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# Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices in Academic Credit Mobility (Armenia, Moldova, Ukraine)

## Educational Policy Survey

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## Executive Summary

The academic credit mobility has a significant importance for the enlargement of the cooperation between the European Union and the Eastern Partnership countries in the field of higher education and research. Certainly, the expansion of credit mobility is not the exclusive mission of higher education institutions, but also the one of civil society organisations. The latter, through their specific methods, may analyse the way how the provisions of the Bologna Process are implemented, may identify the possible constraints and, what is more important, may conduct efficient campaigns to promote the academic credit mobility among students, master's students and the teaching staff.

**The goal of the survey** consists in assessing the present situation in the field of academic credit mobility in Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine, identifying the possible constraints to mobility expansion and making recommendations for the increase of the level of student and teaching staff participation in mobility programmes.

**The survey methodology** was based on qualitative sociological surveys and on the analysis of relevant educational policy documents. In each country, the target-groups included teaching staff, managers of higher education institutions, students, representatives of governmental structures in the field of higher education, civil society representatives.

The main **findings of the survey**, applicable in all three countries, are:

- The major beneficial effects of the mobility consist in the higher quality of education as a result of the improvement of teaching-learning-evaluation methods, curriculum modernisation, harmonisation of the educational programmes with the European ones, updating the subjects taught in universities. As a whole, the academic credit mobility sets the required prerequisites for the accession of university education from the countries covered by the survey to the European Higher Education Area.

- Each of the three countries has a legal-regulatory framework related to the academic credit mobility, but it still has some gaps, particularly in terms of regulating the contractual labour relations with the teaching staff during the periods of the stay abroad; gathering statistical data related to the mobility process; rewarding the teaching and the managerial staff who take part in or promote the mobility.

- In general, the scale of the process of academic credit mobility depends to a decisive extent on the activism of teachers who have already participated in mobility programmes. The teaching staff who have taken an active part in conferences, round-tables, international training courses, etc. are the ones who develop, on their own initiative, collaboration relations with teachers of the host institutions from abroad and have a significant contribution to signing of inter-institutional agreements.

- At present, in the countries included in the survey, there are very few analytical reports and official statistical data concerning the developments of the mobility process, the difficulties related to student participation and the obstacles faced by the teaching staff in the process of academic mobility. There are no national statistics identifying the less active categories which are not involved

in the mobility processes yet, the share of such categories, disaggregated by gender, year of study, educational field, specialisation, etc.

- The level of student and teaching staff awareness of the academic credit mobility opportunities is still relatively low. In general, the present tools for information are mostly based on the informal social networks and less on the existing institutional structures. The information about the mobility programmes is mainly disseminated by the means of "man-to-man" channels, what results into the establishment of closed communities. The members of such communities use to apply repeatedly for mobility programmes, thus reducing the chances of the uninformed persons to participate in them.

The major **recommendations of the survey**:

- Enhance the capacity of higher education institutions to participate in academic mobility programmes as a result of providing university courses in languages of international circulation; developing new curricula, adjusted to the needs of the European labour market; promoting the image of educational institutions at the international level, encouraging the participation of students and of the teaching staff from abroad.

- Disseminate examples of good practices; strengthen the tools for student and teaching staff information about the opportunities provided by higher education institutions in the field of academic credit mobility; raise the efficiency of the work of departments in charge of academic mobility within the higher education institutions.

- Diversify the ways for information of the target-groups by the departments in charge of academic credit mobility within the higher education institutions, encourage the students and the teaching staff who participated in academic mobilities to provide support to the applicants who lack such an experience.

- Develop institutional policies intended to enlarge the access of teachers who face difficulties in the process of mobility: grants for those who have families, maintaining their position and the courses taught by them, providing intensive foreign languages courses.

- Ensure the transparency of the process of selection of the teaching staff and students who apply for mobility programmes. Publish analyses of application processes and of the results of applicant selection.

- More active involvement of civil society organisations in promoting good practices of academic credit mobility, provide to students and to the teaching staff consultancy and assistance in identifying the mobility programmes and the possible host institutions, making the application files, getting familiar with the social-cultural particularities of the host countries.

- Organising by civil society organisations of exchanges of experience and of good practices among the higher education institutions which are active in terms of mobility. Involve the international experts in the facilitation of the exchange of good practices gained by foreign universities with traditions in the field of academic credit mobility.

## Survey Methodology

From the perspective of the current globalisation processes, the academic mobility is a need, as it promotes the coherence at the European level and the enlargement of the scientific horizon. This fact further contributes to building the capacity to face a new learning environment and to understand other cultures. In the context of the multiple problems faced by the Eastern Partnership countries – poverty, corruption, lack of transparency, etc. -, the process of teacher and student mobility fosters the increase of education quality as a result of improving the modern teaching/learning methods, the curricula and the educational programmes adapted to the European context, the contents of the subjects. Such a fact determines the alignment of education in the countries of the Eastern Partnership to the European standards for education quality.

Despite the multiple advantages of the process of academic mobility, for the moment being, there are no analytical reports, nor integrated statistical data showing the developments of the mobility process, the difficulties related to students participation and the obstacles faced by the teaching staff in the process of academic mobility. Moreover, the national statistical data are fragmentary and do not identify the passive categories which do not involve in the mobility process, neither the size of such categories disaggregated by gender, year of study, specialization, etc.

In such a context, this survey addresses the need for identifying the size, the forms of manifestation and the obstacles faced in the process of student and teaching staff academic mobility. The survey was conducted in three countries of the Eastern Partnership – the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Armenia –, being a comprehensive and comparative investigation intended to facilitate the exchange of good practices and submit recommendations for enhancing the degree of accessibility for the categories with a limited access.

Thus, the survey represents an absolutely necessary step, a useful argument in terms of raising the main stakeholders' awareness of the academic credit mobility and a prerequisite for resource mobilisation towards its active promotion.

The general objectives of the survey focussed on:

- Analysis of the regulatory-legal framework in the field of academic mobility in the countries of the Eastern Partnership: the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Armenia.
- Identifying the major types of mobility programmes in the Eastern Partnership countries.
- Assessing the tools for managing the process of student and teaching staff credit mobility.
- Mapping the academic mobility with a view to identify the passive groups (students and teaching staff) in the mobility process.
- Determining the level of teaching staff and student awareness of the opportunities in the field of academic credit mobility.
- Identifying the main sources for student and teaching staff information about the academic mobility opportunities.
- Analysis of the attitudes towards the benefits and the advantages of academic mobility.
- Elucidating the changes occurred at the institutional level as a result of the participation in the mobility processes.
- Analysis of the difficulties and obstacles faced by teachers and students in the process of mobility.
- Making recommendations for the increase of the degree of accessibility of the categories with a limited access to academic credit mobility opportunities.

**The target-group** consisted of teaching staff, managerial staff of higher education institutions, students, representatives of governmental structures in the field under consideration, civil society representatives, etc.

The survey was conducted in the Eastern Partnership countries: the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Armenia. Three methodologies adjusted to the particularities of the mobility process in the concerned country were developed.

In the Republic of Moldova was conducted 1 focus-group with students involved in credit mobility, and 16 in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders in the field of education (7 teachers from two universities, 2 students, 2 administrative university staff, 1 representative of the Ministry of Education, 1 Educational Advising Centre, 3 National Erasmus+ Office in Moldova)

In Ukraine, following the research methodologies, were conducted 2 focus-groups and 10 interviews with relevant stakeholders in the field of education.

In Armenia were conducted 2 focus-groups with students involved in credit mobility, representatives of different organisations, NGO-s and 17 in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders in the field of education (10 teachers from six universities, 2 students, 2 administrative university staff, 3 representatives of the Ministry of Education).

The data are presented from a comparative perspective, based on the following criteria: *period subject to the analysis* (2010-2015 time period), *category of interviewees who took part in the survey*, *country of reference* (Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Armenia). In order to ensure the data triangulation, quantitative and qualitative methods for sociological investigation were applied: the statistical analysis (mapping), in-depth interview method, focus-group method, etc. The survey was conducted during the period September-October 2015.

### The Regulatory-Legal Framework in the Field of Credit Mobility

#### General Characteristics

Since 2005, when the Republic of Moldova joined the Bologna process, the academic mobility has become one of the objectives of society transformation and development. Such a process requires a system of credits which facilitates the academic mobility and the recognition, capitalisation on the knowledge acquired outside the country.

Starting from the year 2005, the universities of the Republic of Moldova apply various strategies to promote student and teaching staff mobility, and to develop internal/institutional regulatory documents. Nevertheless, the national policies of the Republic of Moldova for regulation and promotion of the academic mobility in higher education started to be drafted in 2014, when Government Decree no. 56 on the "Framework-Regulations for the Academic Mobility in Higher Education"<sup>1</sup> was issued. The regulations were developed based on the provisions of the Education Law no. 547-XIII of 21<sup>st</sup> of July 1995 (the Official Journal of the Republic of Moldova, 1995, no. 62-63, art. 692), with its further modifications and updates, taking into account the commitments taken by the Republic of Moldova as a result of joining the Bologna Process, as well as the provisions of the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, of the Mobility Strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), adopted in 2012, of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, signed in Lisbon in 1997, and aiming at the participation of the Republic of Moldova to building the European Higher Education Area.

The Regulations set the way for the participation of students (cycle I, II and doctoral studies), researchers and of the teaching staff in academic mobility programmes at the national and international levels, as well as for student participation in internships and educational-cultural exchange programmes which include a paid employment component.

The Regulations also establish the conceptual framework and define the major key-concepts. According to the Regulations, " ... The mobility is a process of fulfilment by students or by the teaching staff of educational cycles/ periods or internships in an educational institution from the country or from abroad". The process of mobility shall be implemented within different (long-term and short-term) mobility programmes. The long-term mobility programme is a programme which finishes up with the award of a graduation document which certifies a level of qualification, while the short-term mobility programme is implemented during an educational period, practical training, language and research internship, summer school, etc. and finishes up with the award of an academic certificate or, if appropriate, of a participation certificate.

The mobility process implies a cooperation between the host and the home institution. It should be noted that the *host university* is a higher education institution from the country or from abroad where the student, the teacher or the manager undertakes an academic mobility programme; *the home university* is the higher education institution from the Republic of Moldova in which the student was enrolled for licentiate/master's/doctoral studies or in which the teacher works, and the *partner universities* are the universities from the country and/or from abroad which collaborate towards the implementation of academic mobility programmes.

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<sup>1</sup> Published on 31.01.2014 in the Official Journal No. 24-26.



“The academic mobility means short-term student mobilities, lasting from 3 to 9 months, that is during one term or one academic year, aiming at earning and making a transfer of credits. This means that a student from the country X has the possibility, within different projects/programmes, to go to another country or another university in order to study during one academic year, to pass an educational module or to make a research within a licentiate or master’s degree programme.”  
(*expert of the Ministry of Education*).

The academic mobility of students, doctoral students and of the teaching staff from the Republic of Moldova is organised based on the provisions of the following official documents:

- international treaties to which the Republic of Moldova is a state-party;
- inter-university agreements/conventions;
- agreements signed between higher education institutions, on the one hand, and companies and organisations from the country and from abroad, on the other hand;
- agreements/contracts signed between institutions having a doctoral research component and universities/research centres from abroad;
- mobility programmes provided by different states and international and regional institutions/organisations;
- individual contracts.

The academic mobility programmes in the Republic of Moldova are focussed on the following objectives:

- improve the quality and the relevance of education as a result of strengthening the international cooperation and enlarging the transnational access to the educational resources of other countries;
- ensure the competitive participation to building the European Higher Education and Research Area, as defined by the Bologna Process;
- develop and adapt the educational services to the requirements of the extra-academic environment identified at the national and international levels;
- develop an optimal framework for the integration of educational programmes into research;
- internationalise the higher education and support the inter-university cooperation;
- make exchanges of experience with the academic, research or economic environments with a view to ensure lifelong learning;
- strengthen the cultural identity in Europe through the promotion of multiculturalism, multilingualism, openness and tolerance dimensions in education;
- promote the public-private partnerships, both at the national, and at the international levels;
- promote the academic transparency, compatibility and recognition of the studies and of the qualifications awarded in other countries, encouraging thus the development of an area open to national and international cooperation in higher education;
- promote abroad the image of the educational system and of the national culture.

### **Student Academic Mobility**

The following types of studies and activities may be performed within the mobility programmes:

- licentiate/master’s/doctoral studies and/or studies during one semester/academic year
- research internships in the context of master’s/doctoral studies and of post-doctoral programmes;
- language internships;
- summer schools;
- internships;
- educational-cultural exchange programmes which may have a paid employment component;

- research internships and exchange of experience for the teaching staff.

Article III of the above-mentioned Framework-Regulations sets the prerequisites for the participation in student academic mobility. Accordingly, citizens of the Republic of Moldova who are full-time students or doctoral students enrolled in any form of doctoral studies and who comply with the conditions below may be beneficiaries of inter-university mobility programmes:

- a) follow an educational programme in a higher education institution from the Republic of Moldova upon completion of which a licentiate /master's/doctor's title is awarded;
- b) the academic performance is as follows: a minimal average score of 8,0 in the examination sessions in the humanities and 7,0 – in the exact sciences;
- c) master well enough the language in which the educational programmes is taught or the language of the country where the mobility takes place;
- d) no academic arrears and disciplinary sanctions.

The mobilities within the joint programmes (joint diplomas) at the level of cycles I, II and of integrated studies are regulated in accordance with the agreements signed by the partner higher education institutions. The number of credits earned by the students during the mobility process shall not be less than 30 per semester, respectively, 60 per year of study, and they are recognised based on the principle of credit accumulation and transfer.

Under the principle of financial autonomy of universities, the higher education institutions may make decisions on the provision of the financial support, payment of the tuition fee in the home university and granting scholarships to the participants in the mobility programmes. The respective decisions are based on clear and transparent criteria established by the university senate. In order to achieve the above-mentioned, the higher education institutions, in accordance with the regulatory acts in force, budget financial resources intended to support the academic mobility.

The participant in an inter-university mobility programme shall hold an ECTS learning agreement, supplemented by a transcript of the records/an extract from the transcript. The ECTS learning agreement shall be signed by three parties: the student who participates in the programme, the home university and the host university, testifying the compatibility of the educational programmes and the commitment for their recognition. The file of the student participating in a mobility programme shall be evaluated in the home university, for recognition purposes, by the specialists in the respective field before the beginning of the academic year/semester and shall include the following institutional and personal documents:

- the student's application form (ECTS template);
- the ECTS learning agreement;
- the transcript of the records/an extract from the ECTS transcript, documents which are recommended by the Guide for the implementation of the National System of Academic Credits approved by the Ministry of Education;
- the student's CV, a letter of recommendation and the letter of motivation, etc.

Within the international mobility programmes, if appropriate, the student shall submit, at the request of the home university, an official document containing additional information about the educational system within which the mobility programme was implemented, the grading scale, the curriculum, its length and the form for its certification and recognition. The documents shall be issued either by the host university, or by another authorised body from the respective country.

Based on the faculty's recommendations, the administration of the higher education institution issues an ordinance for the continuation of the educational process by the student returning from a mobility programme.

Non-fulfilment by the student of the educational programme agreed upon by the ECTS learning agreement shall lead to the repetition of the educational programme in the home institution or to passing equivalency examinations, under the conditions specified in the Regulations for the organisation of higher education studies based on the National System of Academic Credits, approved by an ordinance of the minister of education.

If an inter-university cooperation agreement is available, according to the criteria which are mutually accepted by both universities, the periods of study in other institutions from the country or from abroad shall enjoy academic recognition following the provisions of the national legislation and of the international regulations in the field of recognition, including the number of transfer academic credits (ECTS), the scores for the examinations and internships and/or other forms of evaluation undertaken in the host university.

Students may participate in academic mobility programmes based on individual contracts, informing the administration of the home university about the programme, its length and goals at the beginning of the academic year or semester.

The individual participation in academic mobility programmes is done based on an order/permit of the rector of the home higher education institution. The academic recognition of the individual academic mobility programme is done under the terms of the above-mentioned Framework-Regulations.

The courses studied in the framework of a mobility programme are registered in the student's Diploma Supplement, with the mention that the respective educational period was carried out within an academic mobility programme. The courses with no equivalent in the curriculum of the home university are recognised within the package of optional courses and are awarded supplementary credits.

In addition to it, students may participate in internships abroad, including in educational-cultural exchange programmes which have a paid employment component. They are based on:

- international treaties to which the Republic of Moldova is a state-party;
- international and inter-university programmes/projects;
- agreements signed between the higher university institution and institutions/organisations from abroad;
- individual contracts concluded between the students and service providers which are authorised/licensed for such an activity in accordance with the provisions of Law no. 451-XV of 30<sup>th</sup> of July 2001 on the Regulation of Entrepreneurship Activity through Licensing.

Students may take part in such programmes exclusively during the period established based on the learning schedule or during the summer vacation, if no other types of instructional-educational activities are scheduled.

### **Teaching Staff Academic Mobility**

The teaching staff of higher education institutions may also take part in the mobility programmes based on individual contracts concluded with educational institutions from the country and from abroad, covering the expenditures on their own. The home university sets up with each teacher individually a teaching/activity programme within the educational institution before the start of the mobility programme. In the process of identification and acceptance of the mobility programmes, preference is given to the ones which comply with the institution's objectives and mission and finish up with the production and publication of new teaching aids, which enlarge and strengthen the collaboration relations between the institutions/faculties/chairs and promote the new cooperation

projects. The above-mentioned priorities also serve as criteria for the selection of the teaching staff for mobility programmes.

The rights, the responsibilities of the participants in mobility programmes, of the home and of the host university, as well as the length of the mobility programmes for the teaching staff shall be specified in the inter-governmental, inter-ministerial, inter-university agreements, as well as in the international programmes/projects under which the mobility programme is carried out.

The participation of the teaching staff in mobility programmes is recognised, in accordance with the legislative and regulatory provisions in force, as continuing education and for the promotion in the teaching and managerial career.

Thus, *the teaching staff mobility* aims at the following *objectives*:

- make exchanges of experience with the academic, research or economic communities aiming at the continuing training and professional development of the teaching staff;
- carry out teaching activities in universities from the country and from abroad;
- develop new curricula, educational and training programmes, teaching and methodological aids, and update those available;
- develop functional partnerships for educational, training and research projects;
- strengthen the cooperation between the higher education institutions in areas of common interest;
- promote the exchanges of experience in terms of teaching-learning-evaluation methodology and techniques;
- promote abroad the image of the higher education institutions, etc.

### **Managing the Process of Academic Mobility**

According to the provisions of the Framework-Regulations, the educational institutions develop and approve their own regulations concerning the organisation of academic mobility. To organise and promote the mobility programmes, specific structures in charge of supporting the academic mobility are set up at the institutional level among the permanent staff – *the International Relations Department*, entitled with the following responsibilities:

- identify the mobility projects/programmes;
- disseminate the information about the mobility programmes available for students, researchers and teaching staff;
- organise the applicant information and training;
- establish, if appropriate, the procedures for student selection which need further validation by the university senate;
- develop and implement the tools for the monitoring and evaluation of the students participating in mobility programmes;
- monitoring of the implementation of mobility programmes and of their outcomes;
- assess the impact of the mobilities;
- provide counselling to students who apply for mobility, internship and educational-cultural exchange programmes.

Before the 30<sup>th</sup> of September of each year, the officials of the institutional structures in charge of promoting the academic mobility submit reports, following the established template, to the Ministry of Education, as well as to other concerned ministries (in case of the institutional structures with double subordination), to inform about the mobility programmes implemented throughout the academic year, which are afterwards published on the official website of the Ministry of Education.

In the opinion of the interviewed experts, the efficiency of both student, and teaching staff academic mobility processes strictly depends on the university management. Therefore, the administration of universities should put efforts towards the co-optation, the cooperation and the signing of bilateral agreements with universities from abroad. Such a process is a complex one and implies more than exchange of information between the universities. The active promotion of the mobility process depends on the involvement and the activism of the university administration, of the International Relations Department, of the teaching staff and, last but not least, of the students.

A number of faculties apply specific strategies to promote the academic mobility. For example, the administration of the History Faculty of the State University of Moldova uses a specific strategy to encourage the active involvement of students in the process of mobility. A sudden increase in this sense was remarked after the improvement of the educational programme and the inclusion in the curriculum of *Project Management* as a subject. In the framework of this subject, students acquire project development and writing skills, such as: specific application rules (setting the goal, the objectives, the outcomes, etc.), the motivation letters, the recommendation letters, etc. Students are encouraged to apply for various mobility programmes. In the framework of this subject, all possibilities for both credit and study mobility are analysed. The coordinator of this subject is active from the viewpoint of mobility, and covers not only theoretical, but also practical issues. In addition to it, the possible obstacles and the ways how to overcome them are largely covered. This course contributes both to information, and to awareness raising in terms of advantages of the mobility process.

As a result of the involvement in the process of mobility, students and teachers develop their personal relationship, what increases their level of information about the new mobility opportunities. Such a fact contributes to the development of social networks. The mobility becomes more accessible as a result of a higher level of information, awareness raising and willingness to participate.

Another important component concerns *the recognition of study documents and/or of the mobility programmes implemented in the framework of international agreements*. This is done on the basis of the national legislation, of the European directives on recognition and of the bilateral/multilateral agreements on the recognition of studies to which the Republic of Moldova is a party.

### **Available Academic Credit Mobility Programmes**

During the period 2010-2015, there were limited possibilities for credit mobility of teachers and students. Throughout that period, most mobility processes took place within *Tempus*, *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* Programmes. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education, nearly 750 student and teacher mobilities took place under the above-mentioned programmes during the period 2007-2014.

In addition to *Erasmus* programmes, the students and the teaching staff also have the possibility to participate in academic exchange programmes provided by the Agency of the Francophony, the French Alliance, DAAD – the German Academic Exchange Service, the Embassy of the United States of America, etc. (see the table below).

**Table 1. Types of Mobility Programmes**

Programme Name	Programme Characteristics
EDSS: French Doctoral School of Social Sciences	The programme is operational for 20 years. It aims at the renewal of social sciences in the region. Initially, the programme focussed on the cooperation between the French and Romanian academic circles, but now it includes: training courses for the preparatory, master's and doctoral cycles, as well as interdisciplinary training courses (anthropology, history, literature, political sciences, sociology).
Academic, professional and cultural exchange programmes (Government of the United States of America)	<p><a href="#">Fulbright</a> Programme provides research grants for senior researchers, university lecturers and experts from various fields. The programme includes training courses on curriculum development and teaching methodologies for university teachers of Moldova. The length of the mobility periods is 10 months.</p> <p>The international programme providing university education scholarships (<i>Global Undergraduate Exchange Program – Global UGRAD</i>) provides full tuition for study in various fields during one academic year in the United States. The programme aims at supporting the economic and democratic development in the Republic of Moldova by providing studies in key-fields of the transition process and improving the academic education by the means of professional internships and community involvement.</p>
Falk Foundation	Falk Foundation provides independent scholarships for intensive research exchanges. Distinguished medical researchers and practitioners may benefit from scholarships and exchange of experience.
TEMPUS	TEMPUS is a European Union programme which supports the modernisation of higher education in the EU neighbourhood. Tempus Programme promotes the institutional cooperation between the European Union and the partner countries and is focused on higher education reform and modernisation in partner countries of the Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Western Balkans and the Mediterranean region. Tempus also promotes <i>people-to-people</i> approach, provides support to the consortia of institutions consisting mostly of universities or associations of universities.
AUF	University Agency of Francophony (AUF) is an association of French-speaking international universities, academic networks and research centres and it is one of the largest higher education and research associations in the world.
KulturKontakt Austria (KKA)	KulturKontakt Austria is an Austrian association based in Vienna which proposes cultural exchange programmes between Austria and the Eastern and South-Eastern European countries. The association's objectives aim at educational cooperation, cultural promotion, sponsorship, building networks of artists, cultural and business institutions, etc.
OSF Budapest	The <i>Open Society Institute</i> of Budapest serves as the administrative headquarters of the OSF (Open Society Foundation) which provides various educational mobility programmes.

DAAD	The German Academic Exchange Service – DAAD – is the largest German support organisation in the field of international academic cooperation. DAAD provides competitive merit grants for students wishing to perform research activities in Germany. Grants provided by DAAD are available for all higher education cycles, starting from the licentiate cycle ( <i>bachelor</i> ) to the post-doctoral cycle.
EUROCLIO	The European Association of History Educators (EUROCLIO) was founded in 1992 with the support of the Council of Europe. EUROCLIO is an international NGO working at the European level as an active facilitator for innovation and progress in history education. EUROCLIO develops teaching aids, builds and maintains professional networks and acts as an advisor to governments, international organisations, NGO-s, history teacher associations and other organisations.
New Europe College	New Europe College (NEC) is an independent Romanian institute focussed mainly on the advanced individual research. NEC provides scholarships to young researchers and university teachers from Romania in the field of the humanities and social studies, as well as to invited foreign researchers. NEC also provides an institutional framework with powerful international links, operating as a stimulating environment for the interdisciplinary dialogue and critical debates.
IREX	The International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) is an international non-profit organisation providing leadership and innovative programmes aimed at the improvement of education quality, strengthening of independent media and fostering the development of a pluralist civil society. IREX designs educational programmes and provides consultancy to support lifelong learning. IREX implements its activities in countries in transition and provides a number of educational tools: specialised training, academic consultancy, small grants for the developments of democratic mechanisms and institutions.

The progress of mobility programmes depends on the level of involvement of university administrations in the development of inter-university cooperation agreements with higher education institutions from the neighbouring countries. Consequently, the largest number of mobility programmes are implemented jointly with Romania, Ukraine, Russia and Bulgaria.

After the Agreement for visa facilitation was signed between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union, the higher education institutions from Moldova have enlarged their cooperation with counterparts from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Belgium, France, Germany, Bulgaria, Greece, etc. In such a context, the International relations departments of the Moldovan universities are promoting a lot of initiatives aimed at the conclusion of mobility agreements.

### Mapping the Academic Credit Mobility

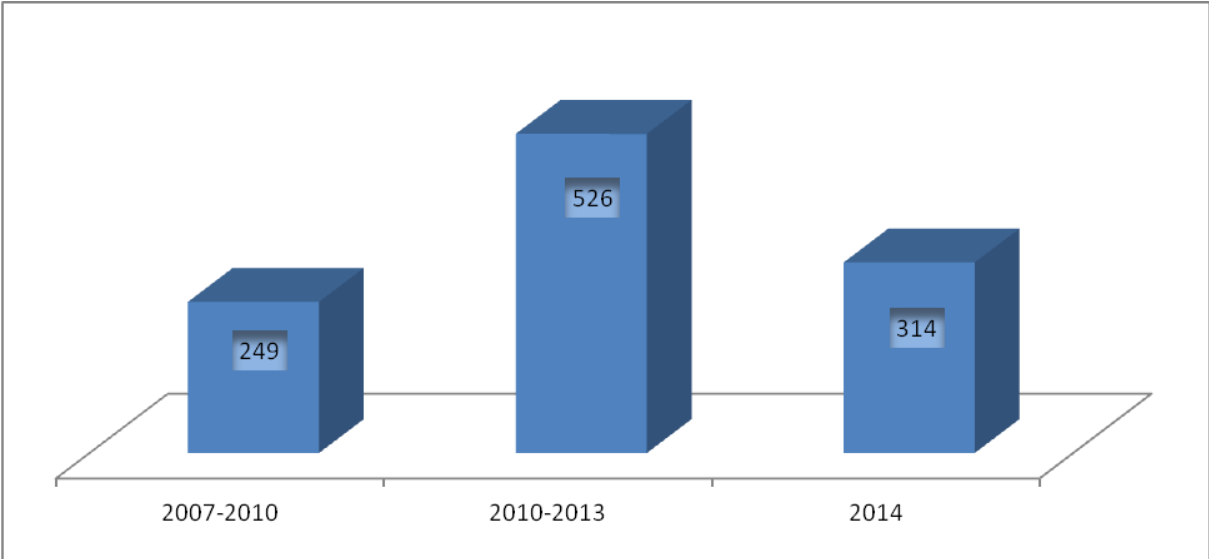
The concern about the promotion of the mobility process may be estimated based on the conducted national surveys, the developed national policies, the degree of involvement of key-stakeholders in

the process of exploration and description of the phenomenon, etc. The survey under consideration found out a weak involvement in the analysis of the particularities and developments of this process. At present, there are no analytical reports, neither integrated statistical data concerning the developments of the mobility process, the difficulties in terms of student participation and the obstacles faced by the teaching staff in the process of academic mobility. The regulatory-legal framework developed not early than in 2014 makes reference only to the procedures of the mobility process and does not set any explicit tools for the monitoring and evaluation of the real situation in this field. Consequently, there are no national statistics about the categories of students and of the teaching staff which are not involved in the mobility process yet, neither about the size of such categories, disaggregated by gender, year of study, specialisation, etc.

The several available statistics related to the particularities of the mobility process are fragmented and incomplete, as the collected data concern only one of the multiple mobility programmes.

Thus, the representatives of Erasmus+ Moldova Office are gathering statistical data about mobility activities performed within Erasmus programmes based on the information provided by the European Commission. According to these data, nearly 775 mobilities took place during the period 2007-2014.

**Chart 1. The number of mobilities performed in the framework of Erasmus Programme**

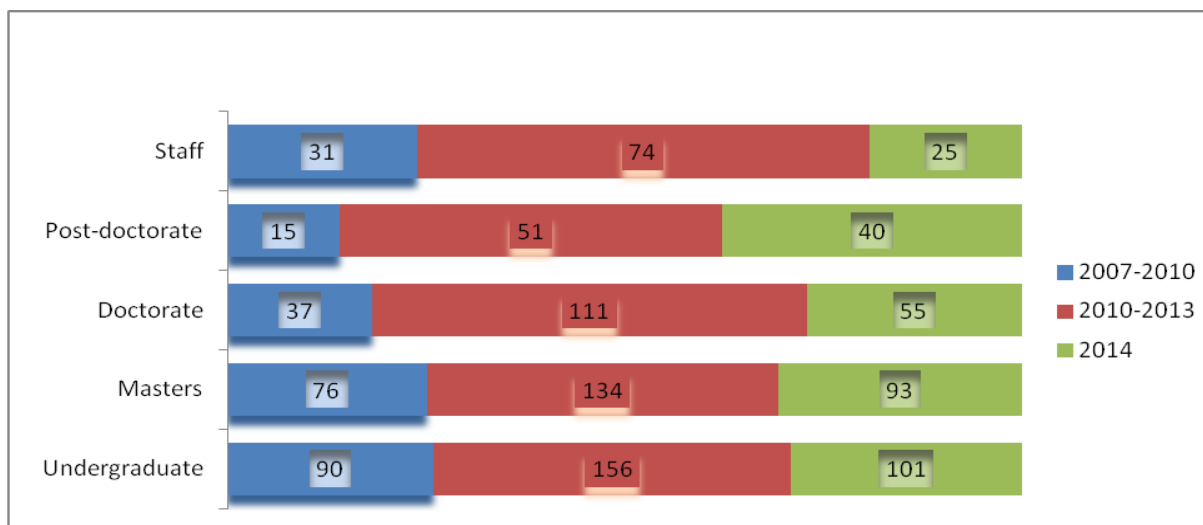


Based on the data provided by Erasmus+ Moldova National Office, there is a constant increase of student and teaching staff involvement in the process of academic mobility. During the period 2007-2014, the mobility process doubled its size, from 249 to 526 mobilities, that is an increase by nearly 49%. In 2014, 314 mobilities were reported within this programme.

From the perspective of the educational cycle, students of the licentiate cycle participate the most actively in mobility programmes (101 mobilities in 2014), followed by master's students (93 mobilities in 2014) and doctoral students (55 mobilities in 2014). Teachers are less active than students and make up a quarter of the total number of mobilities (236 out of 1089 mobilities during the period 2007-2014).



**Chart 2. Mobilities performed in the framework of Erasmus Mundus Action 2 Programme**



The statistical data concerning student and teaching staff mobility in the framework of all programmes available in the Republic of Moldova, disaggregated by various criteria, are collected by the International relations departments of higher education institutions. Thus, in order to integrate the data concerning student and teaching staff mobility undertaken in the framework of various programmes available in the Republic of Moldova, the Institute for Public Policy performed a mobility mapping, requesting to higher education institutions which are active from the mobility perspective statistical data based on the following criteria: gender, year of study, specialisation.

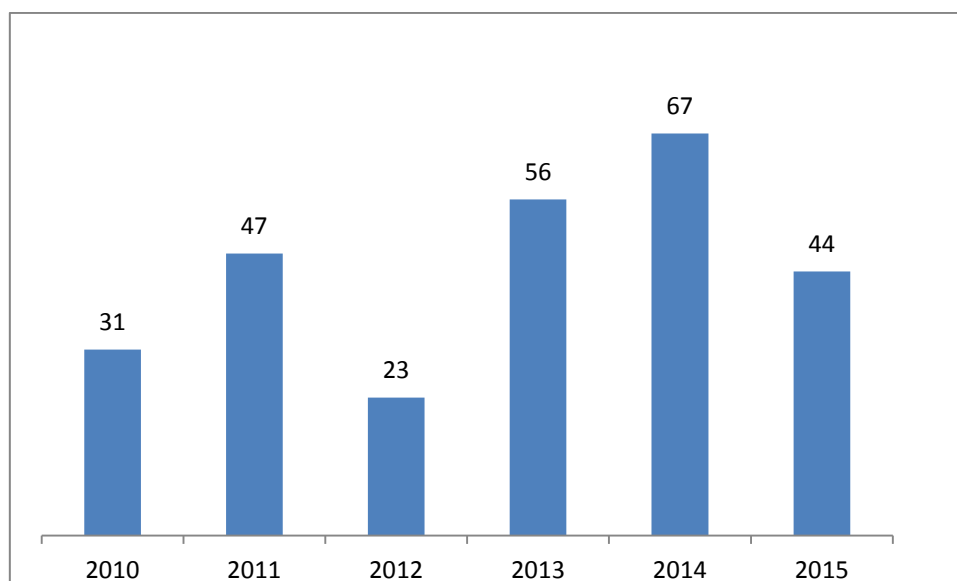
Thus, data have been collected from the following higher education institutions:

- State University of Moldova;
- Technical University of Moldova;
- "Alecu Russo" University of Bălţi;
- State Agrarian University;
- State University of Comrat;
- Academy of Music, Theatre and Fine Arts;
- Cooperative Trade University of Moldova;
- "Nicolae Testemiţeanu" State University of Medicine and Pharmacy;
- State University of Cahul, etc.

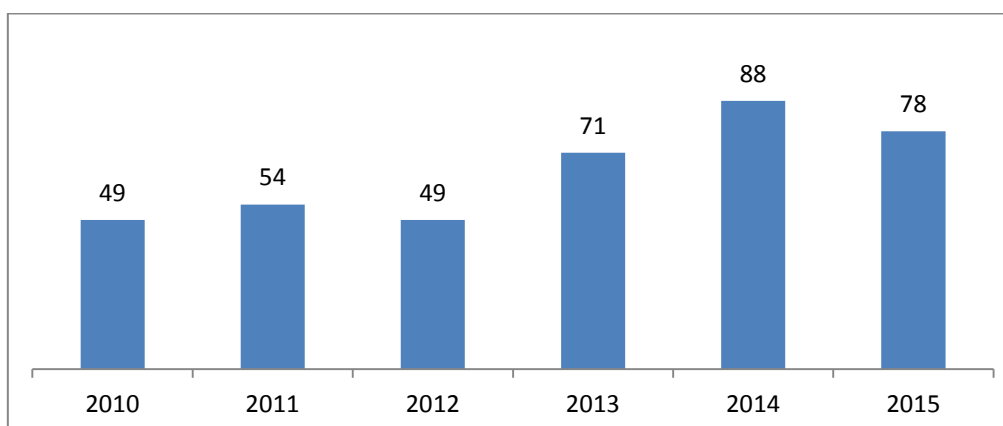
The collected data have been used to analyse the developments of the mobility process, to identify the social-demographic differences and to formulate recommendations for national policies intended to encourage the students and the teaching staff to participate in mobility programmes.

Throughout the period 2010-2015, 268 students (licentiate cycle) and 389 teachers from higher education institutions from Moldova took part in mobility programmes. Compared to the year 2010, the number of students who studied in other countries in the framework of the academic mobility doubled in 2014 (from 31 in 2010, to 67 in 2014).

**Chart 3. The number of students of the Republic of Moldova who studied abroad in the framework of the academic mobility**

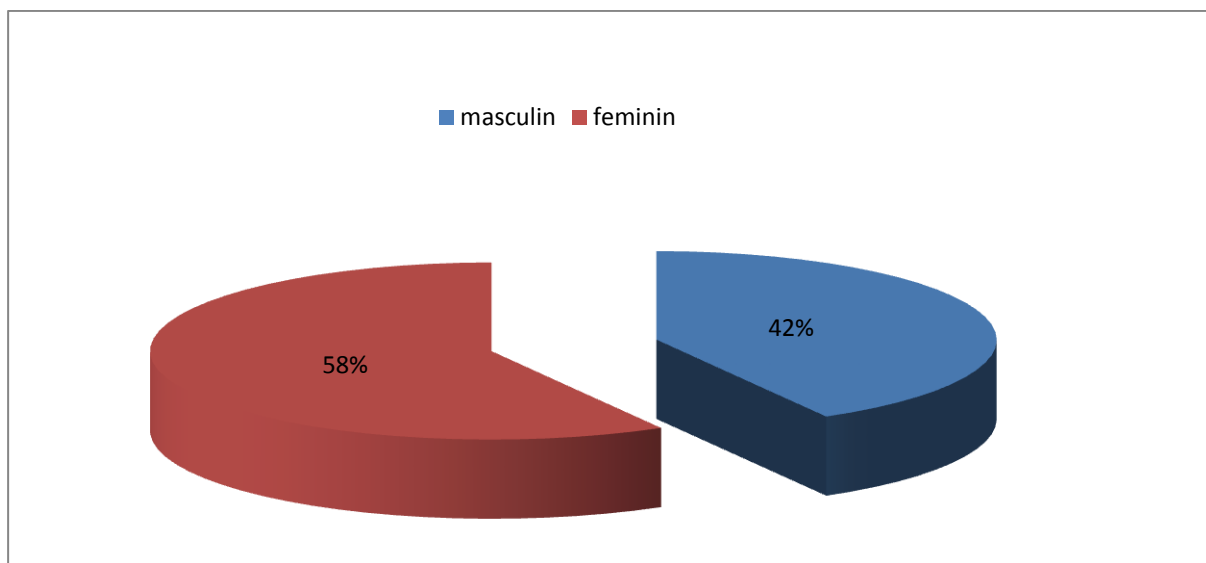


**Chart 4. The number of the teaching staff of the institutions from the Republic of Moldova who taught/had an internship abroad in the framework of the academic mobility**

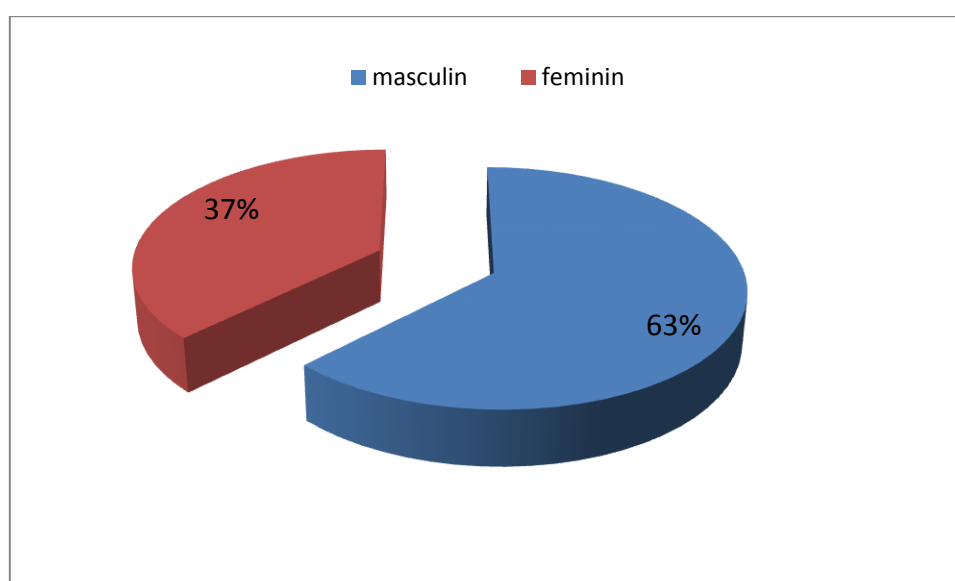


The collected data point out considerable differences from the gender perspective in the framework of credit mobility. Female students and male teachers are the most active in terms of mobility. Such a fact was confirmed by the participants in group-discussions/interviews who stated that, due to their higher academic performance, female students are more likely to be encouraged to participate in the process of academic mobility. As far as the teaching staff is concerned, the qualitative survey pointed out various obstacles faced by women, such as family responsibilities, the presence of children, the shortage of time available for development, etc. The gender differences persisted throughout the whole period of reference.

**Chart 5. The number of students in the institutions of the Republic of Moldova who studied abroad in the framework of the academic mobility, by gender**



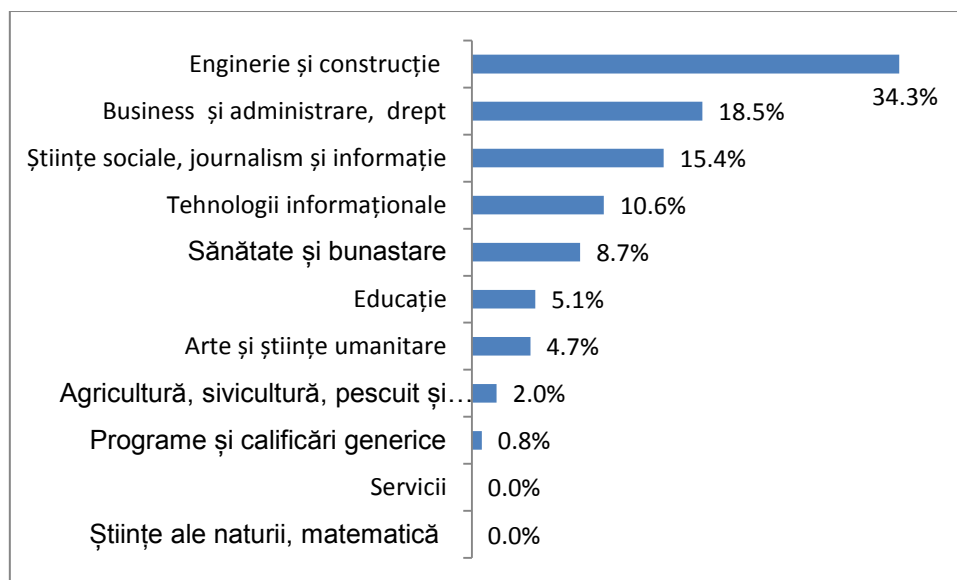
**Chart 6. The number of the teaching staff in the institutions of the Republic of Moldova who taught/had an internship abroad in the framework of the academic mobility, by gender**



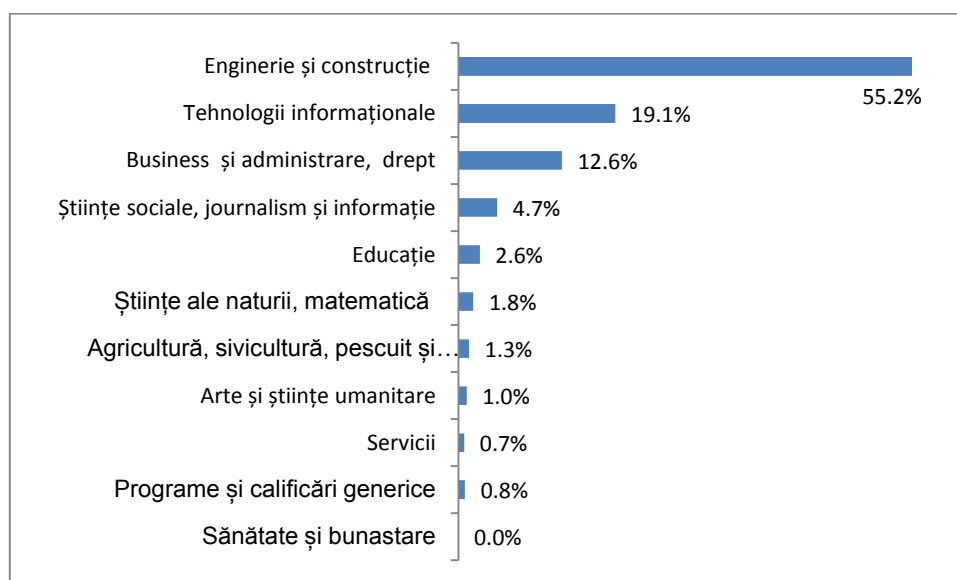
From the perspective of the educational field/specialisation, we found out that the students and the teaching staff in Engineering and construction (34.3% of students and 55.2% of teachers) are the most active in terms of mobility. They are followed by students in Business, administration and law (18.5% of students), Social sciences, journalism and information (15.4% of students), Information technologies (10.6% of students). The mobility is less intense in the field of Natural sciences and mathematics, Services and Generic programmes and skills.

As far as the teaching staff is concerned, most mobilities are reported in the field of Engineering and construction (55.2% of teachers), Information technologies (19.1% of teachers), Business and administration (12.6% of teachers). Less mobilities are reported in the field of Health and welfare, Services and Generic programmes and skills.

**Chart 7. The number of students in the institutions of the Republic of Moldova who studied abroad in the framework of the academic mobility, by educational field**



**Chart 8. The number of teachers in the institutions of the Republic of Moldova who taught/ had an internship abroad in the framework of the academic mobility, by educational field**

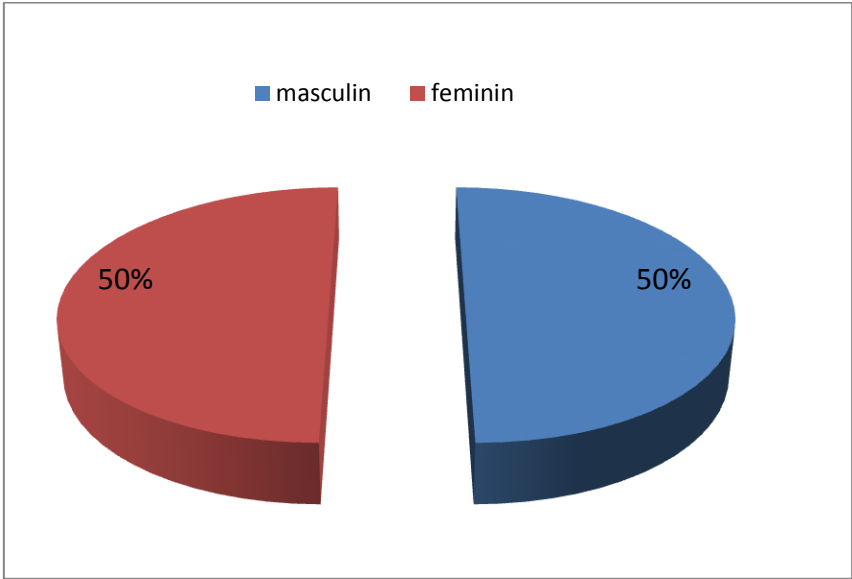


The number of foreign students who came to the Republic of Moldova is much less than the number of Moldovan students who went abroad, making up not more than 3.7% of the total number of mobilities.

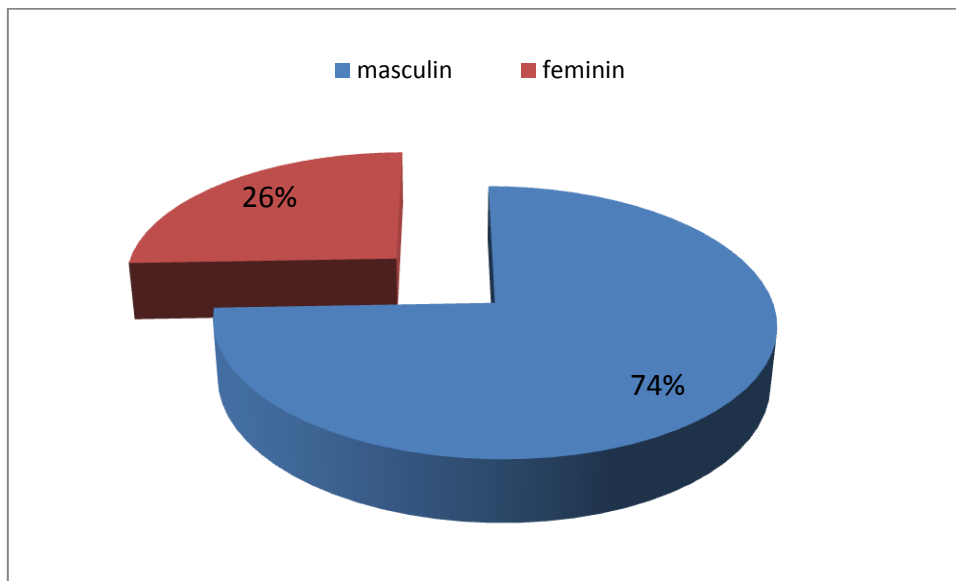
It should be noted that a new requirement concerning the share of foreign students who are expected to join the educational institutions of the Republic of Moldova was established in 2015, and this requirement will foster the enlargement of the process of internationalisation of the Moldovan higher education. Thus, per 100 Moldovan students who go abroad in the framework of the process of academic credit mobility, at least 10 foreign students should come to the Republic of Moldova. This requirement is established at the country level, therefore the educational institutions are not formally compelled to follow it. Consequently, throughout the period 2010-2015, not more than 10 students studied in higher education institutions of the Republic of Moldova in the framework of academic credit mobility. The number of the teaching staff who had an teaching internship in a higher education institution of the Republic of Moldova was larger, but it was not more than 43 persons.

From the gender perspective, similarly to the composition of the teaching staff from Moldova who took part in a mobility abroad, among the foreign people who come to the Republic of Moldova within an educational mobility, men - prevail in the category of teaching staff, but in the category of students, the study did not highlight gender differences.

**Chart 9. The number of students from other countries who studied in institutions of the Republic of Moldova in the framework of the academic mobility, by gender**

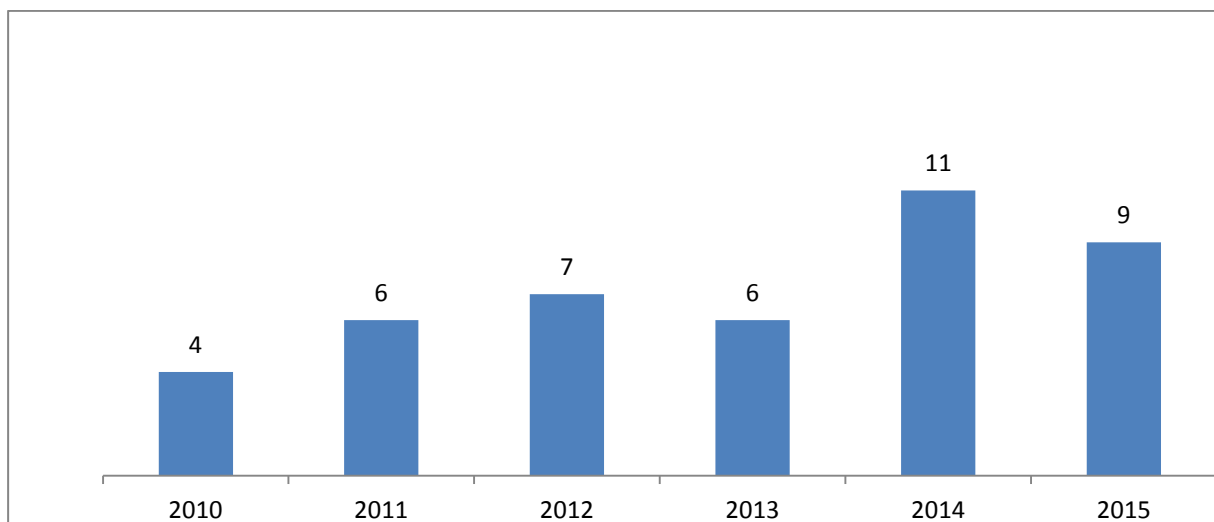


**Chart 10. The number of the teaching staff of institutions from abroad who taught/had an internship in institutions of the Republic of Moldova in the framework of the academic mobility, by gender**



The total number of the teaching staff of institutions from abroad who taught/had an internship in higher education institutions of the Republic of Moldova in the framework of mobility programmes is relatively small, but it is growing continuously. Thus, while not more than 4 foreign teachers took part in mobility programmes in 2010, their number doubled in 2015. From the perspective of their specialisation, the largest share of the teaching staff were from the field of Engineering and construction (29 teachers), Information technologies (4 teachers). Less mobilities were reported in the field of Services, Health and welfare etc.

**Chart 11. The number of the teaching staff of institutions from abroad who taught/had an internship in institutions of the Republic of Moldova in the framework of the academic mobility**



## Knowledge and Attitudes towards the Academic Credit Mobility

The data of the qualitative survey pointed out the multiple advantages of credit mobility both for the students and for the teaching staff, as well as for the managerial staff of the higher education institutions. Given the constant decrease of the number of students, the access to mobility programmes tend to become a means of enhancing the competitiveness of higher education institutions, and universities are more attractive for university and master students. The access to mobility programmes is one of the criteria for the selection of higher education institutions by students. Therefore, the policies aimed at institutional promotion and development should also have a credit mobility component.

The involvement of the teaching staff and of the students in academic mobility processes contributes to the betterment of education quality as a result of the improvement of modern teaching-learning methods, of the curricula and syllabi, which adjust to the European context. The influence is bidirectional (student - teacher, teacher - student), what means that, on the one hand, the teaching staff involved in the mobility process improve their teaching methods and styles, their interrelation with students, commit to the improvement of the curriculum, and, on the other hand, after completing the mobility programmes, students get new knowledge and practices and request a changes in the working methods applied by the university teaching staff who did participate in the mobility process. This process gradually generates significant changes in the system of higher education institutions, bringing it closer to the European standards for education quality.

The level of student and teaching staff information about the academic mobility opportunities is rather low. Most of the participants stated that they had learnt about the opportunity of participating in a mobility programme from their colleagues who had already taken part in such programmes. The mobility programmes are accessible for students and teachers since the year 2005, nevertheless, a large share of the respondents stated they had first learnt about mobility possibilities by the year 2010.

The present information tools are structured as a *social network*, therefore, the level of information is strictly dependent on the number of friends/colleagues who participated in mobility programmes. The survey revealed that the information mechanism is inefficient, as it disadvantages a large share of competitive students and teaching staff whose acquaintances or colleagues have not taken part in mobility programmes. The information about the mobility programmes is spreading slowly, encouraging mostly the participation of the persons who have already been involved in such programmes.

Since the year 2010, the National Erasmus Office and the international relations departments of higher education institutions have been developing an information and awareness-raising tool for students and for the teaching staff concerning the academic mobility opportunities. Although the ways for information are similar, the fields are different. The National Erasmus Office+ informs the students about all academic mobility opportunities, while the higher education institutions disseminate just information about the programmes implemented based on the inter-university-agreements concluded by them.

The information is conveyed at the general meetings of students and teaching staff, which are usually held once a year. In order to ensure the active student and teaching staff participation in information meetings, the representatives of international relations departments of universities displays informative announcement of the university's website, mobilise the dean's offices for gathering the students and the teaching staff at information meetings, display informative posters in university buildings, etc.

Despite the fact that multiple strategies for mobility promotion are used, the respondents still prefer to get informed from media sources and from their personal sources. Thus, we can distinguish two types of strategies applied by students and the teaching staff:

- *information*, getting informed from the institution's website.
- *awareness-raising*, getting information and knowledge about the personal experiences and practices from the colleagues/students involved in the mobility process.

The information displayed on university websites is accessible for the largest share of respondents, but it is not clear enough in terms of filling out the application file, the most important section, etc. A number of respondents face language obstacles while reading the information posted in other languages (English, German, Spanish, etc.). Despite the fact that the mobility programmes imply communication in one's native language, the application form needs to be filled out in English. According to the respondents, this fact sets some barriers for the persons who do not master well enough a foreign language.

The respondents consider that the information activities conducted by some departments in charge of international relations are not sufficient and does not encourage the students to apply for academic mobility programmes. A large share of students, mostly the ones in the first years of studies and students coming from the rural areas, are afraid of going to study abroad. Therefore, they need to be encouraged by the teaching staff, as well as by students who have already participated in mobility programmes, through individual discussions, examples of good practices, solid arguments in favour of mobility. The teaching staff stated that, in some situations, it is appropriate to insist and even to compel the students to apply for mobility programmes.

A number of students stated that the process of student information should be more attractive and needs to start since the first year of study. The information shall be conveyed by the means of various ways: on-line information by the means of the website of the International relations department, information by the means of the teaching staff, information disseminated by the participants in mobility processes.

From the student viewpoint, the most efficient way of information is by the means of senior students who participated in mobility processes. Students think that the information provided by them is the most explicit and encourages the active involvement of other students. Therefore, after being involved in a mobility, each student should be the mentor of another student who did not take part in such a process yet. Such a collaboration would help to solve easier the multiple problems that a student might face during the mobility process: preparing the application file, following strictly the application procedure, designing the plan of activities, etc.

The analysis of *the advantages of academic mobility* points out that all the respondents consider that education acquired in the framework of mobility programmes is useful and of high quality. Most teachers involved in the mobility process capitalised on the possibility to work in libraries and to access original sources of information. From such a perspective, the mobility helped them gather full information required for developing their research and doctoral thesis. Some of the participants in the mobility programmes succeeded to finish their dissertation in a relatively short period of time. The time spent abroad also helped the teachers to gain experience in working with students and master students, and of an opportunity to compare the cohorts of students from the Republic of Moldova to the ones from abroad.

The respondents listed multiple advantages of the mobility, such as: learning new teaching-learning methods focussed on student individual needs and preferences; changing the way how to approach the student, extending the ways for interrelation with students, improving the university curriculum, diversifying the ways how to present the educational subjects, etc.



The mobility determined a change in the teaching staff vision on how the European universities are working and the ways how they might serve as a model for higher education institutions from the home country. The promotion of the research at university level, as well as the high degree of student and teacher involvement in research impressed a large share of respondents.

The changes in the vision of students and teachers involved in mobilities had an impact of their work in the home institutions. After participating in mobility programmes, the teaching staff started to apply new teaching methods focussed more on interaction and less on exposition; the requirements towards the students were modified, shifting the focuss from reproducing the information its application in the accomplishment of the tasks which are characteristic to the future professional activities after graduation.

The financial aspect is another advantage and it encourages the participation in mobility processes. The significant value of the scholarships provided in the framework of academic exchange programmes is a major incentive both for students, and for the teaching staff. On the average, students have a scholarship of 800-1000 Euro per month, and the teaching staff – of 1500-2500 Euro per month. Consequently, the participation in the mobility process helps to solve some financial problems and contributes to the diminution of brain drain. This fact is particularly important under the present conditions in the Republic of Moldova, where the poverty and the low salaries of the teaching staff increase the risk for both student, and teaching staff emigration. In such a context, the mobility opportunities provided by universities are a factor for the reduction of the phenomenon of emigration among the professionals who hold a higher education diploma and for maintaining the interest of the teaching staff for working in higher education institutions of the country.

According to the students, the academic mobility helped them to acquire new learning methods focussed mostly on conversation and less on the reproduction. The largest share of students involved in the mobility process noted that they had been impressed by the way how lessons are organised, both the theoretical (lectures), and the practical ones (seminars). Students remarked that the teaching style is different from the one of the teaching staff from higher education institutions in their home country. Students also pointed out that the universities from abroad renounced long ago a number of practices which are still frequently used in the home universities (dictation, narration of subjects at seminars, etc.).

The teaching methods based on narration and the compulsoriness of note-taking (even during practical lessons) encourages the maintenance of a system of imposed learning. Within it, students present the notes taken during the lectures not because they wish to do it, but because they need at least three current marks during a semester for the calculation of the final score. Differently from the situation in the universities from abroad, where students learn willingly, do not have the obligation to answer during the seminars, do not need to accumulate current marks, to attend lessons, etc., the students from the home country still have to focuss on the simple narration of the subjects, Under such a situation, there is a very clear difference between students who wish to learn and the ones who do not. Therefore, the passive students are not forcibly encouraged to learn, but they are automatically excluded from the system.

The provision of educational institutions with high-performance multimedia equipment– projectors, computer data system, online libraries, etc., - is one of the factors which facilitate de teaching methods based on communication and discussions. In the respondents' opinion, the access to multimedia technologies provides multiples advantages: accessibility of information, approaching the casuistic aspects, getting a much larger amount of information, changing the climate and the student's comfort during the lesson, closeness between the teacher and the student, etc.

In such conditions, the students perceive the lessons as much more interesting and accessible from the information viewpoint. The information presented during the lessons is available on an online

platform accessible for all the students. Students have free access to all lessons (course materials) taught by the teachers and may get acquainted with the information before discussing it during the lectures/seminars. Such a fact provides to them more opportunities for analysis, interpretation and practical application of the theoretical information.

In conclusion, it is worth being noted that the experience gained by the students during the mobility programmes generated positive changes within the whole educational system, as students promote the new methods for interrelation with the teaching staff, the use of new ways for presenting the information during the practical lessons. In the students' opinion, the university education system from abroad is much more professional from the didactical viewpoint and much more accessible from the information viewpoint.

### **Obstacles and Difficulties in the Process of Mobility**

The management of the mobility process, the facilitation of the process of settling the multiple problems faced both by students, and by the teaching staff depend on the work and on the competence of International relations departments of higher education institutions. According to the regulatory-legal framework in force, these departments are in charge of:

- Signing inter-university agreements aimed at the development of mobility projects/programmes. Setting the specialisations for which mobility is possible, establishing the mobility periods, the year of study when the mobility is possible, etc.
- Student and teaching staff information about the mobility programmes for which they may apply in the framework of their institution. To such an end, information meetings are held yearly, information is posted on the institution's website and disseminated among the institution's subdivisions.
- Setting, if appropriate, the procedure for student selection which needs to be approved by the university senate.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the activities of students and of the teaching staff who participate in the mobility programmes developed in the framework of the institution.
- Providing counselling and support to students who apply for mobility programmes while making the application file, filling out the required documents, ensuring the compatibility of the subjects selected within the mobility programme for recognition of the academic credits, etc.

According to the experts, the weak participation of students and of the teaching staff in the mobility programmes is determined by the low level of involvement of International relations departments of the higher education institutions. The shortage of competency in the field of promoting mobility through the collaboration with different universities from the country and from abroad and through concluding inter-university agreements, the deficient management of the mobility programmes, the lack of foreign language and of computer skills, the shortage of free time because of an exaggerated teaching load, etc. are some of the factors leading to the low involvement of the representatives of the above-mentioned departments in promoting the credit mobility processes.

The signing of inter-institutional agreements is to a large extent facilitated by the teaching staff who actively participate in conferences, roundtables, international training courses and who set collaboration relations with teachers of institutions from abroad on their own initiative. The collaboration among teachers facilitates the cooperation and the establishment of partnerships

between the universities. Thus, the mobilities are strictly dependent on the activism of the teaching staff of the home country at the international level.

The representatives of International relations departments need professional training in the field of communication, networking and project management. Such a training would foster a better management of the mobility process, the implementation of dedicated methods for working with students and with the teaching staff in the process of preparing the mobility files, the expansion of the collaboration with the host university towards setting the conditions for credit mobility, the signing and implementation of inter-university agreements.

Another problem is related to the small number of foreign students involved in the academic mobility in the Republic of Moldova. A new provision included in 2015 in the regulatory-legal framework of the Republic of Moldova requires that at least 10 foreign students come to the Republic of Moldova within an academic mobility per 100 Moldovan students involved in the academic credit mobility process abroad. Given that the above-mentioned provision concerns the country as a whole and it does not apply to the level of higher education institutions, it does not encourage the universities of the Republic of Moldova to attract students from abroad.

Fostering the mobility of foreign students contributes to the development of the process of internationalisation of higher education institutions. Obviously, it also fosters the process of exchange of international practices which facilitate the harmonisation of the university curriculum with the European ones, the development of the skills to teach in a foreign language (usually in English), the provision of the laboratories with modern equipment.

Most of the participants in the survey stated that higher education institutions of Moldova do not have sufficient capacity to design and develop courses in English language. The survey also pointed out a number of causative factors: the lack of an institutional policy for promotion and financial encouragement of the teaching staff to teach courses in English, the poor English language skills, the shortage of experience and the fear of teaching in a foreign language. In the opinion of the interviewed teaching staff, developing a course in a foreign language requires a huge intellectual effort, because the bibliographical sources are different from those used to develop the course in Romanian. In the same time, the rules for remuneration are the same, regardless of the language of the course, therefore, the teaching staff do not have any incentives for teaching their courses in other languages. Certainly, such an approach demotivates the teaching staff from learning foreign languages, from designing courses which might be attended by students coming from other countries.

According to the experts, the university management should develop policies for promoting the competitiveness, encourage and promote the integration and the maintenance within the system of the competent and dedicated teaching staff. The university management should put a more pronounced stress on the institutional and human resources development. From such a perspective, both the teaching staff, and the students need information and capacity building courses in the field of project management. The universities should raise awareness of the available academic credit mobility opportunities.

The survey under consideration also revealed a relatively low level of collaboration among higher education institutions of the Republic of Moldova in the field of academic credit mobility. To extend such a collaboration, events focussed on exchanges of experience and of good practices should be conducted, and the activities aimed at awareness raising and promoting the academic mobility should be intensified. Last but not least, international experts able to facilitate the dissemination of good practices of universities from abroad should also be involved.

The problems faced abroad by students from the Republic of Moldova differ depending on the destination country and the length of their stay. The analysis of the statistical data shows that more than half of the Moldovan students who participated in a mobility programme preferred to go to a neighbouring country or to a country with former or present language and cultural connexions, such as Romania, Ukraine, Russia, etc.– less to the countries of the European Union. The main obstacle – the foreign languages – is mostly faced by the students coming from the rural areas and by the teaching staff aged above 40. It should also be noted that many people from these categories have started to intensely learn a language of international circulation, especially English.

Another problem comes from the shortage of skills in developing the documents required for the application files: motivation letters, recommendation letters, CVs, internship plans, etc. Most of the participants stated they had faced obstacles in the process of gathering the required documents, as well as problems related to the equivalency of credits in some subjects. Such difficulties are determined by the differences in university curricula and the shortage of competence in the analysis and selection of the subjects which may be equivalent to those taught in the home country.

With the enlargement of university autonomy, student autonomy should also be extended. From this viewpoint, the educational system needs to take into account to a larger extent the student needs and preferences. This implies the reform of all operational procedures and of the internal structure of educational institutions, redirecting them towards the expansion of student access to a genuine academic mobility and towards providing the required assistance for student participation in this process. But, according to many interviewed experts, a number of higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova still follow the old-fashioned Soviet format for interrelation with the students. Consequently, there is need for strengthening the institutional capacity through designing internal regulations intended to ensure the provision of efficient assistance services to students who wish to participate in the mobility programmes.

In general, because of the curriculum differences, the credits earned by the Moldovan students in the framework of the mobility programmes are hardly recognised by the home universities. In order to be promoted to the following year of study, many students involved in academic mobility programmes are compelled to pass arrears in the subjects taught during the period of their studies abroad. To avoid such problems, the higher education institutions which are already active in the field of academic mobility started to change and adjust their university curricula to the European standards, to promote the specialisations available in the universities which are the targets for future mobilities.

A large share of students and of the teaching staff who applied for mobility programmes expressed discontentment with the lack of a tool for reporting the selection criteria. A small number of respondents are aware of the selection criteria and of the score obtained by them during the competition. The lack of such an information reduces the capacity of the participants to identify their possible weaknesses and increases the probability of being rejected from future programmes.

Another problem faced by a large share of teaching staff comes from the way how the teaching load is planned and from the impossibility to teach courses during the period of their stay abroad. Despite the availability of internal regulations for planning the teaching load of the employees of higher education institutions, a teacher who wishes to take part in a mobility programme is not allowed in fact the reduction of the respective load. Consequently, many teachers have either to find a substitute on their own account, or to teach their courses in the periods before and after the mobility.

Moreover, despite the fact that teachers fulfil their teaching load and teach the full courses they are in charge of, they are not paid for the periods when they are in a mobility process. Therefore, many teachers are discontent, and some of them stated they feel exploited. Given that the law does not

allow the payment of salaries to teachers during the periods of their stay abroad, the academic mobilities should be treated as lifelong learning activities, and the teaching staff detachment abroad should be specified expressly.

Some higher education institutions apply various internal strategies to avoid non-payment of teacher salaries during their stay abroad. For example, teachers of the State University of Moldova who fulfil their teaching load are paid their salaries, even if they took part in a mobility abroad. They are employed for a smaller number of months, but they are paid based on a higher coefficient, so that their remuneration is finally equivalent to the number of hours taught by them. In case of short-term mobilities, some teachers ask for the permission to teach their courses in an intensive way and to be paid based on the teaching load.

According to the teachers, non-payment of salaries for the period of their stay abroad is an injustice which reflects the employer's institutional policy and attitude. Another problem identified by the teaching staff consists in the incompetence and the passivity of trade union structures which do not promote and do not support the academic mobility.

As far as the length of the academic mobility periods is concerned, teachers prefer to involve in short-term programmes. The main reasons for such an option are: the need to take care of the family, the concern about keeping the job, health problems, etc. From the mobility perspective, the obligation to take care of the family, particularly when it consists of small children, is a constraint faced by a large number of teachers. As a consequence, because of the still persisting stereotypes, male teachers, teachers who are parents of older children and single teachers, etc. are more active in terms of mobility.

The difficulties faced by the students in the mobility process are mostly related to credit recognition, the adaptation to the new place of study, the inflexibility of the learning schedule, the non-recognition of the computer-assisted learning systems, the particularities of interrelation and academic learning methods, the language of communication, etc. Another difficulty consists in the procedure for selection of the courses provided by the host universities, so that the requested number of credits is reached (30 credits/semester). Therefore, to have the courses studied in the host university recognised as equivalent by the home university, many students need to earn more credits in the host university. The inflexibility of the learning schedule is another problem, as, in the opinion of students of the Republic of Moldova, it is much more loaded and more exhausting.

## Findings and Recommendations

**Finding 1.** The process of academic credit mobility is being promoted since the year 2005, after the Republic of Moldova joined the Bologna Process. National policies for regulation and promotion of the academic mobility in higher education of the Republic of Moldova are being developed since 2014, when the *Framework-Regulations for Academic Mobility in Higher Education* were approved. In the same time, the regulatory-legal framework regulates just the mobility procedures, not the procedures for monitoring and evaluation of the de facto situation in the field under consideration, therefore, the higher education institutions are not encouraged to diversify and extend the access to mobility programmes.

**Recommendation.** Develop a national strategy for promoting the student and teaching staff academic mobility, an action plan with explicit targets, particularly in terms of extending the mobility and ensuring the access to mobility programmes.

**Finding 2.** The lack of relevant and complete statistical data about the developments of the process of academic credit mobility was revealed. At present, there are no analytical reports and integrated statistical data concerning the evolution of the mobility process, the difficulties in terms of student participation and the obstacles faced by the teaching staff in the process of academic mobility. There are no national statistics yet identifying the less active categories which are not involved in the mobility processes, the size of such categories disaggregated by gender, year of study, educational field, specialisation, etc.

*Recommendation.* Conduct complex investigations intended to identify the main problems faced by the various social categories involved or uninvolved in the process of academic mobility and to set the measures that would increase the participation of all categories of students and of the teaching staff in academic mobility programmes. In addition to the above-mentioned, it is also recommended to conduct periodical surveys of the developments of student and teaching staff attitude towards the academic mobility, to identify and anticipate the possible obstacles to the expansion of academic credit mobility.

**Finding 3.** The educational institutions develop and approve their own regulations for the organisation of academic mobility. They set up specific internal structures to support the academic mobility – *International relations Departments*. Nevertheless, despite the existence of an institutional framework and the undertaken activities, the level of student and teaching staff information about the available academic credit mobility programmes is still relatively low.

*Recommendation.* Diversify and expand the activities intended for the staff of International relations Departments of higher education institutions: organise information and professional training seminars in the field of communication, networking, project management, etc. Such activities would foster a better management of the mobility processes, the implementation of more efficient models for working with students and with the teaching staff while preparing the mobility files, the expansion of the collaboration with the host institutions towards setting the conditions for credit mobility, the signing and implementation of inter-university agreements.

**Finding 4.** A number of universities of the Republic of Moldova apply specific strategies to promote the academic mobility: curriculum adjustment, designing new courses, diversifying the information sources, etc. In the same time, the survey revealed a poor collaboration among the Moldovan higher education institutions, what impedes the dissemination of good practices.

*Recommendation.* Organise events for exchange of experience and good practices of higher education institutions which are active in terms of academic mobility. Involve international experts in the facilitation of the dissemination of good practices of foreign universities having traditions in the field of academic credit mobility.

**Finding 5.** The academic credit mobility facilitates the establishment of interpersonal cooperation relations, what enhances the access to information about the ways how to apply for mobility programmes. Increasing the degree of information about mobility and raising awareness of its importance by all the relevant stakeholders foster the expansion of the categories of applicants and the growth of the number of beneficiaries of mobility programmes.

**Finding 6.** Teachers who take an active part in conferences, roundtables, international training courses, etc., develop on their own initiative collaboration relations with teachers of the host universities from abroad and contribute significantly to the signing of inter-institutional agreements. As a whole, the size of the process of academic mobility depends to a large extent on the activism of the teaching staff detached to the host institutions from other countries.

*Recommendation.* Develop institutional policies for human resources development intended to encourage the participation of the teaching and managerial staff in mobility programmes.

**Finding 7.** The main beneficial effects of the mobility consist in raising the quality of education through the improvement of teaching-learning-evaluation methods, curriculum modernisation, harmonisation of educational programmes with the European ones, updating the subjects taught in universities. As a whole, the academic credit mobility sets the prerequisites for the accession of university education of the Republic of Moldova to the European Higher Education Area.

**Finding 8:** The level of student and teaching staff awareness of academic credit mobility opportunities is still relatively low. In general, the present information tools are mainly based on the informal social networks, less on the existing institutional structures. Therefore, the level of student and teacher information about the mobility opportunities depends more on the number of friends and colleagues who have participated in such programmes, than on the actions undertaken by the formal institutional structures. The information about the mobility programmes is mostly disseminated by the means of "man to man" channels, what leads to the establishment of closed communities. The members of such communities enrol repeatedly in mobility programmes, reducing in consequence the chances of the uninformed to participate in them.

*Recommendation.* Diversification, by the International relations Departments, of the ways for the information of the target-groups, for encouraging the students and the teachers who participated in academic mobilities to provide support to candidates who lack such an experience.

**Finding 9.** Most higher education institutions lack the capacity to develop and teach specialisation courses in languages of international circulation. The survey revealed a number of causative factors: the lack of an institutional policy for promotion and financial encouragement of the teaching staff who hold courses in foreign languages; both the teaching staff, and the students master insufficiently the foreign languages; the lack of experience; the fear of teaching in a foreign language, etc.

*Recommendation.* Develop institutional policies for promoting meritocracy and competitiveness, for attracting the competent and dedicated teachers.

**Finding 10.** Promoting the mobility of foreign students fosters the process of internationalisation of higher education institutions. Exchanges of international practices are undertaken, what leads to the alignment of the programmes provided by the Moldovan universities to those of the European universities, to building the capacity to teach in a foreign language, to the provision of the laboratories with modern equipment. In the same time, the process of internationalisation of the educational programmes is sometimes slowed down by the groundless invocation of the "specificity" of the Moldovan higher education system, by exaggerating the particularities of the local labour market, by the inappropriate attempts to reduce the mobility by the means of such arguments, as "the State teaches them, therefore they should stay in the country".

**Recommendation.** Adjust the educational programmes provided by higher education institutions of the Republic of Moldova to the requirements of international labour market. Diversify the initial vocational training programmes, increase the number of courses taught in a language of international circulation. Open in the Moldovan universities the specialisations which are available in the foreign universities with which academic credit mobility agreements are going to be signed. Mobilise the public opinion towards an open higher education, committed to the European values.

**Finding 11.** The lack of tools for dissemination of the selection criteria and for reporting the results of the competitions for the selection of participants in the mobility programmes diminishes the applicants' capacity to identify their possible weaknesses and increases the probability of being rejected from the future programmes.

*Recommendation.* Ensure the transparency of the process of selection of teachers and students who apply for the mobility programmes. Publish analyses of the processes of application and applicant selection.

**Finding 12.** In general, the teaching staff give preference to short-term mobility programmes. Such a preference is determined by: the need to take care of the family, the concern about keeping the job, the health problems, etc. Consequently, the male teachers, the ones who have older children and the single ones are the most active in terms of mobility. Speaking a language of international circulation, particularly English, is a decisive factor for making a decision about the participation in academic mobility processes.

**Recommendation.** Develop institutional policies aimed at increasing the access of the teaching staff who face difficulties in the process of mobility: grants for teachers who have a family, maintaining the job and the courses taught, intensive modern languages courses.



### Introduction

Education programs of credit mobility and academic exchange programs within Bologna process have been launched in Armenia since 2005. The Bologna system bolstered series of reforms in the education system, but most importantly it set a ground for credit mobility programs between Armenia and different countries throughout Europe. However, the results of those programs have not been summed up in any evaluation or monitoring report. The growing interests by different stakeholders to be involved in similar programs makes the need to assess the past experiences more urgent to make the future programs more efficient.

Current policy paper is referring to the topic of credit mobility in Armenia focusing on the issues and challenges that students, teachers and academic staff of the Higher Education Institutions are generally facing during the process of application and implementation of the study exchange programs abroad. In addition to that, there are policy recommendations included based on the outcomes of the research. The project is aimed at reflecting on a country profile of education in the context of credit mobility.

The research was based on both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. It included 2 focus groups bringing together students involved in credit mobility, representatives of different NGOs, young professionals and experts in the field; and also 17 in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders in the field of education (10 lecturers from six universities, 2 students, 2 administrative university staff, 3 representatives from the Ministry of Education).

Besides, the available statistical data sources and other materials were used to get to know the past experiences and see the current trends. The archives of the Universities in Armenia, official web pages of Ministry of Education, statistical data from National Erasmus + office in Armenia and other official internet sources of statistic services and education mobility organizations in Armenia were used to refine the research. Beyond desk research, current evidence has been revealed through content analysis of series of semi-structured interviews and non-formal meetings.

The 2 focus groups were aimed at exploring and revealing opportunities and challenges that students personally experience with credit mobility projects while studying abroad. Focus groups targeted both Armenian and International students involved in credit mobility programs. Both focus groups involved experts from the respective field.

### National context on credit mobility

Higher education in Armenia is currently facing the pressure of reforms as well as opportunities for development. Since the Bologna system was launched the main focus of the Government of Armenia, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Higher Education Institutions are introduction of a two-cycle degree system, a credit transfer and accumulation system and a Diploma Supplement system; strengthening of Doctoral Programs as a bridge between higher education and

research area; and creation of a recognition body and national quality assurance agency. Those are attached tools indirectly supporting mobility.

As for specifically credit mobility opportunities, they are mainly coordinated by Higher Education Institutes within the legislation of the programs. The Article 21 of Law of the Republic of Armenia on Higher and Postgraduate Education states that credit mobility is a continuation of respective stakeholders' studies or professional development in other education institution in order to enhance academic mobility study, research or improving qualification. Based on the purpose or period of the program it can be implemented in a certain period of time (referred to as mobility) or be a major one (transfer).

With the implementation of the ECTS system in all universities of Armenia the transfers and mobility programs became easier and more accessible for interested stakeholders. It was also a first step towards harmonizing the curricula with the European Universities, which set a ground for both incoming and outgoing students to have their education results assessed and transferred from one education institution to another.

The credit mobility programs at first were implemented in the frameworks of TACIS and TEMPUS programs. Currently, the Erasmus+ program is the main one in the field. There are also series of interuniversity agreements on mobility programs and other interstate agreements.

Before the Erasmus+ program Armenia was included in another external cooperation window within Erasmus Mundus program. So since 2007 already some Universities in our country had exchange opportunities, although in a very limited scale. This external cooperation window was there till 2012. After that started the mobility program called Erasmus Mundus Action 2. Currently, the latter has been finalized as well.

The exchange of students or University staff members was mainly based on bilateral agreements between Universities and respective stakeholders. In past, Universities in Europe would come to an agreement with Universities in Armenia in consortium format to work together to host, send out student and other administrative or academic staff members.

Current program's 1st round of applications have started in 2014 and Eastern Partnership countries did not participate, as it had lots of unclarified points concerning of participation on non EU partners. But this year lot of Universities signed bilateral agreements with European Universities, so we expect more programs being implemented for the next round.

As for the past results, the Ministry of Education mainly encouraged direct cooperation between universities. According to the statistics, every year approximately 10% of university professors and students are involved in the mobility projects. The Ministry is collaborating with 30 countries around the world through interstate agreements, contracts, memorandum of understanding within the framework of various projects.

For example, bilateral agreement between the Government of the Republic of Armenia and the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria 2007-2009 signed in 2006 states that the Bulgarian universities each year gives two 2 scholarship based seats. Another contract between the Government of Romania and the Government of the Republic of Armenia on cooperation in the fields of education and science in 2006-2010 was signed providing 8 places in bachelors and masters and a postgraduate scholarship for Armenian students. The Czech Republic Scholarships are granted each year by the board of the university or post-graduate scholarship to 1-2 students. Lastly, the Council of the Slovak Republic scholarship is granted each year to 1-2 undergraduate or post-graduate students.

Yerevan State University and Armenian State University of Economics are mainly actively involved in credit and academic mobility exchange programs. In Yerevan State University they had implemented 18 TEMPUS programs and 12 programs in the frameworks of Erasmus Mundus, most specifically EMBER, ALRAKIS, BACKIS, ELECTRA, WEBB and IANUS.

In Armenian State University of Economics the only credit mobility program is Erasmus + and the programs based on Interuniversity cooperation. For University teachers the main program was GUDP, which is not being financed during the last 3 years. The students mainly apply for DAAD and 7-8 students attended for summer University of DAAD. In 2015 the University had 7 projects financed within Erasmus+ project. Within the frameworks of this those projects the University expects to have outgoing 11 students this year and 2 incoming students.

During the last years students from Greece, 2 Polish Universities, 2 Romanian and 1 Estonian Universities were hosted in Armenian State Economic University. Outgoing administrative staff were 2 people, outgoing teaching staff 8 people, and incoming teaching staff 4 people. Additionally 1 person from Fulbright program was sent abroad.

The biggest host of Erasmus Mundus exchange programs in the regions is Vanadzor State Pedagogical University. This shows the geographical limits of the credit mobility opportunities for Armenian students and the big difference in the opportunities between the capital and the regions.

There are lot of other exchange and mobility programs that teachers and the students apply for personally. The main universities supporting the students from Armenia with a fully funded scholarships are College of Europe, Central European University, Tartu University, University College London, etc. These are universities which have specific scholarships for the students from Armenia each academic year.

In sum it is apparent that Armenia takes steps to promote the credit mobility programs both for incoming and outgoing students. At least the legal provisions are there to set grounds for more opportunities for the respective stakeholders.

### Credit mobility obstacles, gaps and challenges

In Armenia, the statistical data related to credit mobility were collected within the University of Yerevan, what allows to identify some general trends. The table below shows the major trends, developments and characteristics of student and teaching staff credit mobility in Armenia.

**Table 1. Outgoing students/teachers (Including mobility programs and bilateral cooperation agreements between Yerevan State University and Higher Education Institutions)**

Indicators	2009-2010	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
<b>Scientific educational exchanges - students</b>	144	163	184	152
<b>Scientific educational exchanges by specializations-students</b>				
<i>Math and technology</i>	12	2	8	6
<i>Informatics and Applied Mathematics</i>	12	13	11	15

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>2009-2010</b>	<b>2011-2012</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>
<i>Physics</i>	9	5	6	3
<i>Radiophysics</i>	0	3	4	1
<i>Chemistry</i>	6	3	4	3
<i>Biology</i>	4	3	5	3
<i>Psychology and philosophy</i>	3	6	8	2
<i>Sociology</i>	11	9	2	1
<i>Geology and geogrphy</i>	5	6	11	18
<i>Economics</i>	7	7	10	9
<i>Jurisprudence</i>	1	14	2	7
<i>Journalizm</i>	0	3	2	8
<i>History</i>	2	16	8	6
<i>Armenian Philology</i>	2	1	1	0
<i>Russian Philology</i>	1	7	7	0
<i>Theology</i>	0	0	0	1
<i>International relations</i>	12	31	37	36
<i>Romance and Germanic Philology</i>	13	8	20	30
<i>Oriental studies</i>	30	8	16	3
<b>Scientific educational exchanges by country destination-students</b>				
<i>EU countries</i>	55	72	87	63
<i>US</i>	11	3	15	10
<i>Member of CIS</i>	40	76	69	71
<i>other</i>	38	12	13	8
<b>Scientific educational exchanges by specializations teachers/academic staff</b>				
<i>Math and technology</i>	5	17	8	4
<i>Informatics and Applied Mathematics</i>	6	6	8	4
<i>Physics</i>	29	38	44	4
<i>Radiophysics</i>	7	6	10	41
<i>Chemistry</i>	11	16	17	13
<i>Biology</i>	31	33	36	9
<i>Psychology and philosophy</i>	16	19	11	30
<i>Sociology</i>	14	30	20	7
<i>Geology and geogrphy</i>	3	18	13	6
<i>Economics</i>	10	4	2	8

Indicators	2009-2010	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
<i>Jurisprudence</i>	15	20	12	4
<i>Journalizm</i>	2	4	5	3
<i>History</i>	17	22	20	18
<i>Armenian Philology</i>	2	4	6	2
<i>Russian Philology</i>	5	5	3	6
<i>Theology</i>	3	9	5	7
<i>International relations</i>	7	6	18	14
<i>Romance and Germanic Philology</i>	7	16	18	14
<i>Oriental studies</i>	18	20	13	11
<b>Scientific educational exchanges by country destination- teachers /academic staff</b>				
<i>EU countries</i>	135	164	159	102
<i>US</i>	25	17	14	17
<i>Member of CIS</i>	75	103	137	73
<i>other</i>	29	41	19	14

The total number of students and of the teaching staff from the institutions of other countries who have studied or have taught / have had an internship in institutions from Armenia in the framework of academic mobility was constant during the period 2009-2014 and it is much higher than the number the Armenian students and teachers involved in mobility programmes abroad. The trends of credit mobility from Armenia to other countries of the world are shown in the table below.

**Table 2. Incoming students/teachers and academic staff (Including mobility programs and bilateral cooperation agreements between Yerevan State University and Higher Education Institutions)**

Indicators	2009-2010	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
<b>Scientific educational exchanges - students</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>376</b>
<b>Scientific educational exchanges by specializations-students</b>				
<i>Informatics and Applied Mathematics</i>	18	11	13	14
<i>Physics</i>	4	4	5	5
<i>Math and technology</i>	5	1	1	1
<i>chemistry</i>	15	15	16	18
<i>Biology</i>	8	5	7	7
<i>History</i>	13	6	12	20
<i>Economics</i>	57	40	41	35

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>2009-2010</b>	<b>2011-2012</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>
<i>Psychology and philosophy</i>	10	9	6	10
<i>Armenian Philology</i>	42	29	18	18
<i>Journalizm</i>	11	12	14	15
<i>Russian Philology</i>	9	6	5	17
<i>Oriental studies</i>	18	8	9	14
<i>Romance and Germanic Philology</i>	15	16	24	22
<i>Jurisprudence</i>	45	38	50	52
<i>International relations</i>	64	73	68	73
<i>Geology and geogrophy</i>	9	11	16	18
<i>Sociology</i>	9	3	1	2
<i>Foreign Students preparation department/International education center</i>	28	29	56	34
<i>Radiophysics</i>	3	0	0	1
<b>Number of students by academic year of study</b>				
<i>1st</i>	83	95	123	114
<i>2nd</i>	68	53	65	64
<i>3rd</i>	86	41	53	57
<i>4th</i>	89	59	41	52
<i>5th</i>	5	6	0	0
<b>Master</b>				
<i>1st</i>	21	47	18	37
<i>2nd</i>	31	15	62	52
<b>Scientific educational exchanges by country destination-students</b>				
<i>CIS</i>	308	268	290	288
<i>other</i>	75	48	72	88

Despite the fact that there is a positive trend in the numbers of the students and university staff members in applying for mobility programs, there are still series of issues hindering the process.

The first and most important issue is the lack of awareness among the respective stakeholders on the program. Generally, all the information about credit mobility opportunities is disseminated mainly by International departments through official web page and social network pages of the Universities. Besides, other sources as Erasmus+ website and other scientific informative websites ([www.armacad.info](http://www.armacad.info), [www.armscoop.com](http://www.armscoop.com) ) share this information in their networks. However, the information does not reach the stakeholders, and even if it reaches some part of them, it still stays in the capital with very small amount of exceptions.

Another big issue is the incompatibility of the curriculums. This is a significant issue as sometimes the students cannot have a credit mobility opportunity just because of it. Despite the big achievements in the field with the launching of the Bologna system there are still many gaps there. For example some of the most important courses for any academic program as research methodology, is not even a part of the studies in Armenian universities.

Other issues are more technical and regulatory. One of similar problems is the regulation that the first and the last year students can't apply for mobility projects and also credit difference of returned students should be not more than 20 ECTS. Additionally, there is another Armenia specific issue that even if the guys are accepted to any program if they are in the army age (18-27) and have not joined the army yet, their cases should be discussed on governmental level to give them a chance to leave for studies abroad.

If we look at the mobility of the university staff members the main issues they face are the age and the language barrier. Most of the lecturers still have Soviet education and they mainly do not speak any foreign languages.

Another major challenge for the students applying for the mobility programs is the bureaucracy in the universities and the corruption. It hinders the dissemination of information on the available programs keeping it among the members of Student Unions, or sets obstacles for the students who have already been selected for participation in any credit mobility program.

The complicated visa procedures for Armenian citizens is an additional barrier for the students and academic staff members who want to have a credit mobility program. However, it is worth mentioning that this issue was tackled during the recent years with the visa facilitation process between the EU and Armenia.

As for the incoming students the problems are similar. The language barrier and the incompatibility of the curriculums are the major ones. Some Universities in Armenia do not even have any English language courses.

In sum, despite all the gaps and obstacles, they all can be addressed with strong motivation of respective stakeholders involved in the process. Besides, we already see positive trends in many fields of credit mobility.

## **Conclusion and recommendation**

Armenia has taken serious steps towards promoting credit mobility opportunities. The Government has changed the laws and regulations and launched the Bologna system reforms to ensure the compatible university standards between the Armenian and other European Universities.

The process is still going on and naturally it still has many gaps. Those gaps include the lack of information, language barrier, different Armenia specific laws and regulations, incompatibility of the curriculums, etc.. Despite the latters, there are many achievements in the field and the trend is generally positive.

Based on the mentioned obstacles during research project in Armenia the following steps should be taken:

- Raise the awareness of all the eligible parties on the credit mobility opportunities.
- Reform the curriculum of Armenian educational systems to the European standards.

- Make a system of sharing experiences of the people involved in the mobility programs.
- Assist the students, academic and administrative staff members in the application process.
- Find ways and means to equip the people interested in the mobility programs with skills and knowledge necessary to apply for this programs.
- Enhance the capacity of the universities to be involved in more credit mobility programs.



### The Regulatory-Legal Framework in the Field of Credit Mobility

Although the academic degree mobility is a common phenomenon among Ukrainian students<sup>2</sup>, credit mobility has only recently received the necessary conditions for development. The legislation that was in force till the year 2014-2015 had created many obstacles to the full realization of credit mobility. State standards of higher education had regulated the content of university programs too much, determining the list of required subjects and their thematic content. In such conditions students were forced to take sabbatical leave to participate in a credit mobility. After returning the credits they earned abroad were rarely recognized. The regulatory norms of public funding had stand in the way of the credit mobility between Ukrainian universities. They complicated the transfer from one Ukrainian university to another for the time of participation in the credit mobility.

With the new Act on Higher Education (September 2014) and the subsequent changes in the legal framework Ukrainian universities, students and teachers had received more opportunities to implement credit mobility. Firstly, the higher education standards had not determined the list of mandatory subjects in universities' programs anymore. New standards may regulate only certain learning outcomes giving universities rather broad autonomy to form academic content of the program in order to achieve these results. Secondly, the European credit transfer system with its basic concepts were assigned at the legislative level in the new Act. The very concepts of degree and credit mobility were introduced at the legislation level as well. Thirdly, the students were given a guaranteed choice of subjects for not less than 25% of the total ECTS credits of their educational program. Then, the ECTS credit weight was set at 30 hours instead of 36 hours, which had brought the figure of one Ukrainian ECTS credit closer to the mean number of hours in one ECTS credit in the European Higher Education Area. Additionally, the law stipulates that the recognition of passed courses is based on learning outcomes that student achieved while participating in credit mobility and those results predicted by university for student's constant educational program.

At the same time, Ukrainian higher education has gone through a wave of forced internal credit mobility in 2014-2015 when several thousands of students were transferred from the temporarily occupied territories in the Eastern Ukraine, the Crimea and Sevastopol to Ukrainian universities in the areas controlled by the Ukrainian government with the full recognition of previous learning outcomes. For such students all legislative obstacles of public funding transfer were removed to ensure operational adjustment mechanism. Thus, the occupation of Ukrainian territory removed the legal barriers for financial maintenance of internal credit mobility.

At this point the only legally unregulated issue is the ban for public funding of studies in the Ukrainian universities of the incoming credit mobility foreign participants. The only option is to support the credit mobility with the universities' own funds. Such circumstances limit the admission of foreign students to the Ukrainian universities under the credit mobility programs. In practice, the foreigners are studying in Ukrainian universities mostly under the credit mobility funded by foreign grants.

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<sup>2</sup> There were 47 724 Ukrainian citizens (more than 2% of all students in Ukraine) who studied in foreign universities in 2013/2014 academic year according to CEDOS think tank.

## Data on Credit Mobility

Until recently in Ukraine there was no comprehensive collection of statistical data on credit mobility of all 400 higher education institutions and their branches. The Ministry of education and science of Ukraine has launched the first such collection in December 2015. The results will appear no earlier than February-March 2016.

Available now is the information about the number of foreign exchange programs participants studying in Ukrainian universities in the framework of bilateral agreements. Although these programs are not a full view of credit mobility. They mainly study *Engineering, manufacturing and construction field of training according to ISCED-2011*. Half of them came from post-soviet countries and study in the Russian language. Another half came from Asia and Africa and study in English.

**Table 3. Total number of foreign students, who participated in academic mobility programme and studied in Ukraine within Bilateral agreements between the universities in 2014-2015 academic year**

Year of study	BA-I	BA-II	BA-III	MA-I	MA-II
Number	117	151	16	6	4

In addition, Erasmus+ office conducts its own statistics, according to which 107 foreign students have studied in Ukraine (members of credit mobility programs in 2015). Also, 166 foreign faculty members participated in the credit mobility to Ukrainian universities.

About 2000 Ukrainians received scholarships for study, training and teaching in Europe from 2004 to 2014 under the European Union program Erasmus Mundus, according to Erasmus+ office in Ukraine. Thus, Ukrainian students and teachers are increasingly participating in the Erasmus+ (Erasmus Mundus).

**Table 4. Total number of students and faculty members from Ukraine, who participated in Erasmus programs**

	Students	Faculty members
2010 (Erasmus Mundus)	117	39
2015 (Erasmus+)	896	492

However, this is not the complete data on Ukrainian participation in credit mobility programs. Given the fact that as of 2014 the [list](#) of possible mobility programs to the EU counts several dozens, it can be assumed that the number of Ukrainian students, teachers and university staff involved in the credit mobility is much higher.

## Knowledge and Attitudes towards the Academic Credit Mobility<sup>3</sup>

Teachers who are not involved in the work of the international offices in the universities have a fragmentary notion about credit mobility. Mostly they know about the existence of such programs, but they don't know exactly how they work. The situation is better at the National University of "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy" (NaUKMA) and Sumy State University. Teachers there either have their own experience of participation in international programs, or they help their students a lot. They know about some particular study programs or grants, and they have enough information on how to participate in them.

International offices, partnership organizations, Facebook, meetings with international programs' participants are the main sources of information, as to teachers. Most of them think that it is important for students to find such information themselves, but still there are those who think that university has to be fully responsible for informing students about the opportunities.

Communication with the international office is not set everywhere. Some teachers complain about students being not informed and lacking the experience of mobility.

By contrast, the international office at Sumy State University proves its best. Respondents note that they try to engage in mobility programs not only students and postgraduates, but teachers and administrative staff as well. They have set a mechanism of sharing information, which involves a special service at the student council, social media pages, mailing, head office, presentations, events, advertisements and web-site. On top of that, international office of Sumy State University tries to prepare students for the participation in international programs: they make shortlists of students for the programs, they help with the package and analysis of documents, make necessary translations, consult on money management and provide opportunities for TOEFL testing. The communication doesn't stop while the student is abroad and one can get help in solving some current issues.

## Attitudes towards the Academic Credit Mobility

Most of the teachers believe that Ukrainian universities have poor quality of education compared to European ones. One of the reasons they name is the formality of studies in Ukraine, which include too much theory and do not meet the criteria of employment market unlike the studies in Europe. Not everybody shares this thought: some of the teachers at National University of "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy" believe that the education at their university is better than at some European universities. Teachers at NaUKMA mostly think that due to the open and progressive education policy the situation in their university is a little bit better, than in others. One of the respondents suggested to oblige universities to enroll most of their students in exchange programs for at least one semester to extend the practice of credit mobility.

Judging the influence of credit mobility on students, teachers emphasize that students come back more demanding. They become more critical of Ukrainian education system. Mostly students that have participated in mobility programs later become the best alumni. Some of the teachers want to see such students become teachers later on, so that they could apply their experience from other countries. However, some teachers believe that students participated in credit mobility not for the reasons of better education but because of possibilities to find a job and stay abroad.

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<sup>3</sup> Further findings are based on qualitative surveys among students, faculty members, international offices administrative staff and Ministry of Education and Science officer.

So, teachers mostly think that credit mobility in Ukraine is expanding and has a chance to become a general practice. This expansion is also influenced by the legislative changes, although they don't guarantee it completely, as due to the autonomy of the universities, a lot depends on universities themselves.

At last, teachers stand by the idea of the mobility within Ukraine and agree that in order to improve the quality of education, communication and credit mobility between universities located in one city or town, should be improved. Some emphasize that besides being Europe-oriented, people should care more about Ukrainian education.

Students know about academic mobility in general, they don't distinguish between different types of it. They can mix up credit mobility (studying over some period of time without getting a degree) and degree mobility (full-time studies where one has to write a thesis and get a degree).

Students, who participated in focus group, have a positive attitude towards the credit mobility. Although, there is the thought that at the age of Internet everybody who wants to find the information and join a program can do that. Most of the students see credit mobility as the opportunity to have new experience, make new connections and practice language. Getting new professional knowledge is not always the first reason for participation in credit mobility. Some also see such programs as the opportunity for further education or work abroad.

### **Obstacles and Difficulties in the Process of Mobility**

Teachers outline a couple of holdbacks and difficulties that can occur both with their credit mobility and with students' credit mobility. All these barriers could be summarized as psychological, material, language, administrative and academic. Psychological holdbacks mostly show themselves in students' personal characteristics. For instance, some teachers point out that some students lack initiative and motivation, so they don't look for opportunities of the mobility. On top of that, a lot of students don't feel comfortable about leaving their families, living in another culture, etc. Adjustment also seems harder because Ukrainian students are younger than European ones, due to the different length of school education.

Psychological holdbacks are somewhat connected with the administrative difficulties. According to teachers, one of the main difficulties is the lack of information and support from the administrative office. Despite the fact that there are international offices in each university, they are not always effective and initiative. For example, not all students know how to write a motivation letter, yet no one teaches them how to do it. And some respondents mentioned a necessity to have such international offices or at least some representative on each faculty. At the same time teachers pointed out not only the lack of support for joining exchange programs but also that there are some misunderstandings after the return. For instance, they mention that most of the times courses, that a participant of a credit mobility program took back there, are not taken into account in Ukrainian universities. In some cases an administrative office doesn't meet students' needs when they are not ready to discuss any individual exam schedule. Also there is no possibility to put one's minor or certificate down in their Ukrainian diploma.

So, one of the holdbacks of credit mobility for students is their education in Ukrainian universities because not all of them are ready to have troubles with credits or courses here, or to take an academic leave.

As some of the respondents note, academic problems occur in the need to have specific and formed professional interests and research ideas, for the exchange programs to foreign universities research topics are very important. So, students cannot always go there just to study anything.

There are two more problems that some of the teachers-respondents add to all of the holdbacks and difficulties mentioned above. They are material problems and language ones. Financial problems may occur even with the problems that cover all costs or even if there is a grant proposal for the student. This situation happens mainly because of the required language certificate. To get a certificate one has to take a language competence test. The cost of taking IELTS in 2016 is 3200 UAH, and TOEFL - 4300 UAH. To put this in perspective, the average Ukrainian salary is 4498 (as of November of 2015). So, these tests are not available to everyone who highly dependent on their finances. At the same time, the required language certificate may be a problem not only due to the lack of financial resources but because of low language competence.

Among the holdbacks and difficulties that were described by students, there are many that coincide with those mentioned by the teachers. For example, not all the students, even those who already were on some exchange programs, knew about the international offices at their universities. Thus, they found information about credit mobility programs themselves, as well as collected all the documents and prepared for these programs themselves. Among the obstacles and difficulties that students have identified many points coincide with those mentioned by teachers. Students also confirmed that there is not enough support on the administrative office's side: there may be a lot of difficulties with course credits and grades back home. Also, there are often difficulties due to the lack of assistance from the administration: some still have problems with credit and mark transfer for the subjects passed abroad. Lack of finances is often an obstacle for some students, as sometimes they have to partially cover costs (for example, plane tickets or language certificate) or even pay for everything themselves. And not everybody has such kinds of resources. Sometimes the holdback is due to the low language competence, or at least due to the student's perception of their language competence as low.

However, there are some perspective to move on with credit mobility: in August, 2015 Ministry of education and science signed into power Act on the realization of the right to academic mobility, which secures students' right to join such mobility. And the universities themselves have now a legal frame document which they may use when sending students abroad.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

Credit mobility should be an essential part of the work of Ukrainian universities. Not only students but also teachers and other university employees should take part in academic mobility programs. The application of the experience gained abroad would encourage growth of the national universities both in educational and administrative spheres.

### **For the Ministry of education and science**

The next two years will continue the stage of finding the most effective ways to implement new legislation in higher education, including the issue of credit mobility. In such circumstances, the Ministry of education and science of Ukraine should carry out constant monitoring processes of legislation's work in practice, stimulate distribution of points of excellence to the rest of the industry. In this regard, the results of this first data collection on credit mobility (February-March 2016) is very important. However, quantitative data often make it impossible to evaluate the result of mobility. Therefore, qualitative survey, interviews and focus groups should always take place regularly over a certain period and taken into account by policy makers in universities and government.

### **For the university administration offices**

- Make contacts with foreign universities involved in credit mobility programs and arrange partnerships with them.
- Bring foreign faculty members to the educational process and establish exchange programs in order to host exchange students in your university.
- Set up some administrative and financial bonuses for those who take part in credit mobility.
- Let students use their rights to choose electives in order to recognize learning outcomes gained during credit mobility. At least meet students' needs when they have to study both in their home university and foreign one at the same time due to the problems with credit management.
- Set up some workshops for students where they can learn how to prepare documents and write motivation letters for academic mobility programs.
- Establish discussions and informational camps for students and teachers based on results of surveys within the university.
- Try to involve all faculties in the informational campaigns and create opportunities for them to exchange the information.

### **For faculty members**

While planning new programs (redesigning current ones) try to secure opportunities of recognizing learning outcomes earned during credit mobility, use Tuning project guides. Stimulate and support students who are interested in credit mobility. Consult students on writing motivation letters and don't make them write recommendations for them by themselves.

### **For students**

Demand implementation of credit mobility in your university and demand that administration and faculty members uphold all the issues. Review description of learning outcomes while choosing program for credit mobility, consult international office staff whether you are able to recognize them at your university. Keep in mind that participation in credit mobility could not be reason for expulsion, stipend lose or transfer on tuition fee track.

## Annex 1. A Guide for the Interview with the Education Expert

### I. Social-demographic data

Name, surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

Length of service in managerial positions within higher education (years): \_\_\_\_\_

Length of service in teaching positions within higher education (years): \_\_\_\_\_

### II. Knowledge and skills related to international credit mobility

1. Which academic mobility programmes have been developed over the past five years? Tell about the programmes provided to students and the teaching staff (*which were the requirements, the number of persons who have been accepted, the selection criteria, the destination countries, the benefits, etc.*)
2. Is there a department in charge of credit mobility within your university? If so, tell about the particularities of the credit mobility department: *the tasks, the number of staff, the responsibilities, the activities conducted over the past years, etc.*
3. Which of the programmes subject to the analysis have been the most requested and efficient? Why, justify. To what extent are such programmes accessible for students/the teaching staff of the Republic of Moldova? Justify.
4. How many students/teachers have applied for these programmes (make a difference for each distinct programme). Which are the destination countries the students/the teaching staff prefer the most, why?
5. In which way do you inform the students and the teaching staff about the possibilities of educational exchanges? Why exactly in such a way, to which extent are these ways efficient?
6. Evaluate the level of application by students and by the teaching staff for academic mobility programmes? To what extent are the students and the teaching staff interested in applying for academic mobility programmes? Why, justify.
7. To what extent are such programmes efficient for the students and the teaching staff of the Republic of Moldova, in your opinion?
8. Which are the main problems faced by the students of the Republic of Moldova in *the process of application, studying in the host country, coming back to the Republic of Moldova and enrolling in education?*
9. Which are the main problems faced by the teachers, compared to the ones faced by the students: financial problems, family problems, problems related to the need to master English, other problems.

10. Which changes have been undertaken as a result of a credit mobility exchange: improvement of the learning/teaching methods, enhancing the academic curriculum, developing new courses, etc.
11. To what extent is the experience gained as a result of an educational exchange beneficial, in your opinion? Justify.
12. Tell about the normative framework regulating the credit mobility. Which documents regulating the process of student and teacher academic mobility are available at this moment? To what extent are these documents efficient, in your opinion? What improvements should be undertaken in order to ensure the accessibility of all students and teachers in terms of international academic mobility, in your opinion?
13. What actions should be undertaken (*at the level of the Ministry, University*) in order to encourage the student and teacher academic mobility, in your opinion?



## Annex 2. Moderator's guide

### Students

Stages	Technique
<b>Introduction</b> 10 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of the moderator and of the assistant</li> <li>• Overview of the survey goal</li> <li>• Encouraging the participants to involve, to be active (there are no “wrong” or “rights” answers)</li> <li>• Introduction of each participant: name, age, university, specialisation, year of studies, nationality, civil status?</li> </ul>
<b>General Issues</b> 15 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent is the university education important in your vision? Assess the quality of education in Moldova? Assess the quality of the education in universities from other countries compared to the quality of education in Moldova? Which of the international universities are the best/the most prestigious from the viewpoint of teaching quality, in your opinion?</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge and Skills</b> 30 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you heard about the credit mobility? What exactly have you heard about? Tell about it. When have you first heard about the possibility of an educational exchange? What exactly have you heard about? What do you think about the possibility of an educational mobility?</li> <li>• Would you like to involve in an educational exchange? Why, justify. To what extent would the knowledge gained within an educational exchange influence on your academic performance/ professional experience, in your opinion?</li> <li>• In which countries would you like to undertake a credit mobility? In which international universities would you like to undertake a credit mobility exchange? Why? In which language would you like to study? Which specialisation/profile would you like to be enrolled in? What period of time would you like your educational exchange to last? Why, justify.</li> <li>• What academic credit mobility programmes do you know? Where from have you heard about them? What exactly have you heard about? Who should be in charge of informing the students about the academic credit mobility possibilities, in your opinion? Why, justify.</li> <li>• To what extent are the students informed about the possibilities of educational exchanges, in your opinion? Why? Which students are the most disadvantaged, in your opinion? Why, justify. What should the University do in order to encourage the students to take part in academic mobility programmes?</li> </ul>
<b>Practices</b> 30 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you attempted to apply for an academic mobility programme?</li> <li>• <b>For the interviewees who have applied: If so</b>, when exactly have you decided to apply? Tell more about the programme you have applied for? Why have you applied for the respective programme and not for another one?</li> <li>• To what extent was it difficult to apply for this mobility programme? What problems have you faced in the process of application (writing the application)? Who has helped you to apply and to overcome the problems?</li> <li>• How much support have you been provided by the representation of your University in order to perform this credit mobility exchange? Which was the role of the Department in charge of the academic mobility component? To what extent is the activity of such a department efficient, in your opinion?</li> <li>• Which problems/difficulties have you faced in the process of academic mobility</li> </ul>

Stages	Technique
	<p><i>(financial problems, family problems, language-related problems, shortage of information, etc.)? How have you solved these problems? Who has helped you to solve the problems? Which of these problems were the most difficult ones and why, justify?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think that the representatives of the University can contribute to removing such problems? How exactly?</li> <li>• How long have you been waiting for the response concerning the selection for the educational exchange? Do you know which are the criteria for the selection of the candidates? If so, to what extent are they relevant, in your opinion?</li> <li>• Have you been accepted? <i>If no, why have you not been selected, in your opinion? To what extent are you satisfied with the explanation given for the selection of the candidates?</i></li> <li>• <i>If you have been accepted, tell us more about this experience.</i> In which country have you performed an educational exchange, in which university, specialisation, in which academic year have you gone? Which problems have you faced in the host country (specify for each problem: <i>language-related problems, interrelations with the autochthonous population, food problems, financial problems, problems related to information sources and to learning the material, etc.</i>).</li> <li>• To what extent have the studies abroad enhanced your intellectual potential? Justify. Evaluate the professionalism of the teachers and the quality of education in the host country, compared to the professional level and the quality of education provided in the Republic of Moldova? In which field have you gained new experiences? How have you applied this knowledge in the Republic of Moldova?</li> <li>• To what extent are you satisfied with the lived experience? If you had such a possibility, would you like to take part in another professional exchange? Why? If so, in which field, in which country, in which specialisation... If no, why.</li> <li>• <b>For the interviewees who have not applied: If no, why have you not applied?</b> Elucidate the reasons.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conclusion</b> 10 min.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you were the University rector (if you had the possibility to change the things), what would you undertake in order to support the students in promoting the credit mobility? What would you do in order to encourage the students to make an educational exchange?</li> </ul>