



# **HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA'**

In the Republic of Moldova, in accordance with article 3 of its Law on Education, „*Education is a national priority*”. According to chapter II of the above mentioned law (“Educational system”) and particularly article 12 thereof (“Educational system structure”), the educational system is organized as a levelled and tiered one with the following structure:

- I. Preschool education
- II. Primary education
- III. Secondary education:
  - 1. General secondary education
  - 2. Professional secondary education
- IV. Specialized education (colleges).
- V. Higher education.
- VI. Post-graduate education (Doctoral Studies).

The educational system also includes other forms of education:

- special education;
- additional education;
- education for grown-ups.

Education in the Republic of Moldova is both public and private. Education institutions are legal entities. Education may be organized as full-time education, part-time education, distance learning, and individual study. (art. 3)

The system of education is an open one, with the possibility of evolving from one type to another being ensured by special regulations, approved by the Ministry of Education.

In all the education institutions knowledge is evaluated with a grading system from 10 to 1 and use of “pass” and “no pass” evaluations. 4, 3, 2, 1 are non-passing grades.

The academic year in the higher education system begins on September 1 and lasts up to 42 weeks, divided into two relatively equal semesters, each including two examination sessions, internships, and two vacations.

Article 26 of the above mentioned law stipulates that higher education is organized to meet the following goals:

a) to mold a multilaterally developed and creative personality, to train, professionally develop and re-qualify specialists of higher level and scientific personnel for different fields;

b) to ensure possibilities for the person's strive to enlarge and expand his/her studies;

c) to promote scientific research and to implement its results;

d) to guard, enhance and promote the scientific, technical, artistic, and cultural treasure of the country.

Higher education is carried out by higher education institutions: universities, academies, and institutes. The law also provides for the possibility to organize higher education institutions with teaching provided in other languages than the official state one.

Higher education, with the exception of the medical and pharmaceutical one, consists of two cycles:

Higher education corresponds to a certain number of ECTS credits (European Credits Transfer and Accumulation System). Duration of studies is usually quantified in credits (one academic year in higher education corresponds to 60 ECTS credits).

In higher education, classes are taught through full-time education, part-time education, and distance learning. For higher education, internships are mandatory. Compared to the full-time education, part-time education and distance learning require an additional study year.

1st cycle - Bachelor's Degree higher education;

Students are allowed to obtain two specialities at the same time, if they pass admission exams. The students can benefit from a state scholarship while studying for obtaining one speciality. After graduation, they can obtain a new speciality only after paying tuition, in accordance with the conditions set by the Ministry of Education.

Article 27 of the law is dedicated to Bachelor (called License) Studies, which last 3-4 years and correspond to 60 ECTS credits for one academic year. Enrolment for first cycle studies in higher education institutions is contest-based, in accordance with the general criteria set by the Ministry of Education. The first cycle of higher education ends with passing an exam consisting of 2 specialized exams and defending



of a license thesis (project). The exam is to be conducted in accordance with the general criteria set by the Ministry of Education. Graduates which have passed both the specialized exams and have defended their theses (projects) obtain a Bachelor's Degree in a particular field and specialty, and are awarded a Diploma of Licentiate ("Diplomă de licență").

The diploma proves its bearer has obtained general knowledge and competence to continue his/her studies in the second cycle, and has also obtained an initial professional training which allows him/her to be employed. The specific duration of studies per speciality is approved by the Government, in accordance with the specialities' Classification in higher education institutions.

Article 27 of the law is dedicated to Master Studies, which last 1-2 years and correspond to 60-120 ECTS credits. Master studies are organized for bearers of a Bachelor (License) Diploma, and they ensure specialization in a field or the further expansion and continuous development of one's scientific and teaching potential. Usually, Master Studies are full-time studies. Master Studies are either academic or professional ones.

Academic (Research) Master Studies are focused on developing scientific research skills and are a mandatory stage prior to Doctoral Studies. Professional Master Studies ensure the enhancement of a speciality in a field, and are mostly focusing on acquiring practical skills. Admission to Master Studies is contest-based.

2nd cycle - Master's Degree higher education.

Master Studies finalize with defending one's Master Thesis. Graduates who have defended their theses are awarded the title of Master in the field of study and the chosen specialization and are conferred a Master Diploma. The Master Diploma proves its bearer has obtained general and specialized knowledge and competencies, as well as specific cognitive skills. The Master Diploma gives its bearer the right to be employed in teaching positions in higher education or research institutions and to participate in contests organized for admission to Doctoral Studies.

A separate segment of the higher education system in the Republic of Moldova is that of private higher education institutions. Private higher education institutions can be established, reorganized, or terminated at the initiative of physical persons and legal entities, with the consent of the Ministry of Education. (art. 36) Public authorities, public institutions,

enterprises and other state organizations cannot be founders of a private higher education institution.

Private education is organized and functions based on the not-for-profit principle and must strictly observe state educational standards. State registration and obtaining of a proper license are mandatory conditions to operate as a private education institution.

Enrolment in private education institutions is carried out in accordance with the regulations established by the Ministry of Education for public institutions. Private education institutions are funded through their founders' resources, tuitions, sponsorships, loans, and donations. Private education institutions cannot be established through the privatization of public education institutions.

The content of the education is projected based on state educational standards, is both formative and functional and is tiered on specific levels and stages. For all education levels, the curricula include mandatory and optional subjects. Curricula for higher education institutions are to be approved by university senates, and in accordance with state educational standards. Syllabuses are to be developed by chairpersons and approved by the university senate, based on the positive review of the faculty council.

Article 48 of the Law on Education ("Administration of a higher education institution") stipulates: "A higher education institution consists of faculties, departments, chairs, laboratories, and other research, projection, and micro-production units (sections)" Colleges may be affiliated to a higher education institution. A higher education institution is governed by the university senate and chaired by the rector, a faculty – by the faculty council and chaired by the dean, a department - by a scientific council and chaired by the director; a chair – by the chairman.

Rectors of a public higher education institution are elected on a contest-basis by the senate, with several exceptions. Among those exceptions can be listed the rector of the education institution under the President of the Republic of Moldova, rectors of higher education institutions that report to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Defense, etc, which are appointed by the above-mentioned public authorities. The rector of the education institution under the President of the Republic of Moldova is appointed through a presidential decree. Rectors of higher education institutions can establish the Council of Rectors, a consultation body.



Several articles of the Law are dedicated to *university autonomy*. In accordance with article 49 of the Law, public higher education institutions have a statute of university autonomy. University autonomy is the right of the university community to organize and manage itself (when it comes to administration, structure, and functioning), to exert its academic freedoms with no ideological, political, or religious involvement, and to carry out its accepted competencies and obligations in accordance with national policies and strategies of higher and post-graduate education development.

University autonomy exists in the field of governance, structure and functioning of the institution, its teaching and research activities, its administration and funding, being mostly carried out through:

- a) organization, conducting and improvement of education and research processes;
- b) specialities' determination;
- c) curricula development and development of study programs, in accordance with the state educational standards;
- d) admission of study candidates, based on specific criteria determined by the profile of the higher education institution;
- e) selection and promotion of the teaching body and other staff;
- f) determination of evaluation criteria for the teaching and scientific activity;
- g) awarding of teaching degrees;
- h) election of governing bodies (secret voting);
- i) resolutions on social problems of both students and staff;
- j) ensuring order and discipline in campus;
- k) identification of additional income sources;
- l) establishment of cooperation relationships with different education and research institutions, both national and from abroad.

Financially, university autonomy is to be achieved through:

- a) operations based on self management and principles of not-for-profit, in the existing framework established by the Government;
- b) administration of its financial resources through bank accounts, transfers from the state budget included;
- c) decision-making on the usage of resources available for operations, in accordance with the charter;
- d) earning of their own income, from tuition, services provided,

and from other specific activities, in accordance with the Classification of services provided, approved by the Government;

e) establishment of the contract-based tuition's size, establishment of fees for the services provided, in order to achieve goals and objectives set in the Charter, and after coordinating it with higher-up authorities;

f) management of real estate, fixed assets and other assets in order to ensure optimum conditions for organizational development;

g) property management and management of rights connected to it, in order to ensure the goals established in the Charter of the state higher education institutions are met;

h) establishment of other public institutions, such as research and innovation institutions, experimental and teaching centres, university clinics, university hospitals, business incubators, sports clubs and creative studios, with founders' consent. The above-mentioned institutions are to carry out non-commercial activities, with strict observance of the not-for-profit principle.

When discussing the issue of studying abroad, it is worth mentioning citizens of the Republic of Moldova have the right to study abroad based on international agreements of cooperation, concluded between states, governments and ministries, as well as based on individual contracts concluded with education institutions from abroad, and through the ECTS system. Moreover, citizens of the Republic of Moldova which have graduated from education institutions located abroad have equal employment rights as the graduates from similar education institutions located in the Republic of Moldova.

**The Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Moldova** has a special position in the higher education system in the Republic of Moldova. According to the Academy's Charter, approved through the Republic of Moldova President's decree # 615-VII of April 30, 2013, the Academy is a public higher education institution, which operates as a national centre of promoting state policies in the field of public administration, training of civil service personnel, and providing scientific and methodological support to public administration's activity.

The Academy has administrative, financial, scientific, instructive, and other autonomy provided for in the legislation.

*Major duties of the Academy* are: a) to promote state policy in the field of public administration; b) to provide 2nd cycle higher education studies (Master); c) to prepare scientific staff through its Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Studies; d) to provide professional development of the personnel employed in public authorities and institutions, as well as of the personnel employed in private legal entities; e) to organize and conduct priority fundamental and applied scientific research in the field of public administration and in the field of future civil servants' training; f) to provide methodological, scientific, and informational assistance to the public authorities; g) to provide technical, scientific, and consultative services to ministries, other central public administration authorities, and individuals, either for a contract-based fee or free of charge; h) to promote fundamental principles of a democracy based on defending and respecting basic human rights and freedoms; i) other activities, in accordance with the legislation in force.

A separate chapter is dedicated to the *Academy's public responsibility*, which makes it mandatory for the Academy:

- a) to respect the legislation in force, the university charter and national policies in the field of higher education and research-innovation;
- b) to apply and observe existing regulations for assuring and assessing quality in higher education, professional development, and research-innovation;
- c) to ensure managerial efficiency and sound resource use;
- d) to ensure transparency of all its activities and decisions made, in accordance with the legislation in force;
- e) to respect academic freedom of its teaching, scientific and auxiliary personnel, as well as the rights and freedoms of its Master students, and Doctoral/Post-Doctoral candidates,

*Structurally, the Academy consists of:* departments (faculties), chairs, directions, sections and other subdivisions. The supreme governing body of the Academy is the Senate, which operates based on its own regulations.

Within the Academy, an administrative board is established, consisting of: rector, prime-deputy rector, deputy rector, department heads, the head of property, planning, and finance division, a representative of the President of the Republic of Moldova, and a representative of the Government.



*When discussing the way instructive process is organized within the Academy, it is worth mentioning that the Government annually sets a Master Studies Admission Plan (by Order of the State) for the civil servants, elected officials, and for other personnel employed within public administration authorities. Admission in the Academy is contest-based; both public administration authorities' personnel and other interested persons can participate in the contest. The Academy can provide both budget-funded and contract-based training services.*

A specific component of Academy's activity is the *continuous professional development of the personnel employed in public authorities and institutions* or employed in private legal entities. Its purpose is to provide enhanced and updated knowledge, as well as to develop and sharpen skills in order to efficiently carry out job duties. Continuous professional development is carried out: a) based on the annual Government plan (state order); b) upon public administration authorities' and other public or private institutions' request; c) on the Academy's own initiative; d) in cooperation with public authorities and institutions, and interested private legal entities. Persons who have attended continuous development courses are conferred a certificate of attendance/participation, by the rector's order, and based on a Senate-approved template.

*The Academy's research activity* is carried out based both on state order, funded from the state budget, and on contracts concluded with public administration authorities, institutions and organizations, physical persons and legal entities. The Academy conducts Doctoral/Post-Doctoral studies, in accordance with the legislation in force.

*The Academy's international activity* includes: 1) international cooperation in the field of personnel training and professional development, 2) enrolment of foreign citizens in accordance with international agreements, 3) implementation of training and research projects jointly with partners from abroad.

Thus, due to its charter, its human potential, and the quality of its training, the Academy is perceived both nationally and internationally as an elite institution.