



**EU TEMPUS project “Innovating Teaching and Learning of European Studies”
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**The European Studies
in Higher Education in Moldova**

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Summary

This policy paper provides a diagnosis of the European Studies in Moldova and advances some recommendations. It examines the interaction between internal and external stimuli that impact an academic field, in this case the European Studies, both having equal importance. The analysis is focused on the Master studies in public and private higher education institutions. The first section reflects upon the state of European studies in Moldova. The second section provides a historical overview and data on European Studies. The last section of the paper analyzes the role of internal and external factors in the development of European Studies curricula. The paper concludes with recommendations for improving curricula and suggestions regarding the multidisciplinary approach of European studies.

1. Reflections on the concept of “European Studies”

One of the six major objectives of the Bologna process, to which Moldova adhered, is to promote European studies (ES) and education for Europe. Before talking about the promotion of ES in Moldova, it is necessary to assess what do we mean by ES, and then examine the organizational arrangements for their teaching. ES is broadly defined as studies about the European Union (EU) (Smith 2003, p.3), studies of European integration (Rumford and Murray 2003), but also studies about all European processes and issues, multidisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary. In addition, it was considered a component derived from international relations or Security Studies (Bărbulescu 2015). The diversity of the types and forms of university programs in the ES field has been documented in a comprehensive ES study in the higher education institutions across the EU Member States (Horga and Buda 2012). This typology of ES studies distinguishes five categories:

1. Diversified type (Belgium, Germany, Slovakia);
2. Integrated into other programs (England, Denmark);
3. Monolithic type (Italy, Lithuania);
4. Mixed type (France, Spain, Portugal);
5. ES as part of International Relations (Poland and Romania).

Regarding the status of ES in Moldova, there is a widespread opinion of their establishment within the International Relations domain rather than the political science perspective (Barbulescu, 2015).

The operational definition of the ES for this analysis is study programs and / or modular courses (multidisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary) covering the topics of European integration, EU policy development and its institutional dimensions.

2. Curriculum development of European studies

The European Commission, World Bank or International Monetary Fund regard universities as institutions that are the most representative and adjusted to their spirit and mission, becoming quickly competitors for European training and studies (Vlăsceanu 2007, pp.2-3). Since 2000, ES teaching can be found in most European universities at bachelor, master or doctoral levels (Horga, 2012). Moldovan universities compete vividly for offering ES degrees and courses. ES teaching is spread across 29 universities - 18 state universities and 11 private.

In Moldova curricula are based on the Framework – Plan¹ for higher education (1st cycle - License, 2nd cycle - Master, 3rd cycle - PhD). The teaching content of this curriculum vision is represented by the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and strategies. They are reflected in a set of curricular documents (curriculum, curricula on disciplines, academic textbooks, etc.), aimed at initial and life-long vocational training specialists, but also personal development.

¹ Approved by the Ministry of Education on October 22, 2015, *FRAMEWORK-PLAN for higher education studies*.

Based on these provisions, the content of higher education curriculum can be presented as follows (Guțu 2015):

CURRICULUM CONTENT

The system of disciplines (broadly)	The system of knowledge and values	Skills system
Fundamental disciplines	Theories and practical legal provisions	Transversal competences
Specialization disciplines	General and particular concepts	General and professional competences
General disciplines	General and particular principles, facts, events	Specific professional Competences
Optional disciplines	General and particular processes	Specific competences of study disciplines
Disciplines of free choices	General and particular values	

According to the Framework-Plan, universities are recommended to include in curricula course units / modules that represents four components. Course units / modules on European issues are part of the component of humanities and social sciences and are recommended as optional elements. Therefore, universities are expected to include in their study programs course units / modules on European issues. These courses are diverse, including: *European economic integration, European destiny of the Republic of Moldova, European Law, Political structures in European countries, European university, European civilization, Educational policies in the European context, Community policies in the field of training, globalization, regionalization, geopolitics, etc.* The purpose of the ES component is to form a broad horizon of legal culture, philosophy, political science, sociological, psychological and economic domains. In the Republic of Moldova, the ES can be found in all universities, either as an independent specialty, or in the form of courses / modules on European issues.

3. Curricular development of European Studies

The theory of development of an academic field, formulated by Ben Rosamond (Rosamond, 2007), examines the impact of two types of stimulus: internal and external. This section will examine the influence of these stimuli on Moldovan higher education institutions in the development of the ES field of studies.

The first pioneer institutions in developing independent ES academic programs or interdisciplinary ES studies are Moldova State University (USM), Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova (ASEM), and Free International University of Moldova (ULIM).

USM established the Department of International Economic Relations in 1995, under the Faculty of Political Sciences. This was triggered by the growing awareness of the need for International Relations training in the context of establishing and developing multiple cooperation relations with other countries². This department is considered the first of its kind in the country, which began to prepare specialists in international economic relations. ASEM offered Master programs in Economic integration and European Affairs, European Project Management, Economic integration and European affairs. The Academy of Economic Studies offered the International relations specialization in Public administration since its establishment (1994). At the private university ULIM, the idea of the Faculty of History and International Relations occurred with the foundation of the university in 1992, but it materializes in 1997. The specialty of Political Science was launched as of 2002, in response to societal demands.

The State University "B.P. Hasdeu" from Cahul offers since 2006 a Master program in *European Integration and Neighbourhood Policy*. The program was developed within the European project JEP TEMPUS "Master Studies in European Integration and Neighbourhood Policy – MEINEPO," under the coordination of the University of Maribor (Slovenia). Moldovan Partners, apart from Cahul University, included the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova and the State University "Al. Russo" from Balti. The purpose of this project was the setting up of Master studies within the mentioned domain as of 2009-2010 academic year.

The ES teaching in Moldova can be also found within the private education sector. For example, the Institute of International Relations "Perspective" (founded in 1995 and re-named University "Perspectiva-Int" in 2005) has offered the specialty International relations (1st cycle) and four Master programs related to the ES field. Another private entity is the International Management Institute (IMI), registered as an association under a project funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France³ (1995) and later as educational institution (2005). IMI's teaching includes the full range of economic activities (international economic relations, banking and finance, business and management, accounting, marketing and logistics, tourism, etc.). It also includes non-economic specialties, such as international relations, law, political science and communication sciences⁴. At the moment IMI offers an undergraduate program in International Relations and a Master degree with the specialization European Integration.

The "Law Academy of Moldova," a private company since 1992, was registered in 2005 as an educational institution under the name of "University of European Studies of Moldova". The curricula of its faculties of Political Science and International Relations include diverse disciplines:

² http://frispa.usm.md/V_RO/RI.htm

³ No. MO B8/0620, from 8 June, 1994

⁴ http://imi-nova.md/?page_id=707

- Humanitarian and socio-economic domain (Foreign language, Basic concepts of economy, Geo-Economics, Law, etc.);
- Real sciences (Computer Science and Fundamentals of programming);
- General professional domain (Theory of political doctrines, History of political doctrines, Negotiation and diplomatic protocol, Theory and practice of communication in international relations, International and regional security, and others.)⁵

The Institute of International Relations of Moldova (IRIM) and the University of Political and Economic European Studies "Constantin Stere" are also engaged in the development of academic programs in the ES field.

Overall, the names and contents of the courses are often developed according to the specific study programs or institutional requirements, but sometimes the ES teaching does not relate directly to the specialization profile. For example, the State University of Physical Education and Sport included in study programs a course in Modern and Contemporary History of Europe. Similarly, the Academy of Music, Theatre and Fine Arts included the course of European Communities law. This institution offers two masters in Culture – Cultural interference in South Eastern Europe and Regional cultural policies. The Faculty of Law of the University of Comrat offers a module on History of European civilization, the Slavic University offers an undergraduate program in the field of European economic integration and a course of European civilization.

4. Conclusions and recommendation

The field of European studies in the Republic of Moldova is quite broad and diverse. It shows a great interest in higher education teaching in the field of European studies, the study of the EU is a core part of most programs. University curriculum was developed under the influence of both external and internal factors. It seems that external factors had a major influence on European studies. Soros Foundation's projects in the Republic of Moldova offered active support for the ES studies during 2010 – 2012. EU TEMPUS framework projects, such as MEINEPO or the INOTLES project supported the development of ES teaching and learning, providing examples of good practices through inter-university teaching activities. The institutions that offer undergraduate or Master degrees in ES adapted their contents under the new provisions established by the Framework-Plan.

However, there are still certain issues regarding the ES field in the Republic of Moldova that need to be tackled. Below is a short presentation of major issues and policy recommendations.

Purpose seen as outcome. The major outcome of higher education is competence. The job qualifications vary depending on specific professional categories. In this respect, universities which offer ES need to focus on the development of general professional skills in accordance with National Qualifications Framework. In the case when ES programs are complementary, the outcome will be conditioned by program's specialization and specific professional requirements.

⁵ <http://usem.md/md/p/faculty-of-political-science>

Improving the ES teaching. The process of teaching is not limited to the transfer of the knowledge of the subject. Creativity and innovation are two important aspects of the teaching process. These pedagogical skills can be developed and refreshed through periodical meetings between professors, with the purpose of exchanging best pedagogical practices. These meetings can take the form of training sessions and exchange of experience. The recently established Center for European Studies at ULIM with the support of INOTLES project can offer a good solution for innovating ES teaching through regular training activities and exchanging pedagogical practices.

The insertion in the labour market. The interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach of the ES facilitates the development of the required real-life skills for the labour market. The ES courses and programs need to include a strong practical element (skills development), apart from the theoretical knowledge. A deeper focus on modules dealing with European policy making (transport, environment, industry, home affairs, social security, etc.) would be especially welcome.

5. Bibliography

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