

Research Reform in Moldova

- 1) General Considerations about Reforms
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Dr. Daniel P. Funeriu
EU HLA

General Considerations about Reforms

a) "Reform" is a badly perceived word, void of any meaning East of Vienna. Nobody votes you anymore because you promise "reforms". Saturation reached.

b) Only valid "Reform" is to give power and resources (money) to competent people.

c) Huge confusion: the belief that if we change the institutional framework we obtain results: **wrong:** good people in a bad system get more results than bad people in a good system. So **foccus should be on people** and institutions.

Research Reform in Moldova



National Peers

Toivo Rääim (Estonia)
Brigitte Weiss (Austria)

Independent Experts

Krzysztof Gulda (Poland, *Chair*)
George Bonas (Greece, *co-rapporteur*)
Manfred Spiesberger (Austria, *co-rapporteur*)
Daniel Funeriu (Romania)
Francien Heijs (Netherlands)

Diagnosis of the Moldova Research

Moldovan R&I system presents several *structural weaknesses*

- 1) low financing
- 2) ageing
- 3) migration and downsizing of the R&D personnel
- 4) a weak link to society's needs and challenges
- 5) insufficient possibilities for universities to perform adequate research
- 6) an almost inexistent involvement of the private sector and, last but not least
- 7) a rather unusual governance structure.

Recommendations

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6. Radically improve the employment and funding opportunities and career perspectives of researchers
7. Urgently review the framework conditions for innovation by putting in place a coherent set of policy measures

Recommendations

- 1. Embed Research and Innovation (R&I) policy in the overall economic policy strategy of the country.** Improving synergies between Moldova's R&I strategy and the country's overall socio-economic ambitions is key. This cannot be reached without ambitious reforms of the national R&I system, strong and determined priority-setting, and continuous involvement of stakeholders in order to generate an ownership of these reforms.

Recommendations

- 2. Improve the governance of the national R&I system by strengthening the political responsibility for R&I with a dedicated Ministerial responsibility.** The panel is not convinced of the added value of the inter-ministerial Council for R&I announced by the government.

Recommendations

- 3. Create an independent, transparent and accountable R&I implementation Agency** which concentrates and allocates all available R&I funding on the basis of international standards. The combination of a Ministerial responsibility for R&I policy-making with an independent Agency that manages R&I funds will allow the Moldovan Academy of Sciences to focus on its role as major research performer in the country.

Recommendations

- 4. Redress the *binary* research and education system of Moldova**, whereby universities are mostly concentrated on "teaching" and institutes on "research". The circulation of knowledge and human resources throughout the country's public system is now more essential than ever before. Incentives for cooperation between universities (where the young generation studies) and research institutes (with ageing research staff) should be a driving force of the reforms.

Recommendations

- 5. Safeguard the public R&I capacity of Moldova** by ensuring that the physical, intellectual and human capital of its research institutions is maintained and eventually reinforced. In return, systematic evaluation procedures for public research organizations and higher education institutions should be set up to progressively link public R&I funding to performance in the medium-term, thus rewarding quality research. In addition, the share of competitive funding allocated to R&I needs to be increased to stimulate competition.

Recommendations

- 6. Take resolute action to improve the employment and funding opportunities, working conditions and career perspectives of researchers, including notably young and female scientific talents. Open and merit-based recruitment practices and structured and high-quality PhD programs are essential to modernize the system. Salaries, in particular for entry levels, should be revisited and scientific achievements should be rewarded.**

Recommendations

- 7. Urgently review the framework conditions for innovation by putting in place a coherent set of policy measures** to create and stimulate a supportive environment for business engagement in R&I activities, including both non-financial tools (a legal environment supportive of spin-offs and knowledge transfer, better opportunities to fund risky projects) and the increased use of public funding to leverage business R&I activities. In relation to the latter, the panel is of the opinion that the artificial administrative barrier of accreditation for allocating R&I funds to the business sector should be abolished.

State of Play

1. Genuine optimism due to PM commitment
2. Final stages of new, modern Research Law drafting
3. Each institution attempts to conserve its influence, therefore maintaining system fragmentation
4. Complex political situation
5. Careful power transition between the ASM and the Government
6. Positive commitment of the EU, but EU must see progress in order to continued support