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REPORTS FROM
POTENTIAL NEW MEMBERS OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

Country:	The Republic of Moldova
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1. Towards Bologna***1.1. Give a brief description of policy developments and legislative reforms in higher education in your country***

The Law on Education of 21 July 1995, with further amendments provides the legislative framework of the organisation of the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova. In order to meet the Bologna Process objectives some amendments to the Law of education were initiated and elaborated by the Ministry of Education. In December 2004 the amendments were approved by the Government of the Republic of Moldova and submitted to the Parliament. On 29 of December 2004, the bill has passed the first consideration of the Parliament. The voting of second consideration is planned for February 2005.

The amendments envisage to the following:

1. Adoption of the higher education system essentially based on two main cycles:
 - Ist cycle lasts 3-4 years. The Diploma of Licentiate (equivalent with Bachelor) will be awarded to the graduates of the first cycle and gives access to the IIInd level of studies as well as to the labour market;
 - IIInd cycle lasts 1-2 years. After the completion of the second level the Diploma of Master is awarded and permits to apply for doctoral studies

It is envisaged to introduce the two cycles based system starting with the 2005-2006 year of study.

2. Implementation at the national level of a credit transfer system (equivalent with the ECTS). In higher education of the Republic of Moldova no national credit system previously existed, thus the implementation of ECTS does not need any prior reform. Since 2000, an ECTS-type system of credits is already implemented in eight pilot higher education institutions. The introduction of ECTS at the nation-wide level is foreseen alongside to the adoption of a two tiered system of higher education, starting by 2005.

3. Higher education university study programmes will be professionally and/or academic oriented.

2. National organisation***2.1. Give a short description of the structure of public authorities responsible for higher education, the main agencies/bodies in higher education and their competencies***

(For example, do higher education institutions report to different ministries?)

The Ministry of Education is the central branch body of public administration in the field of education.

The Ministry of Education through its Department for higher education elaborates the strategy and promotes the state policy of higher education development, as well as establishes together with other branch ministries, departments and public authorities the educational network and types of educational institutions.

Other ministries, such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Ministry of Defence administer certain specialised higher education institutions. The branch ministries determine the basic directions of specialised higher education development, as well as co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of these directions.

The Council of the Ministry of Education is a consultative body of the Ministry of Education. The Council examines the current situation and problems occurring in the field of higher education and adopts resolutions. The resolutions of the Council are enforced by an order of the minister of education and are obligatory for execution within the whole system of education. Through its members, the Council represents interests of the academic staff, students and social partners.

Licence Chamber (Camera de Licentiere) is the central public authority, responsible for issuing the authorisation (license) that gives to the private higher education institutions the right to offer educational services to the community. The license is issued in co-ordination with the Ministry of Education.

Rectors of higher education institutions present an annual activity report to the Ministry of Education. In its turn, the Ministry of Education presents to the Government annual report concerning the state-of-the-art in the educational system as well as suggests the strategies of the system development. Annual Reports are published.

2.2. Give a short description of the institutional structure

(For example, number of public/private universities/other higher education institutions or numbers/percentage of students in public/private sector)

There are 36 higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova, 16 of which are public, and 20 – private. More than 117 thousand students are studying at the national higher education institutions. From the total number of students, 80 % study at public higher education institutions and 20% at private ones. Presently higher education institutions offer study programmes of 137 specialities.

In 2004 the number of graduates of higher education institutions made up about 16 thousand, what is by 5% more in comparison with 2003. The total number of higher education academic staff comes to 6 thousand.

Admission to higher education studies is organised by the higher education institutions according to the general criteria established by the Ministry of Education. The Admission is carried out on the basis of the results of external assessment of students' competence exercised by an independent national committee. A unified national examination is carried out for the secondary school graduates.

The internal administration of the higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova is two-tiered:

- the university level: Senate (chaired by Rector), a Senate Bureau (composed by the Rector, vice-Rectors and scientific secretary),
- the faculty level: Faculty Council (chaired by the Dean).

2.3. To what extent are private and State higher education institutions covered by the same regulations?

Generally public and private higher education institutions function on the basis of a common legislative framework. The procedures of curricular designing, admission, graduation, and hiring of faculty members are organised in conformity with the regulations established by the Ministry of Education and are common both for public and private higher education institutions.

The Procedures of establishment/dissolution, and financing of public higher education institutions, differ from the similar procedures applied for the private ones. Public institutions are established on a proposal of the Government and the decision is enforced by a presidential Decree. Private higher education institutions are established by physical or legal persons and exercise the activity on the basis of the license issued by the Licence Chamber. The financing of public institutions is mixed and comes from both the state budget and the tuition fees. The budget of private institutions is formed by the allocations of founders and the tuition fees.

In order to assure rights of students as main beneficiaries of the educational services, in 2003 some amendments concerning the regulation of activity of private higher education institutions were introduced to the Law of education. According to these amendments private higher education institution shall have the status of non-profit organisation, possess own property, required minimum statutory fund, be established/reorganised with consent of the Ministry of Education.

3. Quality assurance

If the answer to any of the questions 3.1. to 3.3. is no, what are your plans in the respective direction?

3.1. Does your country have a national quality assurance system? What are the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved?

The national system of quality assurance for higher education comprises the following procedures: internal (institutional) quality assessment, external evaluation and accreditation. The legislative framework of the process of quality assurance is provided by the following legislative acts: the Law of Education (1995), the Law on Evaluation and Accreditation of the Higher Educational Institutions (1997) and the Regulation of Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Educational Institution (1999), the Governmental decision on the regulation regarding creation of academic evaluation commissions (2000).

Within the framework of internal quality evaluation the scientific board of higher education institution implement regularly the assessment of higher education institution educational activity.

On the basis of internal evaluation report an external evaluation is carried out. The external review is a part and parcel of an accreditation procedure. Accreditation of a higher education institutions is carried out by an ad-hoc accreditation commission. The Department of academic accreditation and evaluation of the Ministry of Education ensures the organisational framework of the procedures of academic evaluation and accreditation. The Council of the Ministry of Education adopts the decision on accreditation/non-accreditation of a higher education institution.

In order to ensure further development of the quality assurance system it is envisaged to undertake the following steps: to increase students', teachers' and foreign experts' participation in the processes of internal and external evaluation; to review the existing criterias and outputs of the quality assessment and on the basis of this revision to elaborate

and set up new standards, procedures and guidelines corresponding to the modern trends and requirements in the field of higher education

3.2. Does your national quality assurance system include evaluation of programmes or institutions, external review, international participation, participation of students, the publication of results? (If yes, please describe)

At present, two types of evaluation are carried out: institutional evaluation and study programmes evaluation. Within the last one the following three activities are evaluated: (i) teaching; (ii) research; and (iii) learning performance.

The evaluation of teaching, research and management processes is implemented periodically by an ad-hoc board, created within an institution (internal review), or by a national ad-hoc commission (external review).

Students – beneficiaries of educational services, can best evaluate the quality of education.

Taking this into account it is envisaged to increase the participation of students in internal evaluation as well as to further promote the mechanisms that will ensure student's

participation at external evaluation and accreditation. Worth mentioning, that presently, students participate at the processes of internal, external assessment and accreditation of a

higher education institutions through the completion of anonymous questionnaires. The students' polls are carried out in order to estimate the student's opinion regarding the quality of teaching learning and leaving conditions within the institutions where they are enrolled.

The poll, which is carried out during the process of external review covers usually 70-80 % of the total number of students engaged into the educational process of an HE institution. The results of the poll are carefully summarized, introduced into the external review report and in a full measure considered while the decision on accreditation/non-accreditation of a HE institution is adopted.

The results of the internal assessment are usually published at the periodical issues of the evaluated institution and at its Web-page. The external review report and the adopted decision on accreditation of a HE institution are published at the periodical public issue ("Monitorul Oficial").

3.3.. Does your national quality assurance system include accreditation, certification or comparable procedures? (If yes, please describe)

The Department of Evaluation and Accreditation of the Ministry of Education carry out the accreditation of higher education institutions.

According to the regulation in operation a specialised commission of academic evaluation and accreditation is created to carry out the external evaluation of a higher education institution. The composition of the commission includes representatives of academic and administrative staff, experts from the particular field of education, representatives of the labour market (patronage), and social partners – representatives of syndicates.

The decision of accreditation/non-accreditation of a higher education institution is adopted on the basis of the results of the evaluation carried out by the ad-hoc commission. The commission presents to the Council of the ministry of education suggestions regarding the accreditation/non-accreditation of a higher education institution and/or of its educational programmes and subdivisions.

The College of the Ministry of Education adopts the decision regarding the accreditation or non-accreditation of the education institution on the basis of the report of the specialised commission.

An accredited higher education institution, as a rule, is re-evaluated every five years.

4. The two-cycle degree system

4.1. Has your country introduced a national degree system for higher education based on two main cycles (equivalent to a BA/MA structure)?

(If yes, please describe - for instance, are two-cycle degrees optional or obligatory for the institutions? - If not, what are your plans for introducing this measure?)

As mentioned in point 1.1, it is envisaged to introduce a two-tiered system of higher education in academic year 2005-2006. The adoption of a two-cycle based system will be compulsory for both public and private higher education institutions.

Actual duration of the higher education studies in the Republic of Moldova is 4-6 years, depending on the field of education. Access to higher education studies requires successful completion of the following kinds of secondary studies programmes: the Lyceum (12 years), secondary schools of general culture (11 years), secondary professional education (1-2 years). The length of higher education programme for holders of the diplomas of lyseum or of vocational education is 4-year. Holders of the secondary school diploma study 1+4-year educational perogramme.

After the successful graduation of higher education studies the Diploma of Licentiate is awarded. The qualification of licentiate provides the access to master and/or doctoral studies.

4.2. Are different orientations of degrees embedded in the system e.g. through a legal division between academic and professional degrees, or through a binary system of institutions?

Today, in the Republic of Moldova there is no defined division between academic and professional degrees. Higher education Institutions offer study programmes which combine both, academic and professional content.

5. Recognition of degrees and periods of study

5.1. If your country has not ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention, when do you plan to do so?

The Republic of Moldova has signed the Lisbon Recognition Convention on March 6, 1997. The Convention has been ratified by the Parliament of Moldova and has come into effect on November 1 1999.

5.2. Does every student graduating in your country receive the Diploma Supplement?

- automatically and free of charge?
- in a widely spoken European language?

If not, what are your plans for introducing this measure?

In 2002 the Ministry of Education has introduced the Diploma Supplement

The Diploma Supplement issued by the Moldovan higher education institutions is designed in accordance with the pattern elaborated by UNESCO-CEPES, Council of Europe and the European Commission. Recently the Diploma Supplement has been improved and added by the information concerning a student's performance compared to the general performance of the graduating year. This in a certain extend can help to better estimate the quality of initial higher education training.

The Diploma Supplement has been issued upon request of a graduate student. Starting with the academic year 2004-2005 all higher education institutions will issue to each graduate a Diploma Supplement completed in English language.

Worth mentioning, that according to the decision of the Council of the Ministry of Education, starting with the study year 2003-2004, Diploma of Licentiate are designed in both: national and English language and have 14 grades of protection against falsification.

6. Doctoral studies and research

6.1. Give a short description of the organisation of third cycle studies

(For example, direct access from the bachelor level, balance between organised courses, independent study and thesis)

Presently, the main forms of postgraduate education are the following: master, doctoral and post-doctoral studies.

Master degree studies represent a form of the postgraduate education that ensures majoring in a field and aims at consolidation of competencies acquired during the graduate studies. The admission to the master degree studies is organised by the higher education institutions. The studies last 1-2 years and finalise by the awarding of a master degree diploma. Worth mentioning that after the modernisation of the higher education system and passing the law (mentioned at the point 1.1) the master degree studies will become second cycle studies of higher education.

Doctoral studies is a level of education, which is carried out mainly by means of scientific research, and lasts 3-4 years. Admission to doctoral studies takes place as a result of a competition where those who have master degree and licence diplomas can participate. The Supreme Attestation Board in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Academy of Science establishes doctoral studies admission criteria, and procedures. Doctoral studies finalise by the public presentation of a research thesis and the doctoral degree is conferred to a graduate.

Those who have a doctor degree diploma can apply for post-doctoral studies. Post-doctoral studies finalise with by the conferring of the second scientific degree - doctor habilitat.

6.2. What are the links between higher education and research in your country?

(For example, what percentage of publicly-funded research is conducted within HE institutions?)

Scientific research in higher education institutions (university level) is carried out according to the Law on Education, Law on State Policy in the Field of Research and Development, Code on Science and other relevant legislative acts.

Within higher education institutions scientific research is carried out in departments, laboratories and other university subdivisions. Alongside the academic staff, students are actively involved into the scientific and research activity.

Programs of fundamental scientific research as well as other research and development programs are evaluated and approved by the Ministry of Education and the Academy of Science. The existing legal framework ensures and stimulates scientific collaboration and co-operation with various scientific centres from abroad.

Out of the total number of higher education teaching staff, 22% are directly involved in research and development. The research activities are financed from the state budget, on the basis of contracts signed with local and foreign companies as well as by international grants.

7. Mobility of students and staff

7.1. Describe the main factors influencing mobility of students from as well as to your

country (For instance funds devoted to mobility schemes, portability of student loans and grants, visa problems)

Promotion of mobility of students is one of the major priorities of the higher education sector development in the Republic of Moldova.

The following factors that increase academic mobility in the Republic of Moldova can be emphasised among others: introduction of the ECTS system; implementation of the Diploma Supplement; increasing of access to information about academic exchange programs; In view of academic mobility promotion a model inter-institutional agreement concerning the procedures of student's transfer and recognition of prior studies has been elaborated and suggested to higher education institutions.

As stipulated at the Action Plan of the Ministry of Education for 2005 it is envisaged to establish in the next year a National Agency ENIC-NARIC. The work over the elaboration of the regulations of the National Academic Recognition and Information Centre has already started. Presently, the services of education documents recognition as well as information of foreign partners about the education system of the Republic of Moldova are implemented by the Department of international relations and european integration of the Ministry of Education.

Among the unsolved problems in view of mobility of students there remains visa problems, as well as the elaboration and implementation of students' grants and study loans schemes at the national level.

7.2. Describe any special measures taken in your country to improve mobility of students from as well as to your country

The academic mobility in the Republic of Moldova is in major extend implemented through international programs, the framework of bilateral governmental agreements and on the basis of direct co-operation between local and foreign higher education institutions.

Until now the Ministry of Education has signed bilateral agreements with five countries: Bulgaria, China, Turkey, Ukraine, and Russian Federation. During the academic year 2003-2004, 353 students (332 undergraduate and 21 postgraduate) have been enrolled at universities on the basis of bilateral agreements. Presently, 1616 Moldovan students study abroad on the basis of collaboration protocols.

Another important dimension of academic mobility in Moldova is the direct co-operation among local and foreign higher education institutions. Thus the biggest University of the Country - the State University of Moldova has signed more than 70 collaboration agreements with educational institutions from European Countries.

The Ministry of Education has declared its openness to any collaboration in the field of education carried out by means of international programs, projects and inter-ministerial structures. Such collaboration is considered one of the most important instruments for the promotion of academic mobility. Thus Ministry of Education highly appreciates the opportunities to promote academic mobility offered by EU community educational programs. In this context it is important to point out the TEMPUS program. Presently, 9 of the 16 state higher education institutions are involved in different projects within the TEMPUS program. Within the framework of TEMPUS projects more than 300 visits of teachers and students to various foreign universities have taken place. TEMPUS Individual mobility projects are the most important part of the whole academic mobility in Moldova. Other international programs and structures that offer to the Moldovan citizens education abroad and contribute to academic mobility increase are the following: The French Alliance, French-speaking Universities Agency, the German Service for Academic Exchange (DAAD), educational programs and projects of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. In this respect worth

mentioning assistance and scholarships offered by Governments of Italy, Czech Republic, Sweden, Netherlands and others.

Besides, according to the recent statistical data, the number of the Moldovan students studying abroad and paying the tuition fees on their own account has increased significantly. The Ministry of Education also encourages activities that attract foreign students to Moldova. Thus several higher education institutions offer higher education programmes in English, French or German languages as well as some courses in other wider-spoken languages. During the academic year 2003-2004 about 400 foreign citizens have been enrolled at Moldovan universities. Presently, more than 2000 foreign students (2% of the total number of students) study at higher education and post-graduate institutions.

7.3. Describe the main factors influencing mobility of teachers and staff from as well as to your country (For instance tenure of appointment, grant schemes, social security, visa problems)

Academic and administrative staff mobility is mostly carried out by means of international programs, in the framework of governmental bilateral agreements or on the basis of direct bilateral collaboration between the local and foreign higher education institutions.

And in particular through:

- collaboration agreements with the higher education institutions from a number of countries: Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Israel, Great Britain, France, Sweden and others;
- participation in common European and transatlantic projects (TEMPUS, INTAS, Copernicus, RAP, COCOP, SAWS scheme);
- participation in international competitions for education and research scholarships (Alexander Humboldt Foundation, DAAD, Fullbright, French-Speaking University Agency, COBS);
- participation in common research programs (CRDF/ MRDA, NATO program);
- participation in various activities at the international level.

7.4. Describe any special measures taken in your country to improve mobility of academic teachers and staff from as well as to your country

The central authorities of the Republic of Moldova responsible for higher education encourage universities to undertake all necessary steps in order to maintain and widen the collaboration and partnership with foreign higher education institutions, structures and programmes. The emphasis is made on the increasing of the number of academic staff collaboration projects.

8. Higher education institutions and students

8.1. Describe aspects of autonomy of higher education institutions

Is autonomy determined/defined by law? To what extent can higher education institutions decide on internal organisation, staffing, new study programmes and financing?

The Law of Education of the Republic of Moldova stipulates major principles of university autonomy. The University autonomy refers to spheres of management, structure and functioning of an institution, as well as to the teaching activity and scientific research, administration and financing. The university autonomy is implemented mainly through: determination of the specialities; elaboration of curricula, study and analytical programs; admission for studies; determination of assessment criteria for evaluation teaching and

scientific staff; employment of the teaching and administrative staff; attraction and utilization of additional sources of income; conferring of teaching titles and grades. Concerning the financial issue, the university autonomy is implemented through the right to manage, within the conditions of law and personal responsibility, the financial funds allocated from the state budget or from any other legal source.

8.2. Describe actions taken to ensure active participation from all partners in the process

Higher Education Institutions, being presented at the Council of Ministry of Education are directly involved into the process of elaboration of legislative and administrative acts that regulate functioning of the higher education system. Beside, interests of the national higher education institutions are assured due to the close collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the Rectors' Council.

As regards HE academic staff, it is involved into the process of HEI governance through the participation at the administrative staff elections. Teachers have the right to elaborate curricula, choose forms and methods of teaching, textbooks and didactic materials.

Collaboration with several branch ministries and departments has been intensified recently in order to facilitate the solution of some problems related to higher education. Thus the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been addressed to contribute to the settlement of visa issue for student and academic staff. The Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Finance have been asked to elaborate more effective schemes of higher education funding. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection was applied to elaborate suggestions in view of graduate employment problem.

International organisations (UNESCO-CEPES, Council of Europe) as well as various NGO-s (e.g. The Institute of Public Policies, Soros Foundation) are consulted when the problems related to higher education are being solved.

8.3. How do students participate in and influence the organisation and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions and at the national level? (For example, participation in University Governing Bodies, Academic Councils etc)

In order to enforce the principle of university autonomy policies related to students' participation in university management are being implemented according to the University Charter.

According to the Decision of the Ministry, since 1996, there have been passed the norms related to the procedure of election of the administrative and didactic Council of a university, its administrative bodies. The norms stipulate the quota of students' participation in the Senate of a university as no less than 15%. In fact, this rate varies according to the internal administrative policies of each university. Thus there exist cases when this percentage runs up to 20 %.

Students also take part in the elections of Dean. They are represented in the General Conference of the administrative and didactic staff, the participation quota being 1 representative per 50 students.

In many higher education institutions of the Republic there are established and function students' self-administration bodies - Students' Department offices and of Students' Senates. At the national level policies aimed to promote students' participation in higher education governance are pursued by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova. Thus the recent initiative of the Ministry to establish a national consultative body of the ministry of education - Students' Council of the Republic of Moldova, has been submitted to higher education institutions. The Students' Council charter has been elaborated by experts of the ministry in collaboration with representatives of academic staff and students. The regulation

proclaims the Students' Council as a consultative, permanent, and representative body of students at national level

9. The social dimension of the Bologna Process

9.1. Describe measures which promote equality of access to higher education

The overall right to education is stipulated by the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova. Nowadays the access to higher education has increased considerably, inclusively thanks to the increase of the number of Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Moldova.

To assure the equal access to higher education for candidates from disadvantaged families, the Ministry of Education has fixed the certain quota of admission to budget funded places. Thus, for children from disadvantaged families as well as for invalids of the 1st and 2nd categories the rate is 12%. Beside, considerable measures are being taken to assure equal chances for access to higher education for school graduates from less advantaged rural areas and for the candidates from the urban areas. The quota of state budget funded places fixed for rural schools graduates has reached 60% during the 2004 admission period.

40% of the total number of students enrolled on state funded places benefit from scholarships in accordance to their academic performances. Scholarships for students from pedagogical higher education institutions are higher than scholarships for students from institutions of other specialisation.

A social scholarship is awarded monthly, to students from disadvantaged families depending on the parents' annual income.

10. Developments in lifelong learning

10.1. What measures have been taken by your country to encourage higher education institutions in developing lifelong learning paths?

Development of the national system of lifelong learning is one of priorities within the overall educational policy carried out in the Republic of Moldova.

In 2002 the Government adopted the "Strategy on labour force employment" that stipulates a number of measures aimed to facilitate employment as well as to assure continuing education and training for unemployed people.

The Labour Code (2003) stipulates basic rights and responsibilities of employees and employers regarding professional training. This legal act has for the first time defined the term "continuing professional training".

In 2003 the Parliament of Moldova adopted the Law "on employment and social protection of unemployed". The law determines the necessity to organise the professional training of unemployed persons in order to raise their competitiveness at the labour market, as well as their mobility and adaptability to requirements of employers and of the economic situation.

The "Conception on vocational education and training of human resources" has been adopted by Parliament decision.

According to the Governmental decision Nr. 1424 of 9.11.2004 the national Council for Continuing Professional Education has been established and the Regulation on the organisation of continuing professional education has been approved. This normative act envisages a number of measures that are to be taken within and out of the framework of the national education system in order to assure the opportunities of qualification, retraining of labour force, in-service training.

At present more than 200 institutions and economic entities providing adult training and

education, are functioning in the Republic of Moldova and assure the attainment and mastering of a professional qualification in a short term

10.2. Describe any procedures at the national level for recognition of prior learning/flexible learning paths

Prior learning paths are mutually recognized by higher education institutions in case of student's transfer from an institution into another.

To the holders of a higher education diploma previous education is recognised, and the candidate studies by a special, one-year reduced programme.

A student can simultaneously study two specialities, or may study in parallel one other specialisation at the same higher education institution in which he/she studies his/her major.

In these cases, the successful completion of common, similar or comparable courses are recognised for both specialities. Students may study in reduced terms at any form of education, but only after having completed the first two years with marks not lower than 8(eight).

The implementation of a ECTS-type credit transfer system at the nation-wide level will facilitate the procedures of prior learning paths recognition both: at the inter-institutional level and within the whole system of higher education.

11. Contribution to the European dimension in higher education

11.1. Describe any transnational co-operation that contributes to the European dimension in higher education

The European dimension in higher education is first of all promoted due to the collaboration of higher education institutions of the Republic of Moldova with the European ones, as well as with different international bodies, structures and programmes operating in the field of education.

Presently the most fruitful transnational collaboration is implemented through some European Union educational programmes, which are eligible for the Republic of Moldova and in particular through the Tempus Programme.

Students as well as administrative and academic staff of higher education institutions are encouraged to participate at post-university research projects in co-operation with foreign institutions.

Higher Education institutions are encouraged to carry out the procedure of doctoral thesis defence with implication of foreign universities, thus offering the graduates the possibility to obtain qualification and diploma recognised by two or several higher education institutions.

Higher Education institutions are also inspired to make an opportunity of the internship abroad, at least for the students with the best performances

11.2. Describe how curriculum development reflects the European dimension (For instance foreign language courses, European themes, orientation towards the European labour market)

In the Republic of Moldova the European dimension in higher education curricula is promoted at both: national and institutional levels. Thus one of the measures undertaken at the national level is stipulation of a certain minimum amount of a foreign language study-hours, which is obligatory for all higher education specialities. According to the higher education Frame-Plan, the minimum workload of a foreign language course is 2 hours per week at the first and second year of studies. Thus, the total amount of the obligatory workload for a

foreign language course, (indifferent of a speciality) makes up 136 hours during the first two years of study. The amount of study hours for a foreign languages course can be increased or doubled upon the request of students. Students of any speciality can also apply to the leadership of a department and to request the introduction of a facultative foreign language course during the 3rd and the 4th year of study, which will end by an examination and the respective note at the diploma.

Quite often higher education institutions offer to students the possibility to choose in a certain extend the content of a foreign language course, and in particular – topics and themes for learning and discussion.

Recently the number of “European Studies” courses taught at higher education institutions of Moldova has grown considerably. E.g.: "European integration processes", "European Law", "European integration of the RM: Reality and Perspectives", "European Security", "European Diplomacy" and others.

12. Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

12.1. Describe any actions taken by your country to promote the attractiveness of European higher education

The Ministry of the Republic of Moldova in collaboration with non-governmental organisations and the national Tempus Program office distributes the information concerning the advantages of the basic principles organisation of higher education, which are common for European countries. The Ministry also emphasises the benefits of active participation at EU educational programmes and promotes academic mobility. In this respect the Ministry of Education initiates and actively participates at the organisation of national and international conferences, seminars and workshops. Such events are aimed to familiarize higher education stakeholders and civic society with the advantages of European higher education, with Bologna Process objectives as well as with the national developments in view of harmonisation of the national higher education system with the European ones.

One of the main factors that increase the attractiveness the European model of higher education is the appreciation of benefits of a credit transfer system. Thus in 2001 a Consultative Centre for the implementation of ECTS was created within the State University of Moldova. The Centre is aimed to give consultations to higher education institutions introducing elements of ECTS System; to cumulate, analyse and distribute among all stakeholders of national education the information concerning ECTS as well as to monitor and co-ordinate the process ECTS application. Presently under the guidance of the Consultative Centre a handbook on the implementation of the ECTS in the Republic of Moldova is under the elaboration.

13. Concluding comments

13.1. Give a description of your national Bologna strategies

In view of the implementation of the Bologna Process objectives, one of the major initiatives of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova is the improvement of the legislative framework of higher education. With this goal there have been elaborated the following drafts: the Law on Higher Education (the second generation Law); the “Strategy of higher education development in the context of the Bologna Process objectives”, the Strategy implementation Action Plan. The mentioned projects were presented and discussed during the international conference "Modernisation of the higher education system of the Republic of

Moldova in the context of the Bologna Process", which took place on 26-27 of November 2004. Council of Europe experts as well as rectors of all higher education institutions of Moldova, representatives of civil society and students took part at the conference.

It is envisaged that the Law on Higher Education will be passed by the Parliament in 2005.

The Bill of the Law on Higher Education as well as other national strategic documents and projects foreseen the following developments toward the implementation of the Bologna Process priorities:

- assurance of students' participation at higher education governance;
- adoption a system essentially based on two main cycles;
- involvement of all higher education institution into the process of ECTS implementation;
- improvement of the quality assurance system through the revision of existing and elaboration of new standards, procedures and guidelines of quality assessment, evaluation and accreditation procedures;
- promotion of university autonomy;
- increasing of public responsibility of and for higher education;
- promotion of academic mobility.

13.2. Give an indication of the main challenges ahead for your country

- Imperfect Legislative framework;
- Insufficient state budget allocations for education;
- Discrepancy of qualifications offered by HE Institutions with labor market demands;
- Explosion of the educational services offer what leads to the deterioration of quality;
- Shortage of highly qualified university teaching staff due to brain-drain as well as to the decrease of the social status and low average wage.
- Unequal development of the institutional infrastructure, material and didactic basis.