

## ROMANIA'S EXPERTISE FOR EDUCATION REFORM IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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**Abstract:** *The relations with the Republic of Moldova are a strategic priority for Romania's foreign policy, given the multiple cultural and historical ties between the two states and communities. Regardless of the governments in power in the two countries, the collaboration between the two countries has steadily strengthened, gaining a variety of forms. One of these forms of collaboration is that in the field of education in general, in particular, of university education. Protocols of collaboration in education, signed over time, provide for bursary, master and doctorate scholarships, internships for master and doctoral students, academic mobility for teachers, study visits, etc. Beyond these concrete aspects, the collaboration on the educational level also aims at the modernization of the national educational systems, with Romania having the experience, expertise and assistance needed to reform the educational system of the Republic of Moldova, in accordance with European principles and values*

**Keywords:** *national educational system, protocol of collaboration, expertise in the modernization of education.*

### 1. Introduction

The paper presents Romania's contribution, after 1992, to the modernization of education in the Republic of Moldova, to its establishment based on European values. In conducting the study, data, information and views from institutions and authorities from the two states (Romanian Government, Romanian Embassy in the Republic of Moldova, Embassy of the Republic of Moldova in Romania) and some Romanian and Moldovan officials were used. The materials published on this subject in the media and on the websites of the news agencies of the two countries were also used.

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## **2. Romania's relations with the Republic of Moldova**

For Romania, the Republic of Moldova is a very special partner-state, considering the multiple cultural and historical links between the two states and communities.

On August 27, 1991, in the context of the breakup of the Soviet Union into national states, Moldova proclaimed its independence. Romania was the first state to recognize the independence of the Republic of Moldova, only a few hours after its proclamation.

From August 1991 until today, the relations between Romania and the Republic of Moldova have evolved, alternating the periods of proximity with those of distance. But gradually, in the relations between the two states, a more pragmatic, supportive and collaborative perspective is required in order to achieve and consolidate a common economic, political and cultural space between the two states. It has been observed lately, with the increase of the pro-European current, that the Republic of Moldova looks with more confidence towards Romania.

For Romania's foreign policy, relations with the Republic of Moldova are a strategic priority (Embassy of Romania in the Republic Moldavia, 2019b). Romania conceives its relationship with the Republic of Moldova on two major coordinates: "the affirmation of the special character of this relationship, conferred by the language, history, culture, traditions - realities that cannot be circumvented or denied" and "the European dimension of bilateral cooperation, being based on the strategic objective of the integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European Union". Romania pragmatically approaches the relationship with the Republic of Moldova, confined to its legitimate interest in seeing the Republic of Moldova entering a path of European integration and ensuring an area of stability and security at the eastern border of Romania, which has become the eastern border of NATO and the EU (Embassy of Romania in the Republic Moldavia, 2019b).

## **3. Collaboration in the Field of Education between Romania and the Republic of Moldova**

Regardless of the governments in power in the two countries, the collaboration between the two countries has been strengthened permanently, acquiring a variety of forms. One of these forms of collaboration is that of education. In the two countries' view, education is an important component of the common cultural space.

The first bilateral treaty between Romania and the Republic of Moldova concerning education was concluded in Chisinau on May 19, 1992 and took the form of an agreement of collaboration in the fields of science, education and culture (Ministry of Education, Culture and Research of the Republic of Moldova, 2019). After that, the collaboration with respect to education as legislated by memoranda approved by the two governments for three years, and on their basis were protocols between the Ministry of National Education in Romania and the Ministry of Education in the Republic of Moldova were signed. The collaboration protocols in education support the granting of bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees, internships and documentation for

masters and doctoral students, academic mobility of teachers, study visits, exchanges of young people in school camps, etc.

In accordance with the last memorandum concluded by the two states for the 2016-2019 school years and the collaboration protocol for the 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years, Romania granted 950 study places to young people from the Republic of Moldova annually in state pre-university education, without paying tuition fees and 1100 places without paying tuition fees for state university education. Starting with the academic year 2016-2017, Romania granted 100 places in Master's degree studies, with scholarships, 50 places in doctoral studies, with scholarships and 50 places in postgraduate studies of residency with scholarship.

It is true that the Republic of Moldova also grants to young people in Romania, annually, according to the collaboration protocol, places of study with scholarship and without payment of tuition fees for Bachelor's degree studies (100), master's degree (50), and doctoral programs (50) (Romanian Government, 2016).

#### **4. "Studies in Romania" program**

For the 2019-2020 academic year, the Romanian Government approved for Romanians everywhere (including the Republic of Moldova) through the program "Studies in Romania", 1,700 places for pre-university education, of which 1000 without paying tuition fees, with scholarships, and 700 without payment of tuition fees but no scholarship. In higher education, the approved tuition figures are: 3405 places for Bachelor's degree program of which 1890 without paying tuition fees, with scholarship, and 1515 without paying tuition fees, but without scholarship. There are 2000 places at the Master's degree level, of which 1000 without paying tuition and scholarship fees, and another 1000 without paying tuition fees, but without scholarship. 160 places were allocated to doctoral studies for Romanians everywhere, out of which 70 without paying tuition fees and scholarships (Government Decision 260, 2019).

Referring strictly to the places offered by the institutions of higher education in Romania in the academic year 2019-2020 for the citizens of the Republic of Moldova, these are 5723-for Bachelor's degree, Master's degree and doctoral programs, of which 3700 are scholarship places.

In the nearly thirty years of the study program in Romania, many graduates of Romanian higher education institutions have become personalities of the Republic of Moldova in various fields of political, economic, academic and cultural-artistic life. Among these, famous graduates such as: Dorin Chirtoaca, Vlad Filat, Alexandru Tanase, Loretta Handrabura, Andrei Popov, Mariana Durleşteanu, Nicolae Damaschin, Silviu Tanase, Ion Macovei, Alexandru Scurtu, Dumitru Crudu, Iulian Ciocan, and Vasilică Vasilache and many others are worth mentioning.

In order to boost the collaboration in education, but also to meet the needs of the labor market, between Romania and the Republic of Moldova there is an agreement for mutual recognition of the diplomas, certificates and scientific titles, granted by the accredited educational institutions of the two countries. The agreement was signed on

June 20, 1998, in Bucharest and was amended by a protocol, on August 26, 2010, in Chisinau.

Based on the agreements at level, Romanian universities have always shown their interest in attracting young people from the Republic of Moldova to their study programs. They have constantly and consistently conducted true marketing and advertising campaigns and have devised and implemented solutions to facilitate communication with potential Moldovan candidates and to facilitate their application for studies. Every year, in the main cities of the Republic of Moldova, fairs featuring the universities of Romania. Thus, in June and July 2019, twenty universities from 16 university centers in Romania exhibited their offer in Chisinau, Balti and Cahul (Romanian Universities Expect over 5700 Students from the Republic of Moldova, 2019).

Also, until 2018, every year, in the latter part of July, a joint commission from Romania was on the territory of Moldova to make the pre-selection of the enrollment files, giving young people the possibility to enroll in educational institutions without having to moved to Romania. Starting with 2018, admission is online, directly, which determine from the number of state funded places that is the number of places for Moldovan students.

##### **5. Romania's assistance in modernizing education in the Moldovan state**

Beyond these concrete aspects, the collaboration in the educational the field of education also aims at the modernization of the national educational systems, Romania having here to offer the experience, expertise and assistance needed to reform the education system in the Republic of Moldova, in accordance with European principles and values. In this regard, the Romanian state provides a program for the training of teachers from pre-university and university education in the Republic of Moldova, granting a number of months-scholarship training courses and months-scholarship for student mobility, with priority given to the following fields : social sciences, literature, literary studies, culture and art. If, in the 2016-2019 school year, 400 training months were awarded (200 months-scholarship for teachers and management staff and school inspectors in pre-university education and 200 months-scholarship for higher education) and another 200 months were allocated to student mobilities, for the 2019-2020 school year the total number of scholarship-months is 500, of which 300 for teacher training and 200 for student mobility / student practice.

The contribution of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), which, in 2014, provided external evaluation of the programs of Law studies for the 17 higher education institutions, should be mentioned in the line of quality education in the Republic of Moldova, compared to a referential in Romania. Within this project, training sessions for internal evaluators were held, which were initiated in the internal evaluation procedures in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in higher education. (Embassy of Romania in the Republic of Moldova, 2019 a)

Romania also offers children and young people from the Republic of Moldova, through educational cooperation protocols, scholarships for participation in Romanian language,

culture and civilization courses, organized by universities as well as places in school camps. In the 2016-2019 school year, 25 scholarships were awarded for Romanian language, culture and civilization courses and 1000 places in school camps (Romanian Government, 2016).

## **6. Facilitating Access to Education in the Republic of Moldova**

Other projects and actions of Romanian authorities are aimed at facilitating to the education of Moldovan students and ensuring adequate study conditions in the schools. From this point of view, two actions were more significant. In one of these, the government of Romania donated, in 2017, at the time of Prime Minister Mihai Tudose, 96 school buses, based on memorandum signed with the representatives of the Government of Chisinau (Republic of Moldova official website, 2017).

At the same time, Romania has provided funds for the repairing hundreds of kindergartens and schools in the Republic of Moldova. Among the Romanian local authorities that offered this form of support for education across Prut river are also those from Braşov county. Following a decision from July 2018, the Brasov County Council allocated 399,504 lei for the capital repair works at the "Grigore Vieru" Primary School in the city of Stefan Voda (Stefan Voda District, Republic of Moldova). The money allocated by the Brasov County administration represented 41.19% of the total value of the investment, considering that the works were estimated at 969,856 lei (Colţea, 2019).

In the face of all these financial and human efforts made by Romania in support of education in the Republic of Moldova, the authorities there expressed their gratitude whenever they had the opportunity. For example, in a press conference organized during the ceremony for taking over the school buses, in 2017, the then prime minister, Pavel Filip, stressed that school buses are a very important help for the Republic of Moldova and thanked authorities in Romania. "I express my gratitude to Romanian authorities for this gesture. We will be able to provide quality education to our children. At the same time, we thank for repairing hundreds of kindergartens and for the 5,500 scholarships that Romania offers to students from our country. Both the Government and the citizens of the country are grateful to you", said Filip (Republic of Moldova official website, 2017).

## **7. Conclusions**

The concrete data of the programs, projects and actions offer a global picture of the support and expertise that Romania offers, starting from 1992, to education in the Republic of Moldova with a view to raising its quality and modernizing it. The success of this involvement of Romanian authorities is explained by the existence between the two states of a mechanism developed in collaboration, with a serious commitment of both parties. The results achieved through this collaboration, like those from other fields, must be made better known to the public opinion in the two countries, including the academic environment. Finally, through this cooperation, the links between Romania

and the Republic of Moldova, between citizens and communities on both sides of the Prut river are strengthened.

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