compulsoriness and eligibility:

a. compulsory course units/modules (which are studied in a compulsory manner). The fundamental course units/modules are provided on a compulsory basis. The specialized course units/ modules, however, will be offered some in compulsory mode and others under optional conditions, according to the decision of the chair/department responsible for elaborating the educational plan;
b. optional course units/ modules (which are chosen from the educational plan offerings and which, once selected, become compulsory). The course units/modules of socio-human orientation, as well as some specialized courses/modules, are offered on an optional basis. Optional course units / option packages ensure the formation of the individual's professional training path, depending on the aspirations of professional development and the employment prospects;
c. course units/modules at free choice (which can be selected from the list of course units/modules to the free choice provided in the educational plan, or from the educational plans of other study programmes provided within the university). In Bachelor's degree studies, the student can obtain additional credits of not more than 10% annually from the number of credits allocated to the study programme followed.

5) The accumulation component

7. The accumulation component reflects the ways of allocation of study credits for each course unit/module or educational activity provided for in the educational plan (course units /modules, internships, annual research projects, Bachelor's / Master's degree theses, Bachelor's / Master's degree exams etc.). Based on the provisionally authorized / accredited study programmes and the educational offer, each university develops a ECTS course catalogue, which is available to the interested public.

6) The evaluation component

8. The evaluation component reflects the programming and determination of the semester and final assessment of the knowledge, skills and competences obtained by the student.

III. Requirements for the development of the Educational plan

7) General requirements

9. The educational plan shall be drawn up in accordance with the provisions of the National Qualifications Framework and of this Framework-plan by the chair/department responsible for the study programme and approved by the Senate of the higher education institution at the proposal of the Faculty Council.
10. The educational plans for Bachelor's degree and integrated studies are developed on specialties, in accordance with the Nomenclature of professional training fields and specialties in higher education, and for Cycle II, Master's degree studies, the educational plans are established within the limits of the general fields of study accredited for cycle I.
11. The educational plans have to:

a) comply with all provisions of legislation and normative documents in force;
b) correspond to the mission undertaken by the higher education institution through the University Charter;
c) pursue the achievement of student-cantered education and ensure the obtaining of learning outcomes and the acquisition of knowledge, skills and professional competences associated with the qualification granted at the end of the respective cycle of studies;

d) be compatible with study programmes in European Union countries;
e) be in line with the current or prospective requirements of the national and international labour market.

8) Special requirements

12. The educational plans for the cycles I, II and for integrated studies, developed for each specialty/Master's degree programme, depending on the form of organisation of education (full-time, part-time, distance), are drawn up in Romanian and, at the decision of the Senate, in an international language.
13. The educational plan shall contain the following structural components, developed in accordance with the templates set out in Annexes 1-9 to this Framework-plan:

a) Title sheet;
b) University calendar;
c) The plan of the study process for semesters/years of study;
d) Internships;
e) Course units/modules at free choice;
f) The plan for the Psycho-pedagogical module;
g) The curricular minimum, guidance to another field;
h) The matrix of correlation of the learning outcomes of the study programme with those of the course units/modules;
i) Explanatory note.

IV. Annual and periodic evaluation, records and preservation of educational plans

9) Annual evaluation of the educational plan

14. Study programmes, including educational plans, shall be subject to annual monitoring and evaluation according to a methodology and criteria established by the higher education institution.
15. As a result of the annual evaluation process and in well-substantiated cases, the educational plan may be amended provided the implementation of changes in the next year of study and only when the changes have been made public through the institution's information system at least 3 months until the beginning of the academic year.
16. The modification of the educational plan shall be carried out at the organizing chairs / departments of the study programme and approved by the Senate of the institution at the proposal of the Faculty Council. The minutes of the Senate meeting in which the amendments were approved will be attached to the primary educational plan.

10) Periodic evaluation of educational plans

17. In order to meet the needs of the socio-economic sector, study programmes, including educational plans, will be evaluated every 5 years or on expiry of the term of the provisional operating authorisation or accreditation.
18. The educational plans shall be assessed/revised by the chairs / departments responsible for the study programme with subsequent approval by the Senate of the institution at the proposal of the Faculty Council.
19. The periodic evaluation process also implies compulsory external evaluation by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC) or by an international

agency registered in the European Quality Assurance Register in Higher education (EQAR), with a view to accreditation/reaccreditation of the study programme.

11) Records of educational plans

20. After decision making, on the basis of the results of ANACEC or an international agency registered in EQAR, on the provisional authorisation/accreditation/reaccreditation of the study programme, the higher education institution records the educational plan in a record book.
21. The list of provisionally authorised/accredited/reaccredited study programmes for each higher education institution is also complemented by the Department responsible for Higher Education of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, based on provisional authorisation/accreditation/reaccreditation decisions.

12) Preserving of educational plans

22. The educational plans shall be recorded and kept at ANACEC and at the higher education institution responsible for the application of the study programme and, in parallel, on the official website of the institution.

V. Initiation (authorisation for provisional operation), accreditation/reaccreditation and closing of a study programme

23. The educational plan is part of the (Bachelor's/Master's degree) study programme, being appreciated and approved in the process of external evaluation of the respective study programme by ANACEC (or by an international agency registered in EQAR), with a view to authorisation for provisional operation/accreditation/reaccreditation.

13) Initiation, approval and authorisation for provisional operation of the study programme

24. The initiation, approval and authorisation for provisional operation of the study programme involves taking minimum the following steps:

a) Initiation of the study programme by any interested person/ interested group within the faculty/chair/department or the economic or social environment;
b) Evaluation of the programme draft within the chair/department to carry out the respective study programme. The evaluation process involves assessing the necessity and timeliness of the development of the study programme, the necessary and existing resources, including human resources, the expectations of the economic and social sector related to the programme, the analysis of similar national, European and international programmes, etc.;
c) The designation by the management of the chair/department of a team which, together with the initiator/initiators of the programme, will establish the outcomes and competences of the programme, develop the educational plan, the curricula of the course units / modules, as well as the list of scientific-didactic staff with competences in the field;
d) Internal quality assessment and elaboration of the self-evaluation report of the new study programme, including its examination within the subdivision responsible for quality management;
e) Endorsement of the study programme by the Senate at the recommendation of the Faculty Council;
f) Issuing the decision of the Council for Institutional Strategic Development (hereinafter CDSI) on the initiation of the study programme. The decision to initiate the study programme may be

issued only under the condition of the favourable endorsement of the programme by the Senate and at least 2/3 of the votes of CDSI members;

g) Initiation of the external quality evaluation procedure, according to the normative framework in force, with a view to authorising the provisional operation of the study programme by ANACEC or by international agencies registered in EQAR.

14) Accreditation/periodic reaccreditation of the study programme

25. The accreditation and reaccreditation of a study programme shall be carried out under the conditions and time limits laid down by the external quality evaluation methodology developed by the ANACEC and approved by Government decision.

15) Closing of the study programme

26. The study programme may be closed in the following situations:

a) In the case of the non-accreditation of the study programme or the withdrawal of the right of activity of the educational institution as a result of the external evaluation carried out by the ANACEC (or by the international agencies registered in EQAR), in accordance with legal provisions. The decision of non-accreditation of the study programme or withdrawal of the right of activity of the educational institution shall be adopted by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research based on the results of the external evaluation;

b) If the programme has lost its relevance to the labour market, produces unjustified expenditure for the institution etc., in this situation, the closure of the programme is made by decision of CDSI, with at least 2/3 of the number of members' votes. The higher education institution shall notify the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research, within 10 calendar days of the adoption of the decision, about the closure of the study programme by decision of CDSI.

Annex 1

The title sheet shall contain the following information:

a) The name of the central specialized body, which coordinates the education system and, where appropriate, the relevant ministry;
b) The name and category of the higher education institution, according to the accreditation certificate;
c) Date of approval of the educational plan by the Senate of the institution, No. of the respective minutes. In the case of a newly initiated study programme, the date of approval at the meeting of the Council for Institutional Strategic Development and No. of the respective minutes shall be indicated on the title sheet;
d) The registration number, stamp and signature of ANACEC (which are applied in the process of external evaluation of the study programme, with a view to its provisional authorisation/accreditation);
e) The context (there shall be indicated the qualification level according to ISCED);
f) Code and name of the general field of study;
g) Code and name of the field of professional training;
h) Code and name of specialty or specialties – for cycle I; and for Cycle II – the name of the Master's degree study programme;
i) Total number of study credits;
j) The title obtained at the end of the studies;
k) The basis of admission (the basis is the diplomas of studies that allow the student to access the level of studies according to the normative acts in force);
l) Language of instruction;
m) The form of organization of education (full-time, part-time, distance learning).

Annex 2

1. The **university calendar** includes the distribution of didactic activities for years, semesters (sessions in the case of part-time or distance studies), time limits and duration of semesters, internships, exam sessions, final evaluation and holidays.
2. In the development of the university calendar, there shall be taken into account the provisions of the normative framework in force concerning the duration of Bachelor's and Master's degree studies (reflected in number of years and study credits, reported to the form of education) and the legal provisions concerning the terms for the organisation of studies (Bachelor's degree studies begin on 1 September and finalise until 31 August, except for the last year of study, and the date of commencement of Master's degree studies shall be determined by the Senate of the institution).
3. In the case of joint study programmes in higher education, the academic calendar shall include the academic mobility schedule agreed by the member institutions of the consortium.
4. The organizational structure of education in the fields of military, security and public order is drawn up by the Faculty Council and the Senate of the higher education institution and approved by the authority under whose subordination the institution is.

University calendar

Year of study	**Terms** (*calendar dates*) **and duration** (*number of weeks*)								
	Didactic activities		**Examination sessions**		**Internships**		**Holidays**		
	Sem. I	**Sem. II**	**Sem. I**	**Sem. II**	**Sem. I**	**Sem. II**	**Winter**	**Spring**	**Summer**
I									
II									
III									
Total no. weeks									

Annex 3

The plan of the study process for semesters/years of study shall be elaborated, taking into account the following aspects:

1. The educational plans for the Bachelor's degree studies shall contain fundamental, general, specialized and socio-human course units, grouped by categories of disciplines (compulsory, optional, at free choice), in the proportion established as being optimal to train the knowledge, skills and competences necessary to obtain a qualification. The fundamental and specialized course units/modules shall constitute 65% of the total number of credits assigned to the study programme. The training component of general skills and competences is compulsory and shall include:

a. a foreign language course with application in the field of professional training, provided starting with the first year of studies. It is recommended that higher education institutions establish and extend the system of teaching courses in foreign languages. Depending on the possibilities of the institution, there can be offered 2 foreign languages and the study of the specialty in cross-cultural context (especially recommended for fields oriented to international activity);
b. a course of information communication technologies, which shall include modules: information culture, information technologies, the use of information technologies in the field of training, new software and risks of IT use in the field of training, communication techniques based on using IT etc.;
c. a Romanian language course of communication for students from alolingual (speakers of other languages) groups, including communication techniques, business correspondence, etc. For the purpose of facilitating the integration into the labour market of graduates from the alolingual (speakers of other languages) groups, for this category of students there shall be introduced, obligatorily, in the later years of study, specialized courses taught in Romanian;
d. a separate course of ethics and professional culture or the inclusion of topics related to ethics and professional culture in the contents of the specialized course units/ modules.

2. Educational plans, in the case of Bachelor's degree study programmes, shall necessarily contain a course of physical education for the students of the years of study I and II, which are not quantified with credits, but whose rating with the "admitted" classification is a precondition for admission to the examination for the completion of the Bachelor's degree studies.
3. Educational plans for Master's degree study programmes shall include fundamental and specialized components, and 50% of the total number of credits awarded to the programme shall consist of practical and research activities.
4. The type and number of course units/modules scheduled for each semester and their consecutiveness shall be established at the level of the chair/department responsible for the study programme in a rational and logical manner, capable of ensuring the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and competences necessary to obtain the qualification.
5. The course units/modules shall be coded according to the university's unique system, approved by the Senate of the institution.
6. At the cycles I and II, the course unit /module can be accomplished through didactic activities in class or direct contact with students (lectures, seminars, laboratory works, practical works, projects, didactic, clinical internships, and other forms approved by the Senate) and didactic activities performed outside class (projects or bachelor/master's degree theses; individual study, etc.). The direct contact/individual study ratio shall be determined according to the field of professional training, specialty/Master's degree study programme, learning outcomes, specifics of the course unit/module, the degree of novelty and/or complexity and the methodical-didactic support. This ratio shall be established by the profile chair/department, on the basis of a specific

methodology for each general study field approved by the Senate, at the proposal of the Faculty Council organizing the study programme.

7. In the process of allocating study credits to educational activities contained in the educational plan, account shall be taken of the fact that for an academic semester there are allocated 30 study credits (i.e. 60 study credits for one academic year), and the annual workload of the student (direct contact and individual study) is about 1800 hours. It is recommended to allocate 4-6 studies credits for a module. The application of the study credits system shall be carried out in accordance with the methodology approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research.
8. The educational plan shall expressly indicate the semester assessment form of the course unit/module, as well as the final assessment form of the higher education (Bachelor's degree studies, Master's degree studies), including the organizational deadlines, and the number of credits associated with these activities.

Plan of the study process for semesters/years of study

Code	**Name of the course unit/module**	**Number of hours**			**Number of hours by type of activity**			**Assessment form**	**No. ECTS**
		Total	Direct contact	Individual study	Lecture	Seminar	Practical/laboratory		
Year I									
Semester 1									
Total semester 1									
Semester 2									
Total semester 2									
Total year I									

Form of final assessment of studies

No.	**Form of final assessment of studies**	**Deadlines**	**No. ECTS**

Annex 4

1. Compulsory **internships** established by the normative framework in force shall be expressly provided for in the educational plan.
2. The types of internships, deadlines, stages, field/branch, internship placements are determined by the higher education institution (chairs/faculties/departments) in strict compliance with the expected learning outcomes and competences for the specialty/Master's degree study programme.

Internships

No.	Type of internship	Year of study	Semester	Duration (no. weeks/no. hours)	Period of deployment	Number of ECTS
Total:						

Annex 5

1. The **course units/modules at free choice** are attended in extracurricular mode (outside the base timetable) and require additional credits to those allocated to the Bachelor's / Master's degree study programme.
2. The number of credits obtained by attending free choice courses shall not exceed the amount of 10% annually of the total number of credits allocated to the study programme followed.

Course units/modules at free choice

Code	**Name of the course unit/module**	**Number of hours**			**Number of hours by type of activity**			**Assessment form**	**No. ECTS**
		Total	Direct contact	Individual study	Lecture	Seminar	Practical/laboratory		
Year of study/semester									

Annex 6

1. The **Psycho-pedagogical module** is intended for graduates who intend to hold didactic functions, but attend/attended study programmes in other general fields of study than Education Sciences and do not do / did not do the Psycho-pedagogical module. The Psycho-pedagogical module is also compulsory for graduates of non-pedagogical specialties, who continue their studies at a Master's degree study programme in the field of Education Sciences.
2. When drawing up the plan for the Psycho-pedagogical module, it will be taken into account that it should make 60 study credits, of which 30 credits for theoretical training and 30 credits for a compulsory pedagogical internship.
3. Theoretical training within the Psycho-pedagogical module shall include the following course units: pedagogical module, psychological module and didactics of the discipline.
4. If the higher education institution does not have the academic subdivision responsible for organizing the Psycho-pedagogical module, it shall be done at another higher education institution on the basis of the interuniversity agreements.
5. The Psycho-pedagogical module can be offered both al the level of Bachelor's degree studies (cycle I) and Master's degree studies (cycle II), in extracurricular mode (outside the base timetable).

The educational plan for the Psycho-pedagogical module

Code	**Name of the course unit/module**	**Number of hours**			**Number of hours by type of activity**			**Assessment form**	**No. ECTS**
		Total	Direct contact	Individual study	Lecture	Seminar	Practical/laboratory		
Total:									

Annex 7

1. The **initial curricular minimum, guidance to another field**, is intended for students who will select for cycle II, Master's degree studies, a study programme from another field of training than that attended at cycle I, Bachelor's degree studies.
2. The curricular minimum amounts to 30 study credits and involves the study of the fundamental and specialised disciplines related to the chosen field of study.
3. Initial curricular minimum:

a. can be obtained during the Bachelor's degree studies, being offered by the higher education institution in extracurricular mode (outside the basic timetable), to the student's free choice, starting with the year II of studies;
b. can be partially or wholly accumulated by transferring the credits accumulated at disciplines relevant to the Master's degree study programme, obtained during the Bachelor's degree studies;
c. can be followed during the period of the Master's degree studies, during the year I of studies, in extracurricular mode.

4. The methodology for the accumulation of the curricular minimum shall developed by the coordinating subdivision of that programme for each general field of study, coordinated by the Faculty Council organizing the Master's degree study programme, and approved by the Senate of the institution, with subsequent publication on the website of the higher education institution.

Initial curricular minimum, guidance to another field

Code	**Name of the course unit/module**	**Number of hours**			**Number of hours by type of activity**			**Assessment form**	**No. ECTS**
		Total	Direct contact	Individual study	Lecture	Seminar	Practical/laboratory		
Total:									

Annex 8

1. The **matrix of correlation of learning outcomes and competences formed within the programme with those of the course units/modules** comprises the list of all the course units/modules contained in the educational plan, as well as the learning outcomes and competences they provide.
2. For the formulation of the learning outcomes and competences required to get the qualification, the National Qualifications Framework shall be consulted and, consequently, the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area.

The matrix of correlation of learning outcomes and competences formed within the programme with those of the course units/modules

Name of the course unit/module	**Code of the course unit/module**	**No. ECTS**	**Learning outcomes and competences**							
			1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**...**

List of learning outcomes and competences:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
…

Annex 9

The **explanatory note** shall contain:

1. Description of the study programme (brief presentation of the profile of the specialty/Master's degree study programme, as well as the field of professional training and the general field of study);
2. The knowledge, skills and competences provided by the study programme;
3. The objectives of the study programme, including their compliance with the University mission;
4. The connection of the study programme and the content in the educational plan to international trends in the field;
5. Assessment of the expectations of the economic and social sector (studying the requirements of the National Qualifications Framework, as well as the European one; study of job descriptions in potential employer institutions, market evaluation by questionnaire method etc.);
6. Consultation of partners in the process of elaboration of the study programme (employers, teachers, graduates, students, etc.);
7. Relevance of the study programme to the labour market;
8. The possibilities of graduates' employment;
9. Access to studies of diploma holders obtained after completion of the respective study programme.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

to the draft of the Framework-plan for Bachelor's degree (Cycle I),

Master's degree (cycle II) and integrated studies

1. Name of the author and of the participants in the development of the draft

The draft of the Framework-plan for Bachelor's degree (Cycle I), Master's degree (cycle II) and integrated studies shall replace the Framework-plan for higher education (Cycle I – Bachelor's degree, cycle II – Master's degree, integrated studies, cycle III – doctoral studies) approved by Order of the Ministry of Education no. 1045 of 29.10.2015. The draft is promoted by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, in consultation with interested institutions.

2. The conditions that led to the elaboration of the draft of the normative act

The necessity to improve the existing normative act through the elaboration of a new variant resulted from the reforms carried out at European level and, as a consequence, at national level, which assigns university autonomy to higher education institutions under the conditions of public accountability.

3. Expected outcomes

This Framework-plan is part of the educational policies for the modernization of higher education and aims to ensure efficient and competitive conditions for the organization of Bachelor's degree, Master's degree and integrated studies both in the country and at European level, thus being stimulated the academic performance, encouraged and sustained university autonomy and public accountability of the higher education institution.

The process of reviewing the Framework-plan approved by Order of the Ministry of Education no. 1045 of 29.10.2015 pursued the following objectives:

1. Compatibility of the study programmes offered by the universities of the Republic of Moldova with those of the European Union countries;
2. Facilitate the process of organizing and developing joint study programmes and supporting academic mobility, both nationally and internationally;
3. Ensure flexible study programmes and an effective connection with the national and international labour market;
4. Linking study programmes and contents to international trends in the field;
5. Involvement of partners, including the business community and employers, in the design of educational plans;
6. Involvement of beneficiaries in establishing their own educational pathways, according to the individual needs of professional development.

4. The main provisions of the draft and highlighting the new elements

1) The Regulatory Framework has been updated;
2) The Glossary and definition of terms have been revised;
3) Unsuitable provisions for the Framework Plan concept have been excluded;
4) The terminology of the document has been unified and updated;

5) General requirements for developing the Educational plan (requirements that do not affect university autonomy and highlight the public accountability of the university) have been established;
6) The special requirements for the elaboration of the Educational plan have been set out, with the annexes of the tables and the information that it should contain. For convenience, for each Annex, the important aspects that need to be taken into account when developing the respective structural element of the Educational plan, but without diminishing the institution's responsibilities and decision-making, have been enumerated, with the multiple limitations excluded from the ones existing in the variant subject to change
7) Controversies related to the process of modifying the Educational Plan were excluded (a distinction was made between the annual and the periodical reviews, the latter necessarily involving external expertise, with the involvement of experts from the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC) or an agency registered in EQAR);
8) Regarding the record of the Educational plan - the obligation to coordinate the Educational plans with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (in the key to good European practices) was excluded. The Educational plan should be kept at the higher education institution (mandatory on the website of the institution) and at ANACEC. Given that the study programmes are authorized / accredited / re-accredited by decision of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, a database of approved / accredited / re-accredited study programmes will be managed by the MECC profile department;
9) The main stages of initiating a study programme were described;
10) There have been stipulated the two situations in which the study programmes can be closed (by non-accreditation or CDSI decision);
11) The explanatory note has been substantially amended, with the assumption of providing more relevant information both on the content of the programme and on the process of development, self-evaluation and connection to the labour market.

5. Economic and financial reasoning

Application of the provisions of this Regulation does not imply additional financial means.

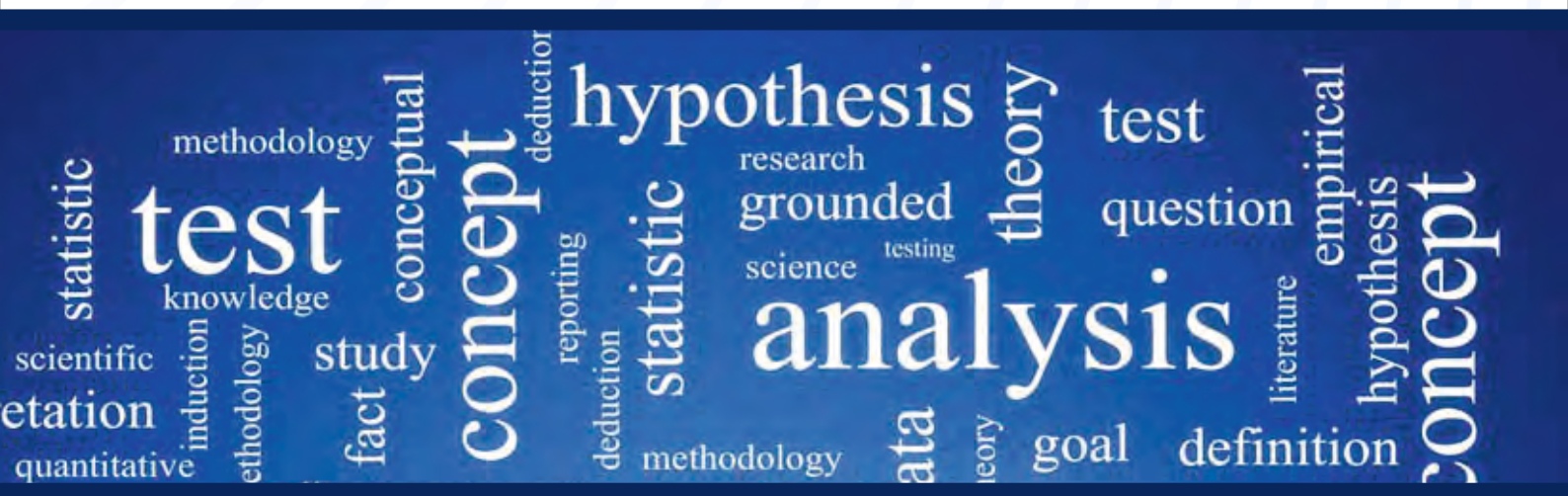
6. Incorporation of the act into the normative framework in force

The Framework-plan for Bachelor's degree (Cycle I), Master's degree (cycle II) and integrated studies shall replace the Framework-plan for higher education (Cycle I – Bachelor's degree, cycle II – Master's degree, integrated studies, cycle III – doctoral studies) approved by Order of the Ministry of Education no. 1045 of 29.10.2015.

Minister **Monica BABUC**

Tell me and I forget,
Teach me and I may remember,
Involve me and I learn.

Folklore



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