

UNIVERSITY OF TAMPERE
Department of Management Studies
Administrative Science/
Higher Education Administration

TRANSFERRING BOLOGNA IDEAS
INTO NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY PRACTICES:
THE CASE OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

European Master in Higher Education (HEEM), a
joint program provided by the University of Oslo
(Norway), University of Tampere (Finland) and
the University of Aveiro (Portugal)

Master's Thesis

May 2008

Supervisor: Jussi Kivistö

Sofia Cuşnir

ABSTRACT

University of Tampere Department of Management Studies

Author: CUSNIR, SOFIA

Title of the thesis: Transferring the Bologna Process Ideas into National Higher Education Policy Practices: the Case of the Republic of Moldova

Master's thesis: 81 pages, 5 appendices

Time: May 2008

Key words: Bologna process, policy transfer, policy network, the Republic of Moldova, higher education, Tempus programme.

The aim of present research was to conceptualize the way the European level political incentives are transferred to the national level and acquire their practical embodiment in domestic policy practices and developments. Policy transfer and policy network are the core concepts placed in the centre of the theoretical framework of the research. Through the prism of these concepts the major issue of the Bologna process ideas transfer to the level of national higher education policy formulation is explored. The object of the study is the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova. Moldova joined the Bologna Process in 2005. Key developments since then include: implementing the new two-cycle system in all higher education institutions from 2005-2006; introducing ECTS; drafting a new higher education law based on the concept of modernization; and approving a working plan for 2005-2010 to align the national higher education with Bologna principles. Policy transfer concept, operationalised into four variables, is applied to analyze the Bologna-related developments in the Republic of Moldova. The undertaken analysis has resulted in several basic findings. It has been concluded that the Bologna process ideas are predominately transferred to the state level by the internationally active higher education institutions of Moldova which, through the establishment of fruitful international collaboration with partner universities within the framework of the Tempus programme, essentially facilitate the incoming flow of European policies in the area of higher education.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BFUG – Bologna Follow-Up Group
BP – Bologna Process
CARDS – Assistance Programme to the western Balkans
CoE – Council of Europe
DS – Diploma Supplement
EC – European Commission
ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EHEA – European Higher Education Area
EU – European Union
EURIDICE – The information network on education in Europe
GDP – Gross Domestic Product
HDI – Human Development Index
HE – Higher Education
HEI – Higher Education Institution
ISCED-97 – International Standard Classification of Education - 1997 version
MEDA – Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
MEY – Ministry of Education and Youth (of the Republic of Moldova)
NIS – New Independent States
TACIS – Technical Aid to the Commonwealth and Independent States
TEMPUS – Trans-European Mobility Scheme for University Studies
UN – United Nations
UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO-CEPES - European Centre for Higher Education

Country abbreviations

AM – Armenia
AZ – Azerbaijan
BY – Belarus
GE – Georgia
KG – Kyrgyzstan
KZ – Kazakhstan
MD – Moldova, Republic of
RU – Russian Federation
TJ – Tajikistan
TM – Turkmenistan
UA – Ukraine
USA – United States of America
UZ – Uzbekistan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES:	vi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Study Background	1
1.2 Rationale for the study	1
1.3 Research aims and questions	3
1.4 Methodology	3
1.5 Organisation of the study	5
2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.1 Policy transfer	6
2.1.1 Operationalisation and definition	6
2.1.2 Variables.....	7
2.1.3 Classification.....	9
2.2 Policy Network.....	10
2.2.1 Policy network literature review	10
2.2.2 Relevance of the policy network concept for the country specific context	12
2.3 The Bologna process	15
2.4 Combining the concepts – the overall theoretical framework.....	17
3 THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA CONTEXT	19
3.1 The socio-economic background of the Republic of Moldova	19
3.2 Higher education system of the Republic of Moldova.....	19
3.3 Challenges facing the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova	21
3.4 The analysis of the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova in the context of the Bologna process.	23

4 BOLOGNA PROCESS AND THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA	25
4.1 Rationale for the Bologna process membership.....	25
4.2 Joining the Bologna process – the chronology of basic political steps.....	28
4.3 Major achievements and progress made since formal Bologna membership	29
4.4 Major obstacles facing the national higher education system in the context of Bologna-related reforms.....	32
5 TRANSFERRING THE BOLOGNA IDEAS INTO NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY PRACTICES	36
5.1 The object of policy transfer	36
5.2 The reasons of policy transfer	40
5.3 The degree of policy transfer	41
5.4 The actors of policy transfer.....	43
6 THE TEMPUS PROGRAMME AS A TOOL OF POLICY TRANSFER	45
6.1 The Tempus programme - basic facts	45
6.2 The Tempus programme trends and shift in priorities	46
6.3 Tempus - a major instrument of Bologna process principles transfer to the national level	48
6.4 The Tempus programme in Moldova.....	51
6.5 Tempus impact in Moldova.....	53
7 CONCLUSION	57
7.1 Overall conclusions	57
7.2 Validity, reliability, and limitations of the study	60
REFERENCES.....	62
APPENDIX 1	68
APPENDIX 2	69
APPENDIX 3	70
APPENDIX 4	71
APPENDIX 5	72

LIST OF TABLES:

Table 1. Policy transfer variables	9
Table 2. Classification of policy transfer	10
Table 3. Tempus IV indicative budget	53

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Policy transfer	18
Figure 2. Elements of the strategic approach of the Tempus programme.....	50
Figure 3. The population of the New Independent States (NIS).....	52
Figure 4. Number of projects within the Tempus III phase	52
Figure 5. Funds allocated within the Tempus projects.....	53
Figure 6. Higher education policy transfer in the Republic of Moldova	59

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study Background

Processes of internationalisation, regionalisation, and globalisation occurring worldwide inevitably influence all spheres of social life leading to transformation in the social behaviour paradigms, shifts in existing structures, orders and norms as well as to changes in dominating values, beliefs and perceptions. Discussing the influence of the worldwide processes over such societal field as higher education one would almost immediately mention the Bologna process as one of the most impressive internationalisation developments of the modern world in the domain of university policy. Despite the fact that the Bologna process is predominately regarded as a European initiative and an endeavour to create the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), it can be undoubtedly stated that this process which achieved an unprecedented pan-European scale in an amazingly short period of time “has a strong – and growing – appeal in other parts of the world” (European Higher Education in a Global Setting, 2007, p. 1). Taking into account such influential character of the Bologna process one would not doubt the great impact this complex multi-dimensional political process has over the higher education systems of the countries located within the European region.

The discussion of the effects produced by the internationally developed ideas over the countries in transition with immature democratic systems is particularly interesting and important. The Republic of Moldova is one of such countries. It proclaimed its independence 17 years ago and started its thorny way toward democracy through ample social, political and economic reforms. The higher education system of the Republic of Moldova currently also undergoes a profound process of transformation, striving to become a modern, comparable and competitive system. In an endeavour to achieve better quality, flexibility and transparency of the national higher education, major actors of the domestic university policy perceive the Bologna process as one of the most important frameworks for the conceptualisation of the structural modification of Moldovan university system.

1.2 Rationale for the study

There are three basic groups of reasons motivating my decision to research on the topic of the Bologna process and the way this process’ incentives are transferred to be further absorbed and

interpreted at the state policy level in the Republic of Moldova and subsequently embedded as national higher education policies and practices.

In the first place, these are the *personal* motives which are primarily curiosity-driven and related with the previous personal commitment to the topic. During my work at the Ministry of Education and Youth of Moldova in the International Relations Department my activity was directly related with the Bologna process in general and with the logistic of Moldova's adherence to the Bologna membership in particular. Therefore, it was assumed that this work experience could have been perceived from the academic perspective as a "prolonged engagement on-site" (Newman & Benz, 1998, p. 51), serving, therewith, as an additional source of evidences for the study, as well as it has essentially facilitated the empirical data collection during the fieldwork. Another important personal reason is the intention to enhance and systematize my knowledge about the Bologna process, enriching the practical experience obtained during the activity as a civil servant by the in-depth academic thinking and abilities of a researcher.

Secondly, a number of *academic* reasons shall be emphasised. These reasons are primarily related with my aspiration to contribute to the existing knowledge about the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova and its Bologna-related reforms and modifications. It is worth mentioning here that so far scholarly research on the mentioned topic is highly scarce and, moreover, there are no academically based studies in the field in English language. Therefore, it is hoped that the theoretically grounded research on Moldovan higher education developments in the context of international university policies will bring valuable results suitable to serve as a point of reference for further studies.

The last but not the least motives for the current research are the *socio-political* ones. Since, as it has been mentioned already, academically valuable research on Moldovan higher education system in the Bologna process context is highly insufficient so far, it is expected that the present paper will enhance understanding of the policy processes occurring in the field of higher education in Moldova. Moreover, it is hoped that the research will prove to be valuable not only to students and experts interested in higher education issues, but also to the national university administrators and higher education policy-makers, contributing to their practical activity by bringing some theoretically grounded argumentation.

1.3 Research aims and questions

The present study aims to explore the way ideas of international character, and specifically those of the Bologna process, acquire the form of practical political developments within a certain national context. The object of the present study is the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova. Therefore, the *research objective* of this Master's thesis is to discuss *how the international developments in the area of higher education policy and, specifically those stipulated in the Bologna documents, are transferred to the level of national policy formulation of the Republic of Moldova.*

The outlined above research problem can be articulated by the following research questions:

1. *By what means and through what kind of instruments are the Bologna-related ideas and practices transferred to the level of national higher education policy formulation in Moldova?*
2. *Which actors of the national higher education system of the Republic of Moldova perform as the principle mediators between international and national levels?*

In order to maintain the research based focus, a number of key concepts and notions will be applied to form a theoretical framework of the study. *Policy transfer, policy network* and the *Bologna process* are the basic concepts underpinning the empirical part of the present study. The concepts are more precisely discussed and overviewed in the second chapter.

1.4 Methodology

The study is based on such qualitative research methods as document study (content analysis) and interviewing. (Bryman, 2004, p. 181) It is aimed that the combination of these methods of data collection will assure better validity and reliability of the present research findings.

There are several kinds of research interview which can be combined into two basic categories. The first category represents interview as a technique of the quantitative research methodology. *Structured* or *standardized* interview belongs to this category. The second major group of research interviews can be named - a *qualitative* or *exploratory*, which includes such more specific interview styles as: free-style, in-depth, open-ended, semi-structured, unstructured, life-history, oral-history, etc. The main purpose of the standardized interview is that of (factual) data

collection, while the goal of qualitative interview is “not that of data collection but ideas collection” (Oppenheim, 1999, p. 67). In explorative interview the emphasis is made “on greater generality in the formulation of initial research ideas and on interviewees’ own perspective”, “there is much greater interest in the interviewee’s point of view” (Bryman, 2004, p. 319). Thus, the exploratory interview helps “to develop ideas and research hypotheses rather than to gather facts and statistics” (Oppenheim, 1999, p. 67).

According to C. Marshall and G. B. Rossman, there are several strengths of the interviewing methodology. Interview “yields data in quantity quickly” and provides “wider variety of information”. Moreover, the immediate follow-up and possibility to ask for clarifications “allows the researcher to understand the meanings that everyday activities hold for people”. But at the same time interviewing has some limitations and weaknesses. Interview involves personal interaction. Interviewees may be unwilling or may be uncomfortable sharing all that the interviewer hopes to explore (Marshall and Rossman, 2006, p. 102).

“A fairly clear focus [of research] rather than a very general notion of wanting to do research on a topic” (Bryman, 2004, p. 323) conditioned the necessity to follow a script (or an interview guide), and thus, semi-structured or open-ended interviews were conducted on site. It was assumed that this type of the interview will “greatly broaden and deepen the original plan of the research, throw up new dimensions to be studied, suggest many new ideas”, as well as will help in the articulation of hypotheses (Oppenheim, 1999, p. 67). In case of the exploratory interviews exact representativeness is not always necessary and the interviews can be conducted with the ‘key informants’ or people who are relevant to the research questions. Therefore, the sampling strategy applied for the present research can be characterized as a combination of strategic and snowball techniques.

During the fieldwork aimed at empirical data collection ten interviews were conducted in the Republic of Moldova in January 2008. The interviews were conducted with vice rectors of four Moldovan universities, with officials responsible for higher education from the Ministry of Education and Youth as well as with two representatives of the civil society. The interviewees were selected as ‘key informants’ by the principle of their competence and information awareness on the issues of the Bologna-related reforms in the higher education system of Moldova. With the permission of the respondents the interviews were recorded. For the sake of anonymity the answers, opinions, and ideas of the interviewees, quoted and referred to within the

present study, are codified and presented as Respondent 1 through Respondent 10 (R1...R10). The list of the respondents¹ is presented in the Appendix 1.

The second basic methodology applied in the present study is the qualitative content analysis of the national higher education policy documents available to the author, as well as analysis of the secondary data sources such as national studies, reports and surveys. Analysis of some statistical data is applied as well. Thus, the statistical data analysis is applied to describe socio-economic context of the Republic of Moldova in section 3.1 and the higher education system of Moldova in section 3.2. Besides, a comparison of statistical data on the Tempus programme in the New Independent States (NIS) is accomplished in the section 6.4.

1.5 Organisation of the study

The structure of the present research comprises seven chapters. In Chapter 1, the study background, research aims and questions are presented along with an overview of the research methodology. Chapter 2 is aimed to shed light on the main theoretical concepts of the present research. Policy transfer, policy network and the Bologna process are the basic notions forming the conceptual framework of the thesis and are, therefore, overviewed in the first three sections of the second chapter. In the fourth section the above concepts are combined and a theoretical chart is presented. In Chapter 3, the Republic of Moldova context is overviewed, the national higher education system is described and its Bologna related analysis is made. Chapter 4 is designed to review more precisely the Bologna process developments in the Republic of Moldova. Therefore, the chronology of basic political steps undertaken in view of joining the Bologna process as well as the rationale for the Bologna process membership is presented. Major achievements since formal Bologna membership along to the principle problems related with the Bologna reforms are outlined here. Chapter 5 presents the backbone of the present study since the theoretical and empirical data is combined and analysed there. In Chapter 6, an overview of the Tempus programme is made and the impact of the programme over the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova is discussed. Finally, in Chapter 7, the overall conclusion is drawn, and the limitations of the study are highlighted along with some aspects of validity and reliability of the conducted research.

¹ N.B! The order of the respondents presented in the list does not correspond to the coding R1 through R10. The information on the coding principle is available exclusively to the author of the present research.

2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The current chapter is aimed to build up and to develop the theoretical framework of the present study through reviewing and discussing such notions and concepts as *policy transfer* and *policy network*. The mentioned basic theoretical concepts, applied to underpin the empirical data of the research, derive from the comparative politics, public policy, organizational sociology, and developmental studies. The Bologna process is another term relevant to be overviewed in the present chapter since this international trend and development has acquired recently certain theoretical character often referred to in many analytical studies.

2.1 Policy transfer

Nowadays, hardly any political process taking place in a certain country occurs in total isolation from the political developments proceeding in other countries. Moreover, in the modern circumstances of globalisation and internationalisation, almost no one can claim that a particular political change is a pure ‘home-grown policy’. To some extent this explains the fact that “the literature on policy transfer, diffusion and convergence as well as lesson drawing is burgeoning” (Stone, 2000, p. 1). The current chapter is not meant to analyze in full detail the existing literature on policy transfer, but aims to present some general knowledge about the concept.

2.1.1 Operationalisation and definition

Idea-spreading is traditionally discussed in terms of “diffusion” (Gzarniawska and Sevón, 1996, p. 23). Studies on policy diffusion were originally developed in the US. Diffusion has been defined as any pattern of successive adoption of a policy innovation. The term describes a trend of successive or sequential adoption of a practice, policy or a programme (Stone, 2000, p. 4).

Along with the term diffusion multiple terms, notions, and categories are used in policy transfer literature. It is worth noting however that policy transfer research is not yet mature enough and, therefore, there is no yet commonly agreed set of definitions for the terms and notions of this subject area. Thus, in one of her recent articles Åse Gornitzka refers to the synonymous meaning of such terms as “policy transfer, copying, imitation, emulation and diffusion” (Gornitzka, 2007, p. 21). The principle distinction she makes is the one between the two types of policy transfer: *diffusion* and *translation* (ibid.). Thus, in case of diffusion what is imported remains unchanged and so the original definition of problems and solutions in a policy area and the links between

them remain the same. While in case of the translation of a policy or a structure the latter are affected by the road upon which they travel from one context to another and thus the definition of problems and solutions may change or solutions become linked to other problems and in this sense a transformation occurs (Gornitzka, 2007, p. 22).

Therewith, according to Diane Stone, the terms: diffusion, convergence, lesson-drawing, learning and transfer – are not interchangeable even though there is considerable overlap. Policy transfer can encompass coercion as well as lesson-drawing. Lesson-drawing is a voluntary process. Learning may lead to policy transfer but it may also produce other policy outcomes or no apparent outcome. Any of these processes may take place between individuals, between and within organizations and through networks (Stone, 2000, p. 14).

Therefore, in order to avoid a profound discussion on the correctness of definitions and terms, the basic term used in the present study is *policy transfer*. But such notions as copying, emulation, combination, and inspiration are discussed, in accordance with the framework developed by Dolowitz and Marsh (2000), as degrees of policy transfer and not as the synonymous terms of the latter.

Most common and widely accepted definition of policy transfer is given by Dolowitz and Marsh. According to them, a *policy transfer* is a “process by which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political system (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political system” (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000, p. 5).

2.1.2 Variables

Dolowitz and Marsh relate the process of policy transfer to policy outcomes. Along their study the authors try to prove that the policy transfer process does not inevitably lead to the successful implementation of a policy or a program. Moreover, recently “it is becoming increasingly apparent that policy transfer can and often does, lead to policy failure” (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000, p.6). The researchers analyze the process of transfer within a broader theoretical framework, applying such variables as: (a) the **object** of transfer (what is transferred), (b) the **degree** of transfer (what are the different degrees of transfer), (c) the **reasons** of transfer (why do actors engage in policy transfer), and (d) the **actors** of transfer (who are the key actors involved in the policy transfer process) (ibid.).

Further analysis of the policy transfer concept will be undertaken along the above mentioned four variables:

- a) When we discuss the **object** of transfer, it is important to distinguish between *policies* which are seen as broader statements of intention and which generally denote the direction policy-makers wish to take, and *programs* which are the specific means of the course of action used to implement policies.
- b) According to Dolowitz and Marsh there are basically four different gradations or **degrees** of transfer: *copying*, which involves direct and complete transfer; *emulation*, which involves transfer of the ideas behind the policy or program; *combinations*, which involve mixtures of several different policies; and *inspiration*, where policy in another jurisdiction may inspire a policy change, but where the final outcome does not actually draw upon original (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000, p. 13).
- c) In order to understand better how the policies are transferred it is also important to consider the motivations involved or the **reasons** of transfer. Policy transfer continuum is helpful in this respect and permits to reflect the difference in policy transfer motivations ranging “from lesson-drawing to the direct imposition of a program, policy or institutional arrangement on one political system by another” (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000, p. 13). In other words policy transfer reasons can range from the voluntary ones to the coercive imposition.
- d) Finally, policy transfer ‘success’ is related to the **actors** involved in the process. Actors within a policy network can be basically divided into two major categories. These are the official actors such as bureaucrats, politicians and state agencies and a much broader category of individuals and organizations “outside and between the state” (Stone, 2000, p. 18) which includes business, transnational corporations, non-governmental corporations, voluntary, and other organizations. The mentioned actors build up the so-called “Third Sector in governance” (Stone, 2000, p. 19).

The discussed above variables of policy transfer concept are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1. Policy transfer variables

Policy Transfer	<u>Object</u> (what is transferred)	Policy idea
		Policy program
		Policy practice (best practice)
	<u>Reasons</u> (why is transferred)	Policy transfer continuum: 
	<u>Degree of transfer</u> (how is transferred)	Copying
		Emulation
		Combination
		Inspiration
	<u>Actors</u> (who transfers)	<i>Official/formal actors</i> : policy makers, bureaucrats
		<i>Non-state actors</i> : NGO, experts, individuals (policy entrepreneurs), interest groups
	<i>International/transnational actors</i> : International organisations, transnational corporations	

2.1.3 Classification

Several kinds or types of policy transfer can be identified when differentiating them by space and time principle. Thus for instance we can distinguish *internal* (national) and *external* (international) kinds of transfer. The first one takes place within the same county among its regions, districts, or states (e.g. USA, Russian Federation). The ‘external’ or ‘international’ policy transfer occurs when policies or practices are transported from abroad. A distinct type of international transfer is represented by a *supranational* one. The latter transfer occurs when exported policies and/or practices are initiated and developed by a supranational body or organization. (e.g. EU, UN). In my opinion, the international initiative aimed to harmonize higher education policy changes occurring in the majority of European countries and commonly known as the Bologna process is relevant to be brought here as an example of the supranational policy transfer.

When exporting jurisdiction is represented by a single country (clearly identifiable) or a region, in case of national transfer, a policy transporting process can be called *unilateral*. Thereafter, in the case of the *multilateral* transfer, policies are transported from a group or a number of countries representing jurisdiction of the same or similar policies. Moreover, a *reverse* transfer can also take place when a certain policy which has acquired some useful modification within the context of the importing jurisdiction, is exported back to the country of origin. (cf. Stone,

2000; Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000; Gzarniawska & Joerges, 1998, p. 207). The above classification is presented in the Table 2.

Table 2. Classification of policy transfer

Types of Policy Transfer (by space and time principle)	Internal	Policy transfer occurs within one country.
	External	Policy is transferred from abroad.
	Unilateral	Policy transfer occurs in one direction from an exporting jurisdiction to the importing one.
	Multilateral	Exporting jurisdiction is represented by a group of countries.
	Reverse	After policy transfer takes place a policy can be modified within the local context and later in its turn can be transferred back to the initial exporter.
	Supranational	Policy transfer occurs within a framework of a supranational body (e.g. EU).
	‘Real-time’ transfer	Policies ‘in operation’ are transferred from one jurisdiction to another.
	‘Second-life’ transfer	Political initiatives and/or ideas which acquired their ‘second life’ throughout history.

2.2 Policy Network

In the current chapter an overview of some thematic literature on policy network concept is made. Another task envisaged to fulfil within the second chapter is to discuss the relevance of the application of the policy network concept for the country specific circumstance of the Republic of Moldova.

2.2.1 Policy network literature review

Globalisation, internationalization, and economic liberalization “gave rise to new and different forms of governance, in which power was increasingly shared horizontally. Policy network approaches became both more common in the policy literature and progressively more ambitious” (Peterson, 2003, p. 8).

Nowadays many public policy scholars agree on the essential change in modern processes of political decision making. It is usually emphasized that today there is no more ‘standard notion of clear separation between state and society’. This means that clearly structured state power hierarchy is blurred by various factors, multiple non-state actors inevitably influencing the processes of national policy making. The state in this context does not represent any more “the

sole entity capable of organizing society, but there is a dispersion of experience and competence and multiplication of channels for mediation and agreement and the involvement of different levels of decision-making from the local to the supranational” (Jouve, 1995 in Coleman, 2001, p. 11608).

As it is summarized by Scharpf, public policy nowadays is more likely to result from the strategic interaction among several or many policy actors, each with a particular understanding of the problem and its own individual institutional self-interests (Scharpf, 1997, in Coleman, 2001, p. 11608). The policy networks concept is particularly relevant for the understanding of described above public-private relations and interactions.

Although “there exists no agreed ‘theory’ of policy networks” (Peterson, 2003, p. 2) and “academic work on networks is often vague or abstract, or both” (ibid.), still the interest in network forms of governance grows substantially in recent time because it reflects how the development of the modern society gradually involves principles of mutuality and interdependence as opposite to those of hierarchy and independence.

The concept of policy network first appeared as an analytical term in the late 1970s. The concepts of corporatism and corporate pluralism served as a basis for the development of the policy network notion. Such authors as H. Heclo (1978) (issue network), Richardson and Jordan (1979) (policy communities) and P. Katzenstein (1978) (policy networks) contributed essentially to the development of this conceptual approach. Thus, according to Heclo (1978), “the policy process was influenced by a diverse collection of stakeholders grouped into ‘issue networks’ – that is, complex networks focused on specific issues – which extended far beyond those actors with the formal power to set policy: Looking for the few who are powerful, we tend to overlook the many whose webs of influence provoke and guide the exercise of power” (Peterson, 2003, p. 7).

One of the most overwhelming and explanatory definitions of the policy network can be found in the “International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences”. *Policy network* is a set of informal and formal interactions between a variety of usually collective (state) and private actors, who have different but interdependent interests. Operating in a more or less institutionalized setting these actors are engaged in horizontal, relatively non-hierarchical

discussions and negotiations to define policy alternatives or formulate policies or implement them (Coleman, 2001, p. 11608).

Policy networks comprise the multiple sets of relations connecting governmental and private-sector actors with common interests in a national policy domain. “The linkages between the actors serve as channels for communication and for the exchange of information, expertise, trust and other policy resources” (Kenis and Schneider, 1991, p. 25). More broadly networks can be perceived as formal or informal structures that link actors (individuals or organisations) who share a common interest on a specific issue or who share a general set of values (Perkin & Court, 2005, p. 3; in Mendizabal, 2006, p. 2).

The policy network literature does not define clearly the composition of a policy network. However, the comparative analysis of the mentioned literature helps to conclude that a policy network can encompass a wide variety of actors, ranging from the state authorities, bodies and structures; non-governmental organizations, foundations and media agencies to individual actors, such as experts, scientists, and academics. In the framework of the present research, a number of key actors were identified as component parts of a higher education policy network. These are official state structures responsible for higher education and their formal representatives, representative bodies of higher education institutions (HEIs), academic staff, students and employers, advisory bodies, quality assurance organisations, international cooperation agencies, disciplinary specific and professional organisations (Witte, 2006, p. 115).

2.2.2 Relevance of the policy network concept for the country specific context

The Republic of Moldova is a country in transition. Consequently the political system of Moldova is still in the processes of the rationalisation of the authority distribution. Accurate functioning of hierarchies, subordinations, and relationships as well as the achievement of the clarity in the definition and delimitation of the competencies and responsibilities of various state structures and bodies are still the issues of great concern of the national political authorities. Moreover, in the context of instability of the political and social life, the process of policy making acquires a complex and vague character. Therefore, it seems relevant to apply the concept of policy networks for the description of the national context of policy formulation in the Republic of Moldova. It is assumed that the mentioned concept is the most suitable for the reflection of the specific circumstances of the policy formulation in the field of higher education in Moldova. Therewith, the concept is particularly appropriate for the discussion and analysis of

the process of transfer of the Bologna related principles and ideas into the national higher education policy practices.

By applying the concept of policy networks I am trying to avoid too simplified perception of the composition of the actors involved into the process of policy-making in the field of higher education. It would be irrelevant to consider just the Ministry of Education and the universities as the single actors of the mentioned process. There is no doubt that the mentioned organisations are the principle factors shaping the higher education policy in general and the Bologna related reforms particularly, but they are definitely not the only actors.

Another too simplified approach would be to perceive the process of translation of the Bologna principles into domestic policy practises in the following manner. After the signing of the Bologna Declaration the Ministry of Education conceptualises all the changes necessary to be made within the higher education system. Further on, the changes are reflected in the respective bill or legislative proposals and submitted to the supreme state bodies (government/parliament) for the approval. As soon as the relevant modifications of the national legislative and regulatory norms come into the force the universities start their implementation in their day-to-day practice. The described above process can be referred to as a pure top-down approach to policy formation and implementation within a particular national system. In the reality, however, the sequence of the political events and actions usually does not acquire the order similar to the described above, although it can be sometimes formally presented as such. Modern circumstances and the character of the national higher education policy formation in the Republic of Moldova could be best described as “interwoven levels of authority with many actors in a web or network of interdependent relationships who influence the agenda setting, decision making, and policy implementation in higher education” (de Boer, 2007). Therefore, policy network concept presents suitable to reflect and overview the contextual reality of Moldova.

Universities of the Republic of Moldova do not have such a long history as their counterparts from the Western world. The oldest higher education institutions of Moldova were established in 1940s, while the majority of the modern universities were established just after the Soviet Union collapse – in 1990s. Therefore, when discussing the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova it is necessary first of all to take into account its ‘young history’. This fact leads to the necessity to perceive the Moldovan higher education institutions differently to those from the traditional democracies. The western universities are normally perceived as very well defined in

space and time entities with long lasting traditions of university autonomy, academic freedom, stable horizontal and vertical links of communication, cooperation, hierarchy and subordination. In case of the Republic of Moldova, when analysing the universities as independent actors of the higher education policy processes, it is important to remember that national universities are still in the process of formation as well-established units with a clear vision of institutional development, commonly agreed and well defined institutional policy, and a widely shared opinion regarding political developments taking place worldwide and at the national level. Therefore, the policy network concept relevantly reflects the fact that sometimes a university shall not be regarded as the sole and integral actor of higher education policy processes, while its units or even individuals can act as separate actors influencing the domestic policy network.

One of the essential characteristics of a policy network is a 'relative independence' of its actors. Although on one hand one can state that the universities are the subordinate entities of the Ministry of Education, on the other hand the principle of university autonomy can be referred here as a factor favouring a 'relative independence' of the universities from the government. The introduction of the ECTS and Diploma Supplement in some of the higher education institutions of Moldova, before the similar developments were undertaken at the state level, can serve as an example of the institutional initiative fulfilled into the practice. Therewith in the context of the Republic of Moldova public funding of the higher education sector is very low and comprises just 20% of the overall budget. This makes the universities seek various sources of additional income and to some point be perceived as business-like entities. In this respect, universities strive for the promotion of own interests including the economic ones. One of the examples in this respect can serve the lobbying of the governmental decision to impose state control over the amount of tuition-fees established by the universities.

Policy network concept is particularly relevant for the policy analysis of a distinct or specific public policy area. It is hardly possible to assume that central state authorities have enough capacity to be equally competent for shaping all peculiarities of policies in every specific policy domain. Moreover this aspect is especially suitable for Moldova - a country in transition. It can be also argued that the specificity of the socio-political life of the Republic of Moldova and particularly various hidden factors influencing the formally democratic processes of public policy formulation and implementation dictate the need to apply some broad theoretical concepts or even metaphors which can best overwhelm all the formal and informal factors shaping the political sphere of the country.

2.3 The Bologna process

The Bologna process takes its origin as well as the name after the Italian city of Bologna where Ministers of Education from 29 European countries signed in 1999 of the Bologna Declaration. The overall aim of the Bologna process stipulated in the Declaration and further developed in other follow-up documents is to establish a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010. It is conceived that the EHEA will be primarily characterised by the more comparable and compatible higher education systems throughout Europe. Currently 46 countries are members of the Bologna process².

The Bologna process is a complex multi-dimensional and “the most large-scale educational reform process the World has so far seen” (Tomusk, 2007, p. 4). Although some authors perceive the Bologna process as a “political campaign launched through a top-down process” (Tomusk, 2007, p. 3), still the majority of higher education researchers often emphasise the unconstrained character of this pan-European initiative and present its nature as “a voluntary commitment undertaken by national governments (i.e., bottom-up)” (van der Wende, 2003, p. 16). Moreover, “vagueness of the Bologna Declaration reflects the fact that it has not been imposed top-down but agreed upon by several independent nation states” (Witte, 2004, p. 420). Regardless to the mentioned differences in authors’ attitudes toward the nature of the Bologna process, the opinion that “it is not entirely correct to talk about the *implementation* of the Process” (Tomusk, 2007, p. 4) becomes widely spread and commonly shared. There are several arguments that can be brought up in favor of the above statement.

First of them is discussed by Voldemar Tomusk and refers to the extreme diversity the Bologna process ‘dares’ to overwhelm. “The Europe of Bologna Process makes a more diverse group of countries, than most of its ideologies dare to accept openly. From Scandinavia, through Great Britain, continental Europe, Albania and Russia it perhaps covers as wide range of quality, as well as issues and problems that one could probably identify anywhere in the world. Making a European system of higher education out of that is an extremely challenging task.” (Tomusk, 2007, p. 228).

² For more details see the Bologna Declaration as well as over follow-up documents of the Bologna Process at official Bologna w-site: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/>
The present chapter is not aimed to explore in depth the very nature of the Bologna process, rather to review some authors’ perception of this tremendous pan-European development occurring in the field of higher education.

Secondly, since the Bologna Declaration, as well as other follow-up documents, is not underpinned by any supranational legitimate power, the document “can hardly be considered a policy in a classical sense” (Witte, 2004, p. 407) being, therefore, “not legally binding” (van der Wende, 2003, p. 16). Moreover, no joint capacity exists at the international level (Tomusk, 2007, p. 247) to build up a firm institutional framework to impose stricter implementation rules, or at least to arrange relevant monitoring procedures. It is worth admitting however, within the latter context, that recently the European Commission gradually acquires more pronounced role as a legitimate authority of the Bologna process, including due to the fact that it performs as the principle funder of the international Bologna-related activities.

The third argument that can be discussed here is based upon the fact often emphasized by the authors describing the Bologna process implementation in their home countries. They argue that certain developments within the national higher education system have already been conceived or even have started yet before the formal Bologna documents were signed (cf. Gornitzka, Välimaa et al., Slantcheva). This undeniable fact clearly illustrates the idea that the Bologna action lines were developed not as a completely new, groundbreaking, and profound reform initiative, but were meant to systematize and structure those developments that have already been taking place in the majority of Western countries. Therefore, it presents not entirely fair to operate with the notion ‘implementation’ in both cases – for the countries where Bologna-like developments have already been taking place yet before 1999, and for the countries which are initially at a much later stage of the Bologna related reforms (i.e. former communist countries).

The last point relevant to be overviewed here is often present in the Bologna process literature. This is the ‘voluntary nature’ of the Bologna engagements and the persistent calls to maintain ‘diversity’ and ‘national identity’ during the process of the embodiment of the internationally agreed principles into domestic higher education policies and every-day practices. As it is noted by Johan P. Olsen, “European level developments do not dictate specific forms of institutional adaptation but leave considerable discretion to domestic actors and institutions” (2002, p. 936).

In the context of discussed above, it can be stated that rather than being implemented the Bologna Declaration items and ideas are being transformed as they are transferred from one context to another including due to the fact that “people translate them according to their own frame of reference” (Gornitzka, 2007, p. 20). The very nature of the implementation activity implies a procedure of a much stricter, rules-related and obligatory character. Therewith, an

activity aimed at a transfer of a policy or an idea leaves much wider space for a maneuver and so permits to national governments to preserve and maintain certain degree of national higher education specificity and identity. Hence the Bologna Process rather than to be regarded a supra-national reform policy of a coercive character, can be perceived – a source of policy transfer and an incentive for higher education policy change in 46 countries, a change which occurs along a commonly agreed direction.

2.4 Combining the concepts – the overall theoretical framework

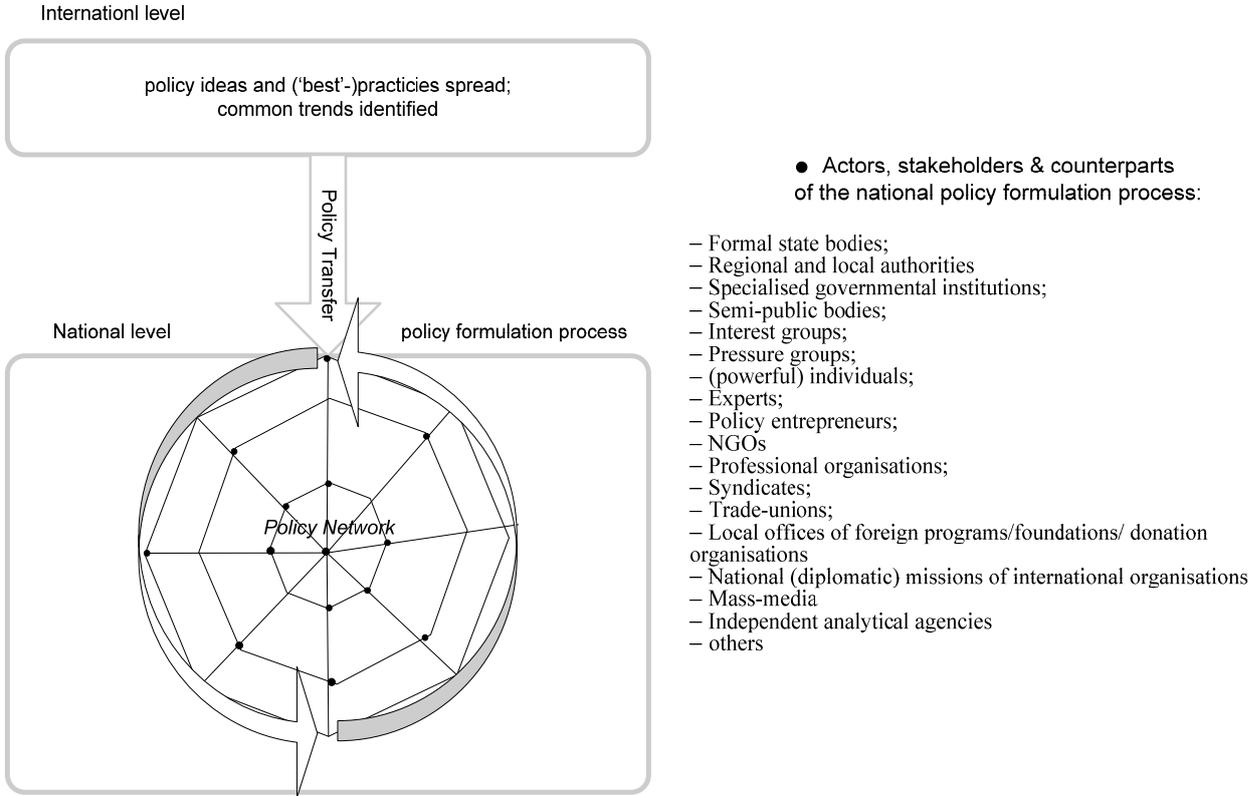
Policy transfer takes place when ideas, interests, behaviors, perceptions and discourses are transported from one jurisdiction to another and adapted. Networking is the most appropriate mode to consider the manner in which policy ideas are spread and sometimes take root (Stone, 2000, p. 7). Network is an increasingly important mechanism for the spread of policy ideas and transfer of practice (Stone, 2000, p. 14).

An important function of policy network is the ability to mobilize resources toward common policy objective including through research collaboration sharing of information and cooperation on other activities that create a dynamic for policy transfer. However the complexity and the uniqueness of each policy network can lead to essential variations along the policy transfer process and often to uneven and imperfect transfer. Thus for instance “an international consensus may prevail on ‘best practice’ but local political realities may mean that this consensus cannot take root in policy development” (Stone, 2000, p. 16).

As it comes from the above, networks represent a mode for the diffusion and dissemination of ideas and policy paradigms. Diane Stone emphasizes that within networks an essential role is played by knowledge actors, who are central to producing discourses, developing justifications for policy change, and building communication structures for the exchange of information (2000, p. 20). Knowledge actors create their own professional or scholarly networks and establish knowledge organizations. The organizations within the networks develop ‘network infrastructure’ through initiation of research, starting newsletters, building data-bases organizing conferences and public discussions. Such infrastructure aids policy transfer agents to become aware of innovative policies adopted elsewhere and provides the opportunity to analyze and comment of the relevance of such policies to their own context. Therefore, networks essentially facilitate gathering of information in a manner that flows around and between geographical, legal and institutional barriers. Moreover, in this way networks become not merely a means for cross-

national transfer of ideas but also represent “new governance structures” (ibid). The above brings us to the conclusion that multiple knowledge actors and variety of organizations interacting within a web of policy network construct the intellectual infrastructure for cross-national learning and, therefore, create justifications for transfer. This tight interaction of actors forming a policy network and facilitating the transfer of internationally spread ideas to the domestic level of policy formulation is schematically presented in the Figure 1.

Figure 1. Policy transfer



3 THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA CONTEXT

3.1 The socio-economic background of the Republic of Moldova

The Republic of Moldova is a young democratic East-European state which acquired its independence on the 27th of August, 1991, being before that a part of the Soviet Union. In 1992 Moldova became a member of United Nations and in 1995 – a member of the European Council. Moldova's transition to a market-based economy has been slow and difficult: significant internal political divisions within successive governments delayed the implementation of structural reforms. The cumulative decline of the economy during 1990-2000 exceeded 60% (second only Tajikistan among transition economies). Moldova is a low-income country, with a medium Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.681 (on the 113th position out of 177 countries), (Human Development Report, 2004, p. 141) which places Moldova in the group of countries with medium human development level. Moreover, the real GDP³ of the Republic of Moldova is the lowest one compared to the other countries - former Soviet Union republics (See Appendix 2).

Besides the above data, it is also relevant to mention such circumstances as poor quality of governance, a high level of corruption, a reported unfavourable investment climate and multi-dimensional poverty (rooted in acute differentiation of income, unemployment, out-migration of labour force, brain-drain), registering highest rates in small towns and rural areas. About 600 000 people, or 37% of the total active population, left the country searching employment abroad (UNESCO conference report, 2006, Ministry of Education and Youth). The brought above examples partly illustrate the fact that the transition of Moldova towards a pluralistic democracy and a market economy has been marked by economic, social and political changes of extraordinary breadth and depth.

3.2 Higher education system of the Republic of Moldova

The collapse of the Soviet system has marked the starting point of the radical transformations in all areas of social life including in higher education. The higher education system started to undergo profound democratic changes.

³ GDP – Gross Domestic Product, defined as the total market value of all final goods and services produced within the country in a given period of time (usually a calendar year).

The formal structure of the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova comprises the following bodies and institutions. The Ministry of Education and Youth (MEY) is the central branch body of public administration in the field of higher education. The Ministry through its Higher Education Department elaborates the strategy and promotes the state policy of the higher education development. Several branch Ministries such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Internal Affairs participate in the administration of the specialized higher education institutions (MEY official Web page).

The Council of the Ministry of Education and Youth is a consultative body. The resolutions adopted by the Council are enforced by the order of the Minister. Through its members the Council represents interests of academic staff, students and social partners. Council of Rectors is another consultative body of the Ministry of Education and Youth. Rectors of higher education institutions report to the Ministry annually. In its turn the Ministry submits to the Government an annual report, as well as suggestions on further higher education development (Bologna National Report, 2005).

The years between 1991 and 2000 were a period of transition toward the non-politicized national system of education. A new concept of national education had been designed and approved by 1994. The development of the higher education system able to satisfy the growing demand for qualitative higher education became the major strategic option of educational policy in Moldova. In 1995 the Law on Education was adopted. As since the Law on Education is essentially a framework law, its implementation mechanisms were created through the elaboration of further legislative acts. The legislation in the field of education has affected the key aspects of higher education such as the role of the state in the higher education system, the relationship between education and the labour market, the financing of education, the efficiency of the system of education in general, and quality assurance in higher education (Tiron et al., 2003, p. 29).

There are 30 higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova, 14 of them are private. Around 130 000 students are studying in higher education, 80 % of them are studying in the public/state higher education institutions (MEY official Web page). Applying a comparative analysis of the basic higher education system indicators it can be noted that the number of higher education students have increased almost for 120% during the recent years, being in 1991 – 55 000. Such a sharp expansion of the student body is characteristic for the majority of former communist countries, currently passing through their transition period. Another common feature

of the higher education systems of the countries from the former Soviet block is the rapid increase of the number of higher education institutions due to appearance of new establishments primarily of the private nature. Thus, if in the late 1980s there were 8 HEIs in Moldova then in late 1990s this number increased up to 47. Worth mentioning, however, that in recent times the number of private universities is gradually decreasing (from 32 in 2000 to 14 in 2008) due to the enhanced normative requirements toward higher education institutions (Inf. note, National Statistic Bureau, 2007).

3.3 Challenges facing the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova

The major challenges of the higher education system of Moldova are inevitably related with the overall context of the modern higher education and particularly with the massification of the latter. Among these peculiar for the national tertiary sector challenges the following ones can be identified.

Growing disproportion of the student-faculty ratio. In 1991, there were 55 000 students and 5.000 of teaching staff; in 2006 the students' number was around 130.000, while the faculty number was just 6 000. Thus, during the 15 years, the number of higher education students has increased almost for 120%, but the number of academic staff just for 20%. This means that the ratio of students per one professor/lecturer has almost doubled being 11 students in 1990 and 21 in 2005 (MEY; National Bureau of Statistics).

Low qualification of the major part of the faculty. Struggling against insufficient academic staff some universities often employ Master and PhD students. Essential part of the faculty is employed at part-time and/or on temporary basis. Many of the permanent staff members have to implement both functions: the academic and the administrative one.

Insufficient public budgeting. The public budget of state higher education institutions covers just 20% of the total amount of expenses (cf. Tiron et al., 2003, p. 31). Deficient state funding and low salaries of higher education employees force universities to spend major part of the income from tuition fees to the additional salaries and current consumptions, while much fewer amounts are left for the investment in higher education quality and/or improvement of facilities and material base. Therewith, sharp shortage of public financial resources makes the university highly dependent on the students' tuition fees: 80 % of all students pay tuition fees (National

Bureau of Statistics, 2007). The obvious consequence of the above situation is the widely spread “policy” of drop-outs prevention regardless the students’ academic performances.

Concentration of higher education institutions in the capital. The majority of students (85%) study at the capital of the Republic of Moldova (MEY, National Bureau of Statistics, 2007). Dramatic increase of the number of students studying in the capital has led to the extreme deterioration of life conditions of students coming from rural areas. Most of the university’s infrastructure (dorms, libraries, canteens) is considerably outdated and/or requires capital renovation. Some of higher education institutions do not provide hostels at all. These institutions were created just several years ago and do not possess yet the necessary material base. Poor life conditions force the majority of students coming from rural areas to employ for the low paid but time consuming jobs.

Low students’ performance, which can be partially explained by *low secondary education quality.* In some cases, the quality of secondary education depends on the secondary school’s location: in rural areas or in city centres. Rural secondary schools are much less subsidized and equipped what leads to the lower performance of their graduates. The obvious discrepancy in the secondary training of the municipal and the rural school graduates quite often influences the university students coming from rural areas as a factor discouraging better higher education performance.

Along with the above, *students’ indifference* and, sometimes, *ignorance* toward better academic performance is additionally conditioned by the following reasons. Expectations of family, friends and employers influence strongly youngsters’ decision to pursue higher education. But in current conditions a higher education qualification is not yet a guarantee of employment. Quite often much more influential factors in this respect are relationship and protectionism. This fact influences negatively the academic attitudes of both categories of students: those who can not rely on some influential acquaintance are discouraged by the fact that in major cases good academic performance is not duly appreciated by the employers. Respectively those students who are assured about their further professional career are not striving for better academic results as well.

Continuous reformation and/or modernization of the higher education sector affects negatively the university system, which due to its relatively young history is much subjected to external

influences. Moreover, in the circumstances when universities have not yet reached high level of the organizational development and financial stability, it is often impossible to hire highly qualified administrative personnel to manage all the necessary changes conditioned by the reformation processes. The most common solution is that the faculty usually combines both functions: the administrative and the academic one, which obviously does not contribute to the improvement of higher education quality.

The listed above challenges are primarily caused by the overall socio-economic circumstances of Moldova - a county in transition, and clearly illustrate the conditions under which national higher education system operate. Therewith, these pragmatic and daily problems condition the deficiency of the capacity of the national higher education system to respond promptly and efficiently to the new challenges arising from the worldwide developments in general as well as from the international higher education policies in particular. The Bologna Process policies are the most relevant example in this sense.

3.4 The analysis of the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova in the context of the Bologna process

In conditions of continuous reformation processes, insufficient state budgeting, deteriorating material base, and extremely expanded student body the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova meets challenges provoked by the processes of internationalisation globalisation, and specifically by the process aimed at harmonisation of European university systems well known as the Bologna process.

Although the mentioned circumstances obviously constitute the unfavourable conditions for the efficient functioning and prosperous development of the national higher education and to even lesser extent facilitate successful adoption of the Bologna process related developments within Moldovan university system, still some positive features and opportune characteristics can be identified when analysing higher education in the republic. First advantage is related to the size of the country and, correspondingly, of the higher education system. Relatively small scale makes the system easy manageable and quite homogeneous by the level of development. Although from other perspectives the following feature is rather a disadvantageous one, from the perspective of system governance and management it brings some benefits. The mentioned feature constitutes the fact that 85 % of higher education institutions are located within the capital area. Therefore, it is much easier to organise and to maintain sustainable cooperation

among the majority of HEIs, as well as to monitor and coordinate their activity. The mentioned above fact partially causes the following favourable characteristic of the Moldovan higher education. Unanimous propitious attitude of the national academic community towards the Bologna related reforms have been emphasised by foreign experts as a positive feature of the Moldovan higher education system.

There are several essential weaknesses of the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova relevant to be discussed within the current context. These are the insufficient institutional capacity to properly regulate, coordinate and monitor the Bologna process related developments and changes within the system of higher learning and the lack of funding specifically designated for the mentioned changes and reforms. Another threat which essentially impedes the prosperous development of the national higher education is the insufficient transparency and availability of information. Therewith, some deficiency in experience and expertise along with the highly restricted time limits becomes additional obstacles to conduct efficiently the overwhelming structural reforms in higher education.

However, despite the multiple challenges, difficulties, and weaknesses of the Moldovan higher education system there are several opportunities that can be enumerated here. These are first of all participation in the Tempus program⁴, which becomes an essential source of experience, as well as funding at the institutional level. Secondly, the higher education system due to its relatively short history, immature character, and transitional period of development, is not bound by the heritage of historically developed and hence quite rigid rules, principles, and regulations, which in some cases (i.e. Germany, Russia) can become a substantial impediment, or simply a difficulty on the way of new reforms demanded by time and international trends. Therefore, from this angle, the Moldovan higher education can be perceived as a system which is more open and adaptive to the external experience and ‘good practice’ examples; a system where a policy transfer process occurs much smoother. The summary of the above made (SWOT) analysis of the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova in the context of the Bologna process is presented in Appendix 3.

⁴ In more detail the Tempus program is defined and discussed in Chapter 6.

4 BOLOGNA PROCESS AND THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

The present chapter is aimed to overview the major developments and the activities undertaken by the Republic of Moldova to become a full member of the Bologna process and to line up the modernisation of the national higher education system to the principles commonly agreed at the European level⁵.

4.1 Rationale for the Bologna process membership

There is a widely spread opinion that the Bologna process is perceived by some marginal countries (i.e. Eastern European ones) as a tool which essentially facilitates their European integration and finally can “pave the way to the full EU membership” (Tomusk, 2004, p. 85). Besides this, according to Valdemar Tomusk, such country as Russian Federation, which obviously “will never become a part of the European Union” (Tomusk, 2007, p. 227), perceives the Bologna process membership as a high national priority by several reasons. The membership, for instance, allows Russian politics to talk about the success of the Russian higher education as well as about the achievements of the country’s foreign policy in general. In addition, the Bologna discourse is used for the “purposes of internal political mobilization” and even for arguing on the “Russia’s continued importance as a world superpower” (Tomusk, 2007, p. 247). The immediate and direct economic benefits of the Russian universities, academic community and students is another widely spread assumption on the positive effects of Bologna over the national higher education system. Thus, according to Tomusk, Bologna related policies in Russia are used “to secure legitimacy for a particular political regime” (ibid.) and to acquire (albeit groundless) “badly-needed” funding for Russian universities.

Continuing the discussion on the rationale of the Bologna process membership and applying the above mentioned reasons for the context of the Republic of Moldova it can be stated that in contrast to the Russian case, the intention to join the Bologna process was not conceived and subsequently imposed by the central political power, but gradually evolved due to the internationalization initiatives supported and promoted by the national higher education institutions. Moreover, the perception and appreciation by the central state authorities of the Bologna process as a ‘ticket’ to further EU integration came at a later stage when the advantages

⁵ It is worth noting, that essential difficulty faced during the elaboration of the present chapter was the lack of preceding analytical surveys and research based studies aimed to overview the Moldovan higher education system reform in the context of the Bologna process developments.

of becoming a part of the European higher education reform processes have been already comprehended and proclaimed by the academic community. The stated above can be further developed and illustrated by the description of the specific circumstances of the national context of higher education policy formation following below.

In order to present an overview of the contextual peculiarities of the educational policy formation in the Republic of Moldova, it is first of all necessary to mention that a strategy of gradual or step-by-step reform of the education system has been chosen in Moldova. This can be argued and illustrated, for instance, by the fact that the transition from the ten-year secondary schooling, common for all Soviet-type education systems, to the twelve-year lyceum education, most usually applied in the western practice, have occurred quite slowly and evolved during more than 17 years. Thus although the intermediate form of secondary schooling – ‘the eleven-year secondary schools of general culture’ still exist in Moldova, starting with the academic year 2008-2009, the admission to the higher education institutions will require holding of the lyceum education diploma (‘diploma de bacalaureate’) or its equivalent.

In line with the described example, the introduction of the two-tiered higher education structure can not be considered as a sudden and unexpected development within the higher education system. The elaboration, introduction, and application of the Master degree programs started yet in 1990s. This fact can be clearly traced from the first country report submitted to the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) yet before signing the Bologna Declaration. According to the report, the Master degree studies represent a form of the postgraduate education that ensures majoring in a field and aims at consolidation of competencies acquired during the graduate studies. The admission to the Master degree studies is organised by the higher education institutions. The studies last 1-2 years and finalised by the awarding of a Master’s degree diploma. It is also mentioned in the Report that after the formal introduction of the two-cycle higher education structure “the Master degree studies will become the second cycle studies of higher education” (Bologna National Report, 2005). Therefore, it can be noted that although Master program have already existed in Moldovan higher education system for about ten years before the formal start of European-like developments at the national level, the elaboration of such programs was primarily based on the initiatives of universities and was not regulated by state. Duration of such Master programs varied from one institution to another, leaving alone the curricular, contents, and students’ workloads. Moreover, the Master’s degree served just as an optional alternative of the postgraduate studies and was not an obligatory requirement for the admission to the doctoral

level: “Admission to doctoral studies takes place as a result of a competition where those who have Master’s degree and Licence diplomas [equivalent with Bachelor] can participate” (Bologna National Report, 2005).

The presented above examples illustrate the fact that adjusting of the Moldovan education system to the western educational practices and experience has started almost immediately after the proclamation of independence. However, according to many national experts and analysts the national education reform process was far from being homogeneous, strategically consistent and justified. Thus, for instance Vlad Paslaru holds that “Moldova has not elaborated a political doctrine of education, in spite of the modifications operated within education” (2003, p. 7). There are several evidences that can highlight the fact that during about 15 years the Moldovan education system was wandering around choosing among the foreign ‘practices’ an example, which would serve as a model for the national educational structure. In this way, the term “baccalaureate” was borrowed from the Latin countries’ practice to refer to the secondary schools graduates.

Higher education system also experienced multiple transformations, modifications and application of ‘alternative solutions’. Thus, for instance, for a certain period, a “short-term higher education” (Tiron et al., 2003, p. 46) was introduced in Moldova following the example of Romania, but quite soon the novelty was abandoned and this level of education acquired the status of vocational education and training level (non-university professional education). Another example that can be brought here is the pilot introduction in 2001 of the American study credit system in the biggest higher education institution of the country – the Moldovan State University. As one could predict, shortly after that, the European Credit Transfer System substituted the American model of study credits.

In line with the above, it is also necessary to take into account the frequent restructuring of the Ministry of Education and the transferring of its high ranking staff, accompanied by equally frequent shifts in the orientations and priorities of the educational policy (Tiron et al., 2003, p. 31). Therefore, it is almost impossible to reach the efficient and strategically coherent solutions of the problems and challenges related with the reform of the national higher education (ibid.), and it becomes quite evident that Moldovan higher education has been developing primarily by a trial-and-error method where the clearest tendency and a goal was “to abandon the communist education system” (Paslaru, 2003, p. 27).

Taking the above into account, it can be concluded that as soon as the Bologna related developments started to acquire certain consistency at the European level, the Moldovan higher education reform process gradually shifted toward the aim of “harmonizing higher education legislation with European policy in the field of education and at synchronizing the Moldovan system of higher education with the trends of educational development in the Western European countries” (Tiron et al., 2003, p. 31). And, therefore, “the integration of Moldovan higher education into the European higher education area” was declared as a final major objective (ibid. p. 30). Moreover, it shall be stated that the Bologna action lines which have systematised the higher education changes and trends occurring in the majority of European countries, have become not only a “final objective”, but also a “conceptual framework” for the cohesive motion of the higher education reformation process, outlining in a consistent way the current and future strategic priorities relevant and valid for the central higher education authority regardless any political changes and/or shifts. The above fact can be best illustrated by the words of the Deputy Minister of Education and Youth of Moldova at the Conference of European ministers responsible for higher education in Bergen in 2005, where the Republic has been unanimously accepted as a full member of the Bologna process: “The Bologna Process, unprecedented by its speed, as well as social, cultural and political goals and outputs, is currently viewed by the national authorities as a conceptual framework outlining the priority guidelines for further development of higher education in the Republic of Moldova” (Speech of the Minister of Education, 2005, Bergen).

4.2 Joining the Bologna process – the chronology of basic political steps

The process of the adherence of the Republic of Moldova to the Bologna Declaration principles can be provisionally divided into two basic stages – the pre-joining period and the post-joining stage. The earliest point of the pre-joining phase can be marked by the 2001 when, due to the participation in projects within the Tempus program, administrators of Moldovan universities took part in a number of international conferences and events. Owing to such participation the national academic community has become acquainted with the Bologna-related developments in European higher education (R4, R1). Subsequently, universities of Moldova, higher education stakeholders as well as the civil society have become aware of the basic Bologna principles and therewith gradually involved into their promotion within the national context.

A formal political step taken in view of joining the Bologna process was the participation in the Conference of the European ministers of education in Berlin in September 2003. The delegation of the Republic of Moldova headed by the Minister of Education took part in the work of the conference with the status of observer. Shortly after the conference, a formal letter was directed to the Bologna Follow-up Group stating the intention of the Moldova to sign the Bologna Declaration.

It is important to emphasize that the period preceding formal Bologna membership can be characterized by the unanimous commitment of both academic community and governmental authorities to common European educational values. As it is declared in the letter of intention submitted to BFUG: “We are aware of the fact, that adjusting the system of higher education to the European standards requires tremendous efforts from all stakeholders of educational process, both: at university and administrative levels.” (MEY, 2004) Moreover, the organization of the international Conference entitled “Modernization of Higher Education in the Republic of Moldova in the context of the Bologna Process” in November 2004, (AlmaMater Web page) displayed the ability of various stakeholders to cooperate efficiently, illustrated the overall positive perception of the Bologna ideas in the country, as well as demonstrated the country’s readiness and capability to fully assume the Bologna-related obligations.

The pre-joining stage activities focused on the conceptualization of structural reforms, elaboration of new regulations, involvement and a dialogue among higher education stakeholders. Therefore, the mentioned period represented a phase of maximum responsibility for the country, characterized by important transformations that have subsequently provided the firm foundation which have ensured the signing of the Bologna Declaration. Moldova has become a full member of the Bologna process in May 2005 at the Bergen conference.

4.3 Major achievements and progress made since formal Bologna membership

According to the Bologna Process National Report, Moldova has reached essential achievements in view of translating Bologna principles and ideas into national higher education policies and practices (Bologna National Report, 2005). First of all, key amendments were made in legislation on education. According to the amendments, the Two-Cycle Structure of higher education was stipulated by law. The first cycle finalizes with the awarding of the Diploma of

Licentiate [equivalent with Bachelor] and the second cycle graduates acquire the Master degree⁶. The implementation of the ECTS was also stipulated by the amendments (Law No. 71-XIV regarding the Amendments and Completions to the Law on Education).

Besides the above mentioned modifications of the current legislation, it is relevant to refer here to another important legislative development. On the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Youth and in tight cooperation with the academic community, a bill on higher education was drafted within the overall activity aimed at elaboration of the “second generation” laws in the field of education. The so-called Code of Laws on Education was subjected to the public debate and foreign expertise. After the approval by the Government, the bill was submitted to the Parliament for further discussion and endorsement.

The National Coordination Council was established at the state level by the Governmental decision in order to monitor the Bologna process goals fulfillment. The body is chaired by the Vice-Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova. The Council ensured better cooperation and coordination among higher education stakeholders involved in the process of Bologna-related reforms, comprising “representatives of the Ministry of Education and Youth, other Ministries, rectors of higher education institutions, and students” (Bologna National Report, 2007). One of the functions of the Council is the monitoring of the realization of the “Programme of Actions concerning the Implementation of the Objectives of the Bologna Process”⁷, approved by the Ministry of Education and Youth in April 2005 (Report of the deputy minister, Dec 2006; EURIDICE, 2006/2007, p. 219).

In order to assure further alignment with the Bologna principles, the overviewed below specific and narrow activities were undertaken at the national level. In 2005, a Service for Qualifications Recognition was established within the MEY. Although there are more recognition requests for academic rather than for professional purpose, higher education institutions are assigned as centers for professional recognition of qualifications (Report of the deputy minister, Dec 2006).

The Classification of Educational Fields and Specialities for Initial Training in the Higher Education Institutions (first cycle) was approved by law in July 2005 (EURIDICE, 2006/2007, p.

⁶ The higher education system of the Republic of Moldova (after the essential amendments in legislation) is schematically presented in Appendix 4 (Source: EURIDICE, 2007).

⁷ The Programme of Actions is presented in Appendix 5.

219). The Classification was elaborated in accordance with the ISCED-97⁸. Starting with 2005, the admission to the first cycle within higher education institutions was organized and carried out in accordance with the new Classification. The Framework for the first cycle was developed and approved by July 2005. The document constitutes the basis for the elaboration of the undergraduate curricula.

In order to develop a methodological support for the ECTS⁹ implementation, facilitate the academic mobility, and improve transparency and comparability of educational programs and qualifications awarded in the Republic of Moldova and Europe, the “Guide on the Implementation of the National System of Educational Credits” was designed and approved in February 2006.

Since 2005, a new model of Diploma Supplement is issued to every higher education graduate free of charge. The new model has been essentially improved and is currently issued in two languages: the official state language and the English language. The Diploma Supplement was positively appreciated by the UNESCO-CEPES and of the Council of Europe experts (Report, Bologna process Austrian information seminar, 2006).

In the context of quality assurance, a set of methodological modifications was developed for institution/program evaluation and accreditation. New indicators and criteria of higher education quality are used. Some measures were taken to enhance the transparency and efficiency of quality assurance procedures. These were achieved by the including of representatives of branch Ministries, students, and other stakeholders as members of the external commissions for evaluation and accreditation. The first institution evaluated by the external (foreign) agency was the Medical and Pharmaceutical University. In order to enhance quality, national higher education institutions have established quality management units. A vice-rector position responsible for quality assurance was set up in each public and some private universities. Quality manuals are drawn up and distributed at the institutional level. The achievements are partly the result of good partnership relations established within the Tempus project with universities e.g. from Sweden, Germany, Spain, and France (ibid.).

The development of a National Qualifications Framework for higher education was initiated in view of ensuring an adequate level of quality, clarity and transparency of the national higher

⁸ International Standard Classification of Education - 1997 version.

⁹ European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)

education as well as in order to facilitate recognition of national and international qualifications. Experts from various higher education institutions, representatives from branch Ministries, patronage, enterprises, students, graduates have been involved in this process (National Bologna Report, 2007, p. 5). The mentioned stakeholders make part of the working groups aimed at the elaboration of draft of Qualification Framework for each narrow field of education.

Some provisions in the national regulations stipulate students' participation in university governance at institutional and national levels. There are several examples of such practices. Student senates have been set up and operate in eight higher education institutions; a National Council of Students - the 'Prime-ministers' Club (representatives of higher education institutions) operates at the Government level; multiple associations of students from different professional fields (law, economics, journalism and others) are established, along with associations of students with disabilities and other youth organizations. Students are involved in examining of various issues related to the national higher education. Thus, student' representatives are invited to evaluate the conditions provided in student hostels and to submit recommendations to improve students' living conditions on campus. In addition, students have contributed to a new method of calculating accommodation fees. They have been included in the working group for the elaboration of a series of normative acts (the Regulations on student accommodation services, the Regulations on scholarships etc.) (Report of the Deputy Minister of Education and Youth of the Republic of Moldova, Dec. 2006).

Therefore, as it follows out of the presented above information, quite essential progress can be registered in the Republic of Moldova in view of alignment of the national higher education policy and practices with the widely spread and internationally accepted norms, principles and values in the field of higher learning in general and, specifically, with the regulations stipulated by the Bologna documents.

4.4 Major obstacles facing the national higher education system in the context of Bologna-related reforms

As it was discussed in the section 4.4, the overall social context of the country in transition as well as "the political and economical instability of the Republic" (Tiron et al., 2003, p. 31) caused a number of essential problems within the higher education sector of Moldova, "among which the most serious are under-funding of education which entailed the exodus of the teaching staff, especially of the younger generation, and the continuing degradation of the technical and

material infrastructure of educational institutions of all types” (ibid.). Along with the overall contextual deficiencies of the national higher education sector discussed in the section 3.3, there is a number of challenges which are caused by the Bologna-related reforms. Therefore, the present section gives brief overview of the challenges faced by the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova on its way of transferring Bologna principles into national higher education policy practices.

Prior to introducing Bologna –related changes and modification to the higher education structure of the Republic of Moldova *no coherent, competent and theoretically based assessment* of the preceding reform process has been made in the country (Toderas, 2006, p. 19). The systematic evaluation of the major legislative acts, their follow-up modifications and achieved political outcomes could have helped to estimate major omissions and/or incoherence among the regulatory acts currently in fore. Putting it simpler, there is an urgent need in Moldova to elaborate a ‘white book’ of the higher education sector reformation process.

There is *deficiency in theoretically grounded expertise* and, hence, in competent argumentation, justification, as well as analysis of various reform initiatives in the field of national higher education. According to the opinion of some university professors “there is an urgent need of creation of a national research center aimed at scientific study and validation of the process of modernization in education” (Rusnac et al., 2007, p. 165, 166). Similar to the practices of the majority of European countries, such center can become an independent research-based body operating, therewith, in tight cooperation with the branch state authorities, and, therefore, to a great extend facilitating all political developments in the field of higher education. Subsequently, the center should become a concentration point for the mutually advantageous interaction of competent theorists and practitioners.

Another major challenge faced by the higher education of the Republic of Moldova is the *insufficient institutional capacity* to coordinate the process of the Bologna-related transformations at the state level. Although, as it was mentioned in the section 4.3, the National Coordination Council was established at the state level to carry out the coordination and monitoring activities of the Bologna reforms (Bologna National Report, 2005), the factual activity of the Council is far from being efficient and promising (R2, R1). The major reason of such inefficiency is the ad-hoc nature of the body in question. Moreover, the majority of members of the Council are highly ranked officials and representatives of universities (usually

rectors or vice rectors). The latter fact makes it clear that it is quite complicated to guarantee the stable composition of the Council. Furthermore, there is no funding specifically designated to assure coherent operation of the Council. In this perspective, one shall not expect a highly efficient work of a body which operates based on a voluntary engagement of its members overloaded with their major duties and responsibilities.

The following challenge, tightly related with the described above, is the insufficient governmental capacity to timely initiate and legislatively support the needed changes in the national higher education policy. The problem is related with the fact that frequently *the national legislation in force is lagging behind* either the needs of the universities, or even the factual activities undertaken at the institutional level. Several examples of such a discrepancy were described in the section 4.1 and refer to the introduction of the Master degree programs and ECTS system in universities before the relevant state level regulations were adopted. Even after the approval of the overwhelming nationwide regulatory framework, some discrepancy between the factual institutional practices and national legislative basis still remains. Thus, according to the opinion of the Prime Deputy Rector of a Moldovan university, “another essential obstacle which HEIs face recently is the outdated regulation regarding the organization of the educational process in a university, which was elaborated by the Ministry of Education yet in mid of 1990s, and until now has not been reviewed and updated. The mentioned regulation is highly incoherent with the new study programs elaborated and applied in line with the Bologna-related developments’ (Cabac, 2007, p. 161). It is quite remarkable that a similar problem is often described and emphasized in the studies about higher education systems of the East-European countries where “in many cases legislature has followed the dynamics of events in the sector in a reactive way” (Slantcheva, 2007, p. 171).

The next deficiency in the process of embodiment of the common European ideas within the institutional practices in Moldova can be conventionally entitled as “*persisting mentality and inertia from the past*” (Slantcheva, 2007, p. 171). As it was mentioned by the authors of the research “Higher Education in the Republic of Moldova”, “notwithstanding the steps taken in favor of decentralization... the system of education in the Republic of Moldova is still highly centralized” (Tiron et al., 2003, p. 37). This fact can be also confirmed by the opinion of one of the interviewees, who stated that “in spite of the fact that recently the universities are starting to take initiatives in various issues of HE reform, their initiative is still not enough pronounced and ‘stops’ at some point, while a more imposing and regulatory role of the Ministry is expected”

(R2). The latter opinion can also be confirmed by the following remark “Moldovan universities have not yet assumed in the full measure the benefits of the university autonomy” (Toderas, 2006, p. 27).

The described below problem represents another dimension of the issue related to mentality. Changes toward European higher education policy are also highly related with the *changes in educational culture*, traditions and perceptions. As it is noted by the national experts “the emphasis in educational culture has shifted from the students’ abilities to understand and memorize information to such key competences as capacity for self learning, self development, analytical and critical thinking. The above shift in its turn requires substantial change in teaching and learning methods and approaches” (Rusnac et al., 2007, p. 166).

A whole number of problems facing the authorities of Moldova were enumerated and discussed by the Moldovan Deputy Minister of Education and Youth at the informal Conference of the Ministers of Education from the 5 member-states of the Bologna process which took place in Brussels in December 2006. According to the Deputy Minister, “complexity of issues, time, cost, resistance to changes, bureaucracy at national and international levels, and others are the main problems that are probably common for all five countries¹⁰”. The Deputy Minister emphasized the issue that the Bologna-related “reforms in the Republic of Moldova are implemented without sufficient time and money to carry out experiments. The process of decision-making and approval of the legislation modification is difficult and time-consuming. Insufficient financing of reforms arouses difficulties.” (Report of the Deputy Minister of Education and Youth of the Republic of Moldova, Dec. 2006). The issue of insufficient time is also widely discussed by the institutional leaders – representatives of the academic community. “New study plans were elaborated in record terms – during the summer 2005, and while putting them in practice various omissions and shortcomings were identified which in their turn were improved in an urgent and quick manner. There is still no opportunity to estimate in the full measure the quality and correctness of the new curricula since the learning outcomes can be best estimated just after first graduations in 2008 and 2009 (Cabac, 2007, p. 161).

¹⁰Countries which became members of the Bologna process in 2005 in Bergen: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

5 TRANSFERRING THE BOLOGNA IDEAS INTO NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY PRACTICES

The Bologna process is a process of higher education policy cooperation at the European level. (Gornitzka, 2007, p. 19). The outcomes of this cooperation are the broad and deep higher education policy paradigms developed in line with the trends clearly observable in the majority of European countries in the last decades of the 20th century. As it has been discussed in the section 2.3, these paradigms do not imply any groundbreaking innovations, but basically attempt to build up a coherent framework for those multiple policy solutions of even greater number of various policy problems, issues, and challenges facing nowadays the European higher education.

Besides its role as a “menu for solutions” (Gornitzka, 2007, p. 29), Bologna also represents an incentive and an “external impetus” for change (Välilmaa et al., 2007, p. 65). Therefore, one can undoubtedly consider the Bologna process an important source for the transfer of the higher education policy ideas, practices and solutions from the arena of international debates and discussions to the domestic policy level of each member country of the “Bologna Club”. One of such countries is the Republic of Moldova.

The present chapter is aimed to conceptualise and to discuss the way the European level political initiatives are transferred to the national level and acquire their practical embodiment in domestic policy undertakings and developments. The higher education system of the Republic of Moldova serves as a central case for the above discussion, although some elements of comparison and correlation with the examples of other former communist countries are also present. The policy transfer variables presented in sub-section 2.1.2 will be overviewed and applied to the national context of the higher education policy formation in the Republic of Moldova.

5.1 The object of policy transfer

Within the present section first three basic principles or action lines of the Bologna Declaration are taken as terms of reference for the analysis of the first variable – *the object of transfer*. In the first place the Bologna Declaration proclaims the following:

- Adoption of a system of *easily readable and comparable degrees*, also through the implementation of the *Diploma Supplement*, in order to promote European citizens

employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system.

- Adoption of a system essentially based on *two main cycles*, undergraduate and graduate. Access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of first cycle studies, lasting a minimum of three years. The degree awarded after the first cycle shall also be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification. The second cycle should lead to the master and/or doctorate degree as in many European countries.
- Establishment of a *system of credits* - such as in the *ECTS* system – as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility. Credits could also be acquired in non-higher education contexts, including lifelong learning, provided they are recognized by receiving Universities concerned (Bologna Declaration, 1999).

As it was mentioned in the §4.5, one of the major challenges facing the Moldovan authorities in view of adjusting national higher education to the commonly accepted imperatives and the best trajectories of the tertiary education development is the multiplicity and broadness of the Bologna objectives accompanied by the tightly restricted time frame for their achievement¹¹ (Report of the Deputy Minister of Education and Youth of the Republic of Moldova, Dec. 2006).

I totally support the rational approach chosen by the national authorities responsible for higher education – approach of gradual adoption of the Bologna principles within the national education system. The above approach is justified and prevents the inefficient dispersion of scarce resources and capacities (both financial and human). Such dispersion inevitably would have taken place in case of the simultaneous fulfilment of all Bologna Declaration action lines. Therefore, the major progress can be noticed specifically in the area of the listed above three core objectives of the Bologna process, while still much work is to be done in view of adoption of other Bologna dimensions such as quality assurance, student participation in governance, academic mobility, and others. It is worth noting however, that the latter Bologna aims are definitely not excluded from the attention and strategies of the national authorities, simply the results achieved along these directions are still not enough pronounced and sustainable throughout the whole system.

¹¹ Particularly taking into account that the Republic of Moldova formally joined the Bologna process just during the fourth wave of adherence in 2005.

In line with the above, the diploma supplement, the two-cycle degree structure and the ECTS are those three basic European higher education practices successfully transferred from the pan-European arena of international debates to be embedded into Moldovan university system. The listed issues will be overviewed in more detail below.

According to the opinion of the national experts and representatives of the academic community from Moldova the most progress is achieved in the area of *ECTS* application and operation within the universities at the nation-wide scale (Caisin, et al., 2007, p. 192). The introduction of ECTS in all higher education institutions of the country was stipulated by the Law on Education in 2005 (Law No.71-XIV Regarding the Amendments and Completion to the Law on Education May 2005). Moreover, the Guide on the Implementation of the National Credit Transfer System was approved by the regulation of the Ministry of Education and Youth in February 2006 (EURIDICE, 2007, p. 220). However, it is worth mentioning that according to the observation made by one of the interviewees, the National Credit Transfer System although applied still does not fulfill in the full measure its function of transfer and is mainly operational for the function of accumulation (R 3).

The introduction of the *study structure* essentially based on cycles is another Bologna development transferred to the Moldovan higher education system. According to the amendment to the Law on Education (Law No.71-XIV), starting with the academic year 2005-2006 all higher education institutions implement two cycle system – Licentiate (equivalent with Bachelor) and Master. The new regulation was applied to all students enrolled to the universities starting from 2005. The latter fact can be regarded as an advantageous achievement of the national higher education policy. It eliminates the problem emphasized by Per Nyborg: “quite a few countries are still keeping their traditional long one-cycle degrees in parallel with the new degree system. That is a very un-economic way of using the resources allocated for higher education. Also, it sends unclear signals to the world of labour. Why should employees believe in Bachelors as long as the national authorities keep open an option?” (Nyborg, 2004) Within the latter context, one of the most suitable examples is the case of Russian Federation where the new Law on higher education adopted recently in line with the Bologna developments stipulates the simultaneous operation of both the old – one-cycle structure (leading to the degree of Specialist) and the new two-cycle degree system (Bachelor and Master). It is quite understandable, nevertheless, that in the national specific circumstances of the Russian Federation, with its highly diverse and extremely large by scale higher education system, just a very slow, gradual, and

evolutionary by character transition to the new university structure is possible and affordable by state from both perspectives: financial and managerial. On the contrary in the context of the Republic of Moldova with quite manageable higher education system, largest part of which (85% of HEIs) is concentrated in the capital (see § 4.4), the simultaneous maintenance of two kinds of degree structures of the university learning would have lead to the unjustified dispersion of the extremely scarce financial and managerial resources.

Although, the cycle degree structure, transferred from the international level, was almost literary adopted within the national higher education system of Moldova, still some essential differences, conditioned by the national contextual features, remain. Thus, the title of the degree awarded upon successful completion of the first cycle has not been changed in accordance with the title commonly agreed by the Bologna countries, but preserved its initial nationally-specific term – ‘Licentiate’. Another essential peculiarity, conditioned by the specificity of education and research sectors inherited from the Soviet past, is the issue of doctoral studies which are still not recognized formally as the third cycle of higher education. The issue represents currently a matter in controversy and provokes hot discussions in the country.

Another core activity undertaken in the Republic of Moldova in line with the Bologna Declaration is the elaboration and application at the nationwide level of the *Diploma Supplement*, aimed to increase the transparency of information on national qualifications and so to facilitate the adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degree. According to the National Report, the Diploma Supplement developed in Moldova has been positively evaluated by the experts from UNESCO-CEPES and the Council of Europe (Report, Bologna process Austrian information seminar, 2006). Moreover, according to the Stocktaking report, elaborated for the London Ministerial conference, the 8th indicator – “the level of diploma Supplement implementation” is estimated in Moldova by the highest evaluation category which means that “every student graduating in 2007 will receive a diploma supplement (DS) in the EU/CoE/UNESCO diploma supplement format and in a widely spoken European language, automatically and free of charge” (Bologna Process Stocktaking Report, 2007, p. 29; my emphasis). Despite the high appraisal by the international bodies of the level of national adoption of the Bologna-related policy, some Moldovan experts recognize several deficiencies still existent in relation to the issuing of the Diploma Supplement. These are first of all some complexities with the correct description of the graduates’ competences and specificities of the study program organization (Caisin et al., 2007, p. 192).

With regard to the first variable of policy transfer – *the object of transfer* the following short conclusion can be outlined here. Speaking generally, the overall trends occurring at the international level in the field of higher education policy which acquired their basic expression in ten Bologna action lines are gradually transferred to the level of national higher education policy formulation of Moldova. Subsequently, at the national level the overall policy ideas receive their practical embodiment either as state legislative initiatives or institutional practices or a cohesive mixture of both.

5.2 The reasons of policy transfer

The following variable of policy transfer due to be analyzed below is the *reasons of transfer*. The latter can be also referred to as a “character of transfer” ranging from the voluntary one to the coercive transfer.

As it can be easily traced from the Bologna National Reports of the new member-countries, the Bologna related changes within their domestic higher education structures have started long before the formal joining to the pan-European process. As it was noticed by Per Nyborg “The need for change may have been greater for countries not yet members of the process than for those already on the inside. Being inside may be a false security” (Nyborg, 2004). In my opinion the “need for change” was even greater for the countries passing through the period of transition from the highly centralized system to the one based on principles of democracy and market economy. This need forced all former communist countries to internationalize actively, searching the alternative political solutions for various spheres of national policy – including the higher education sector. The most relevant point of reference for the majority of eastern-European countries has become the experience and practices of the Western European countries and USA. Therefore, the intensive policy transfer took place widely throughout the whole former Soviet Union space primarily aimed at adoption of western-like policy structures, instruments, mechanisms, and principles. In the case of higher education such transfer has mainly resulted in the gradual shift toward the Anglo-Saxon model of university structure which substituted the long cycle higher education system mainly based on “German model adopted by Russia in the early nineteenth century” (Glonti & Chitashvili, 2007, p.214).

Similar developments can be easily noticed in the case of the Republic of Moldova, where (as discussed in § 4.1) the introduction of master degree programs has started yet in mid 1990s,

despite the still lacking overall national regulation of the issue. In the late 90s, the Bologna Declaration has become “an important factor influencing the direction of the on-going structural reforms of national higher education” (Slantcheva, 2007, p. 170). However, this ‘influential factor’ shall not be perceived as an element of coercive policy transfer. As it was discussed in the section 4.1, the rationale for the Bologna membership is primarily estimated by the national authorities as an opportunity to acquire a grounded, systematic, and coherent framework for further development of higher education in the Republic of Moldova (Speech of the Minister, 2005, Bergen). Similar opinion is expressed by the Rector of a Moldovan university: the participation in the Bologna process offers to the Republic of Moldova essential opportunities for solving the multiple problems and limitations facing the national educational process (Popa, 2007, p. 167).

Subsequently, the joining to the Bologna process has been estimated by the central state authorities as an internationally visible activity of the great importance for the process of further European integration. This fact is illustrated by the inclusion of the Bologna related activities into the Individual Action Plan Agreed among the European Union and the Republic of Moldova. The latter envisages to “bring education and training systems closer to EU Member state standards and the Bologna process” (The EU Moldova Action Plan (75)).

In line with the argumentation of the current section it can be concluded that the reasons for the transfer of the western-like higher education policy were conditioned by the overall history-specific circumstances as well as by national peculiarities and necessities of the Republic of Moldova. Therefore, the reasons of policy transfer can not be qualified as direct and coercive imposition, rather as some voluntary accepted preconditions and ‘rules of the game’.

5.3 The degree of policy transfer

When discussing the following variable of policy transfer – the *degree of transfer*, we need to answer the question – *how* policy is transferred (see Table 1). Therefore, along to the degrees of transfer, it seems relevant to discuss the means of transfer. According to the opinion of one of the respondents, the greatest part of international higher education experience and university practices was transferred to Moldova by the national higher education institutions including due to their active participation at various international partnerships, consortia, cooperation activities and joint projects and, not in the last place, within the framework of the Tempus program (R4).

The most illustrative example of policy transfer, that can be analyzed in the context of the current section, has been already touched upon in the § 4.1 and refers to the pilot implementation of the Study Credit System in some of Moldovan universities. According to the source, application into practice of the system of study credits has started under the title of experiment at some faculties of the biggest higher education institution of the Republic – Moldova State University. A model of credit system applied was the American credit system and was a component element of joint project with some American universities and specifically with the Montana State University (The State University of Moldova official Web page). In May 2001, a decision about “recognition and implementation” (Procesul Bologna, 2005, p. 44) of ECTS was taken in another large university – the State Agrarian University of Moldova.

The regulations on the operation of the study credit systems in the above named universities were adopted at the institutional level and, hence, varied essentially. According to the opinion of an interviewee, during the elaboration of such regulations the universities paid little attention to the common principles and documents existing at the European level, but were guided primarily by the experience of foreign partner institutions and, therefore, simply copied specific practices (R3). Such approach soon has led to the existence of the whole range of diverse institutional experiences and practices within the same higher education system, quite small therewith. This fact conditioned the urgent necessity to elaborate and adopt a common state-level regulation on ECTS implementation. A working group was created. The group comprised representatives of the majority of higher education institutions, the Ministry of Education and Youth, other branch Ministries. The Guide on the Implementation of the National Credit Transfer System was elaborated by the group and approved by the Ministry in 2006. The authors of the national Guide took into consideration two important dimensions: the international experience and common European level recommendations (i.e. the ECTS Users’ Guide, 2004) as well as the national institutional practices on the application of the study credit system within educational process. Therefore, we can conclude here that the above example of the national study credit system formation clearly illustrates the fact that common higher education practice has been transferred to the country primarily by national universities which copied several existent at the international level practices which, in their turn, were combined and emulated by the national authorities and a general state-level policy has been elaborated and adopted.

Therefore, the transfer of the internationally accepted Bologna ideas into the policy steps undertaken in the Republic of Moldova do not represent a blind ‘copying’, which involves direct

and complete transfer, but rather an example of ‘emulation’ where a policy idea is accepted by the national authority as a point of reference but its practical embodiment is shaped by the national contextual circumstances, features and peculiarities. Bringing here the notions operationalised by Åse Gornitzka, the core Bologna objectives are rather *translated* than *diffused* (Gornitzka, 2007) to the national higher education policy level of Moldova.

5.4 The actors of policy transfer

The last variable planned to be overviewed within the present chapter – the ‘*actors of transfer*’ is tightly interlinked with the contextual analysis of the previous variable. As it has been shown in the above section, the universities are those principle actors which play an important role in view of bringing to the country the foreign experience on best practices in higher education. Thus the Moldova State University and the State Agrarian University of Moldova, due to their partnerships with foreign higher education institutions, started the application of the academic credit system yet in 2001 and, therefore, gained a valuable experience of the adoption of a western higher education practices to the nationally specific context and institutionally peculiar features. Such experience has become particularly relevant and useful at the period when the central authorities proclaimed the aim to become a part of the Bologna process and the need to adjust national legislative framework to the common European policies has emerged. To fulfil the latter aim in 2004 several working groups were created by the order of the Ministry of Education in order to elaborate a strategy for higher education development and a higher education law (Cabac, 2007, p. 160). The composition of the working groups included representatives of the majority of national universities, officials from the Ministry of Education and Youth and other relevant branch Ministries. The operation of the working groups can serve as an evidence of active interaction among higher education stakeholders in Moldova. Therewith, a representative of the Ministry of Education and Youth confirmed the fact that all Bologna-related policies, embedded in a number of strategic documents, national laws and regulations, were elaborated in tight cooperation and regular consultation with all higher education institutions of the country (R2).

It is often noticed by the national and external experts that the higher education institutions of Moldova play a highly important role in the process of the Bologna-related reforms. To confirm this statement the following example can be brought. In November 2004, an international conference “Modernisation of higher education in the Republic of Moldova in the context of Bologna process” was organised, bringing to the discussion table representatives of all higher

education institutions of the country, officials from the Ministry of education as well as experts from the European countries. “At the conference an appeal to the Government of the Republic of Moldova was issued regarding the launching of formal procedures for the Republic of Moldova adherence to the Bologna process” (Cabac, 2007, p. 160).

The sustainable interaction and, in some cases, even tighter cohesion among the multiple actors of the national higher education system of Moldova is essentially facilitated by the Tempus Program. According to the opinion of a representative of the largest university of Moldova, it is specifically the participation in the projects realised within the Tempus program proved to be the key factor which has contributed to the closer cooperation of the national universities and, therefore, to the consolidation of the national academic community, as well as favoured substantially to better communication and cooperation among universities and the Ministry of Education (R4). In more detail the Tempus programme will be overviewed in the next chapter.

6 THE TEMPUS PROGRAMME AS A TOOL OF POLICY TRANSFER

In the context of the Republic of Moldova the Tempus program is a highly important tool of policy transfer. As it has been noted by the representatives of the national academic community of the Republic of Moldova the progress achieved by the Republic in view of alignment to the Bologna ideas can be partially explained by the support of the reform process on behalf of the universities, by the enthusiasm of the majority of faculty, as well as by the fruitful and supportive partnerships within the Tempus program established with partner universities from Sweden, Germany, Spain, Portugal, France, Great Britain, Lithuania and Estonia (Caisin et al., 2007, p. 186). The contribution offered through the Tempus program was and still remains essential, particularly in view of improvement of the administration and management systems of universities, updating of the university curricula, and supporting individual mobility of faculty and students (Moldovan-Batrinac, 2007, p. 183).

6.1 The Tempus programme - basic facts

By the decision of the Council of the European Communities in May 1990 the trans-European mobility scheme for university studies (TEMPUS) was adopted, and due to begin on 1 July, 1990 (90/233/EEC: Council Decision of 7 May 1990). Tempus, later renamed in *trans-European cooperation scheme in higher education*, was initially designed to respond to the modernization needs of the higher education sector in Central and Eastern European countries, following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, including through the “contribution to the improvement of training in the eligible countries, and encouragement of their cooperation with partners in the Community” (ibid.).

The first countries to be involved in Tempus were Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia (from 1993 as Czech and Slovak Republics). The new member states - Bulgaria and Romania were targeted by the programme since 1991 and participated in it until 2000. Quite shortly Tempus has evolved from an assistance programme into one of the European Community’ cooperation programmes aimed to help the transition and reform process of the higher education sector in 27 the so-called Partner Countries. The latter include countries from Western Balkans (CARDS)¹²,

¹² CARDS countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia).

Central and Eastern Europe, the New Independent States and Mongolia (TACIS)¹³ and Mediterranean region (MEDA)¹⁴.

The Republic of Moldova became eligible for participating in the Tempus programme on 1 July, 1994, when Tempus II phase was launched. On 29 April 1999 the Tempus III phase of the programme was adopted for a period of six years from 1 July, 2000. Tempus IV phase started in January 2008 when first call for proposals was published by the European Commission [EC].

Tempus is funded from the MEDA, CARDS or TACIS budget of their respective National Indicative Programmes allocated by the European Union to partner countries. The average annual budget allocated to the programme over the past years amounts to 60 million Euros. 50,55 million Euros are envisaged as indicative budget for the recently announced Tempus IV call for proposals (EC, official Web page, 2008).

The overall management of the Tempus programme is carried out by the Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) of the European Commission located in Brussels. The technical assistance to the DG EAC is provided by the European Training Foundation (Turin, Italy). Independent experts, representatives of national authorities (education ministry), network of National TEMPUS offices and National Contact Points, EC Representative offices at the partner countries fulfil over related to the program responsibilities and/or provide various kinds of services. For example they are attracted for expert assesses and evaluation exercises.

6.2 The Tempus programme trends and shift in priorities

The principle tool of the Tempus programme is *Joint European Projects (JEP)*. The projects are initiated and managed by the multilateral partnerships – consortia – between higher education institutions from the EU Member States and the partner countries. Joint European Projects constitute the core of the Tempus programme which “is essentially a bottom-up programme” (EC, Executive Summary, p. 3) and is primarily focused on institution-based university co-operation. Therefore, the strongly pronounced orientation of Tempus programme toward the needs and initiatives identified at the institutional level is widely known and recognized. However, analyzing the recent dynamics of the Tempus development and operation, one can

¹³ TACIS countries : Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

¹⁴ MEDA countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, and Tunisia.

easily notice some drift of the above mentioned core priority of the programme toward more enhanced attention to the system-level issues.

Thus, in 2003 during the Tempus III phase a new cooperative instrument was developed and adopted – the *Structural and Complementary Measures (SCM)*. The latter tool comprises the *Structural Measures* – “short-term policy advice interventions, aimed at supporting reform processes in higher education, and developing higher education strategic frameworks” (EC, official Web page, 2008) and *Complementary Measures* “designed to disseminate and transfer good practice, as well as to provide support in areas that are central to the higher education reform processes” (ibid.). Therefore, the SCM are aimed to support initiatives and developments occurring at the system level and nation-wide scale. Moreover, the projects designed within the ‘Structural Measures’ instrument “typically address issues linked to the Bologna process such as quality assurance, and related accreditation systems, credit systems, and restructuring of the qualification frameworks” (ibid.).

The frequent references in the Tempus documentation to the Bologna process and Bologna-related issues additionally confirm the idea of the gradual shift of the Tempus programme from an almost complete focus on institutional level assistance toward the obviously increasing attention to the system level issues. This statement can be further supported by the following facts.

This is first of all the change in the nature of the priority activity areas. Thus, if Joint Projects under the Tempus III covered primarily such areas as curriculum development, university management and institution building, then within the Tempus IV phase the priority areas of activity are namely: curriculum reform, governance reform and higher education and society, which, consequently, acquire more system level relevant character and features. Moreover, for the first time during the 17 year-history of the Tempus program separate funds are envisaged for the new and special type of actions aimed at direct support to the Ministries of Education to promote higher education reforms (under structural measures).

The Tempus IV phase launched this year envisages even greater enhancement of the activities carried out by means of the ‘Structural Measures’. As it is stipulated by the First Call for Proposals - “Structural Measures will be interventions designed to support structural reform of higher education **systems** and strategic framework development **at national level** that the

competent authorities of partner countries have clearly identified as priorities” (EAC/04/2008). The increase of the proportion of the annual budget allocated for the Structural Measures serves as an illustration and a proof of the Tempus changing nature. Thus, if during the Tempus III - 80% of the operational budget were allocated to JEP and only 17% to Structural and Complementary Measures (EC, official Web page, 2008), then in the fourth phase “it is estimated that a minimum of 50% of the EC funds will be used for Joint Projects and a minimum of 25% for Structural Measures” (EAC/04/2008).

Therefore, it can be shortly concluded that under the new phase of the Tempus programme, it is intended to further strengthen the involvement of national authorities in the definition of priorities, in the selection of projects, and in impact assessment as well as to further support the development and reform of the national higher education structures and systems. Although Joint European Projects still make up the backbone of the programme through which Tempus IV will continue to support institutional development mainly by means of bottom-up multi-lateral cooperation, the top-down Complementary Measures become much more pronounced and enhanced in order to ensure strategically coherent, rational and hence efficient development of a whole national higher education system.

6.3 Tempus - a major instrument of Bologna process principles transfer to the national level

The authors of the study “Integrating Europe through Co-operation Among Universities – the Experience of the Tempus Programme” contend that “without Tempus support, the development of higher education reform would have been markedly slower in all Central and East European countries” (Langan, 2000, p. 216). Although, the study was undertaken yet upon the completion of the Tempus II, its finding is still relevant for the later phase of the Tempus programme. Funding provided in the framework of the European Community Education Programmes, especially in the framework of the Tempus/Cards and Tempus/Tacis, reinforced reform efforts both at system and at institutional levels in the beneficiary countries (Weitgruber, 2006, p. 4).

It is quite evident though, that the higher education reform, essentially supported (as illustrated above) by the Tempus programme, occurs to be in line with the Bologna process. The relevance of the Tempus projects to the Bologna process can be easily traced out of a general overview of the programme. For instance, “the list of projects illustrates clearly the intense work undertaken in partnership between higher education institutions in beneficiary countries and EU member

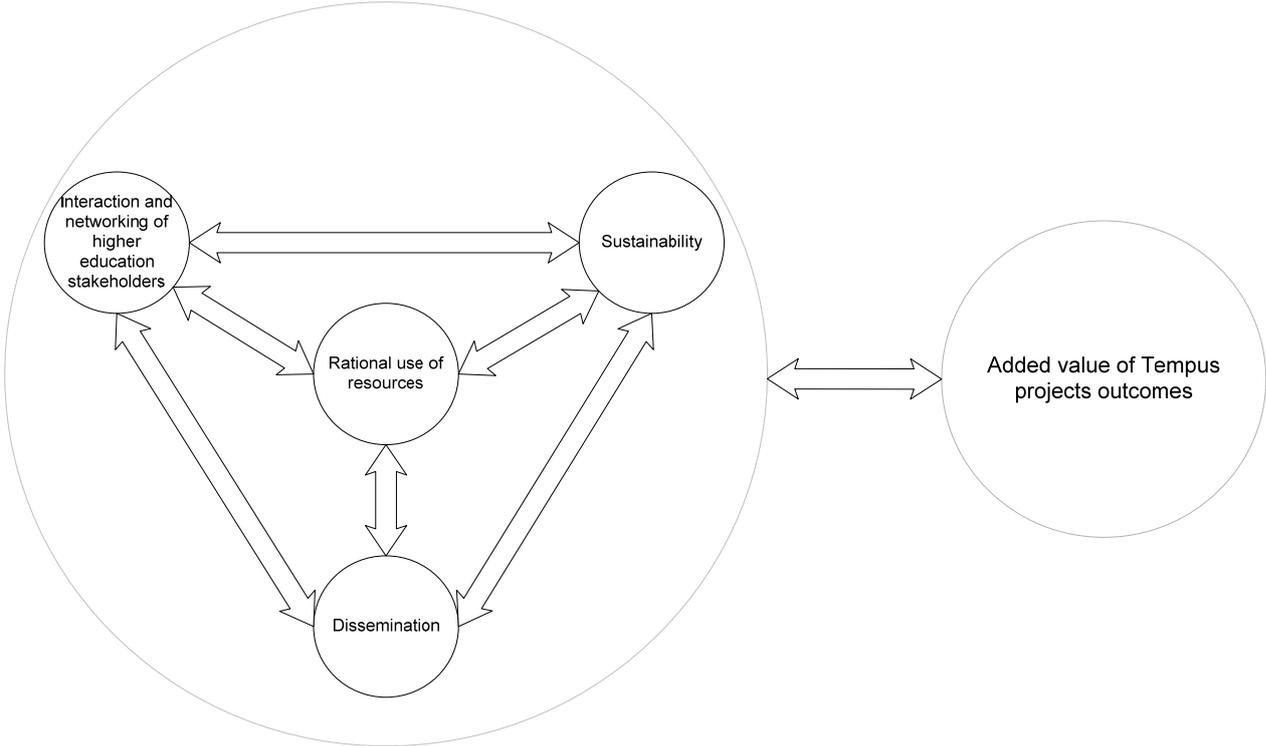
states, across the full range of Bologna action lines. This work has often been concerned with the direct implementation of specific Bologna reform issues” (Weitgruber, 2006, p. 4).

The fact that “the Bologna objectives were included among the Tempus priorities” (ibid.) is also clearly emphasized by the European Commission in the most recent Tempus IV regulation: “the Tempus programme has assisted partner countries in reforming their higher education systems in line with the principles of the Bologna process which is complementary to the EU's modernisation agenda, and is a common reference point for both EU Member States and partner countries”. (EAC/04/2008) Moreover, it is proclaimed that the Tempus programme will further promote voluntary convergence with EU developments in the field of higher education deriving from the Lisbon agenda and the Bologna process (ibid.).

Beside the enhanced attention of the European Commission to the compliance between the Bologna process goals and Tempus tasks, there is another important dimension and a strategic focus of the Tempus programme. This focus can be shortly outlined as a *network-building*. Thus, “according to Tempus regulations, higher education institutions, enterprises and other organizations such as industrial federations, trade unions and scientific organizations could take part in this collaboration” (Canto, 2001, p. 91). Moreover, within the Tempus IV regulations the attraction and implication of multiple stakeholders into the programmes is clearly facilitated and prioritized. The following actors and counterparts of the national higher education are therefore enumerated: “state-recognised higher education institutions from the EU and the partner countries, associations and networks of higher education institutions, public authorities (ministries or national/regional administrations), national and international rector, teacher and student organisations, non-governmental organisations, social partner and their training organisations, private and public enterprises” (EAC/04/2008). Furthermore, the European Commission for the first time has sharply stipulated that direct participation of the Ministries of Education in the Structural Measures projects of at least a formal endorsement on behalf of the Ministry of the project's objectives and activities is a must. “The Ministry/ies of Higher Education of the partner country/ies involved must either directly participate in the project as a partner or must formally support the proposed project objective/s.” (ibid. p. 13) Therefore, it becomes clear that the Commission intends to further reinforce the dialogue and interaction among universities, educational authorities and other higher education stakeholders.

Along with the strong emphasis on links and efficient interaction among higher education stakeholders (ministries, regional authorities, faculty and institutional administration, students, civil society, industry and business), there are two other basic means aimed to highly enhance the rationality and consequently the overall impact of Tempus resources allocation. These are the *sustainability* of the achieved results and the *dissemination* of the latter. Therefore, the core components of the Tempus strategic approach can be combined into the following interlinked chain: the sustainability of the Tempus projects outcomes is enhanced by their dissemination throughout the whole network of higher education stakeholders which steadily interact. Hence, an added value of Tempus project outcomes can be primarily reached by the rational use of resources which in its turn is attained by the sustainability and continuous dissemination of positive practices throughout and by means of the higher education stakeholders’ network. This interaction of the core elements, conditioning the success of the Tempus programme, is illustrated in the Figure 2 presented below.

Figure 2. Elements of the strategic approach of the Tempus programme.



The added value of the Tempus projects is the ubiquitously proclaimed overall aim – ‘to help the process of social and economic reform and development’ in countries neighboring the European Union. This overall strategic and ambitious goal of the Tempus programme is clearly “based on the understanding that higher education institutions are a vital part of any process for social and

economic transition in [EU] neighbouring countries, and that they are a privileged vehicle to ensure better prospects for future generations.” (Jan Figel’, 2006)

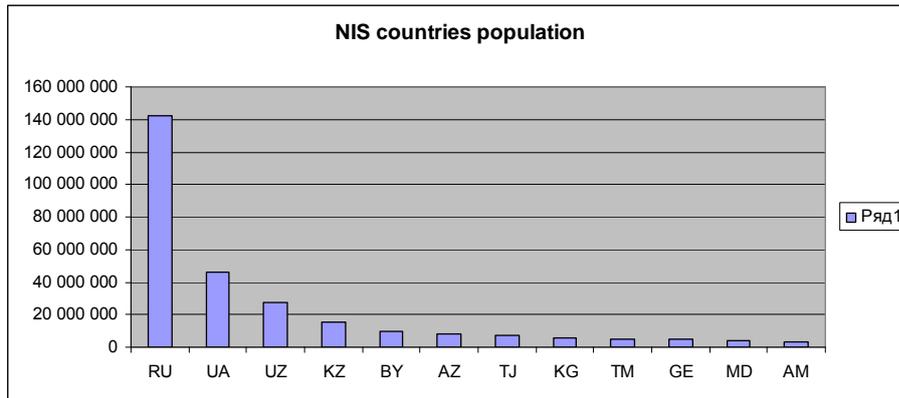
6.4 The Tempus programme in Moldova

During more than 12 years of the Tempus programme operation in Moldova, the Republic has benefited from 32 of Joint European and Structural/Complementary Measures Projects. Total budget allocated to Moldova within the Tempus framework during 1994-2006 made up 8,155 million Euros (Moldova, Country profile). Therefore, Tempus is the largest and the longest running programme supporting higher education reform and cooperation in Moldova, with no programme covering the same range of subjects (ibid.).

Therewith, it can be undoubtedly stated that Moldovan higher education institutions are particularly active applicants in the Tempus programme. The most evident reason of that is the following one. In conditions of market economy and globalized higher education market any university, including the Moldovan ones, needs to invest essentially into the institutional development in order to continuously upgrade or at least to support the level of performance. Such investment is particularly needed, if not notably required, in the circumstances of the rapidly changing modern world of science and knowledge. However, taking into account the socio-economic situation of the Republic of Moldova outlined in the § 3.1 (see also the Appendix 2) and specific challenges facing the national higher education system (section 4.4) one can easily comprehend that extremely reduced public budgeting of the higher education institutions force the later to direct the largest part of funds available (coming primarily from the tuition fees) to the current expenses, leaving thus far insufficient amount for any capital investments and/or institutional development. Consequently, the Tempus programme’ funds, destined specifically for the development and modernisation of higher education institutions, are utterly needed in Moldova. This forces the Moldovan universities to promote actively their interests and necessities, competing for Tempus grants with the counterparts from 27 partner countries.

To illustrate the fact of active participation of Moldovan higher education institutions in the Tempus programme, several figures are presented below. It is first of all necessary to note that by its size and the number of population the Republic of Moldova is the last but one among the NIS countries. (See Figure 3)

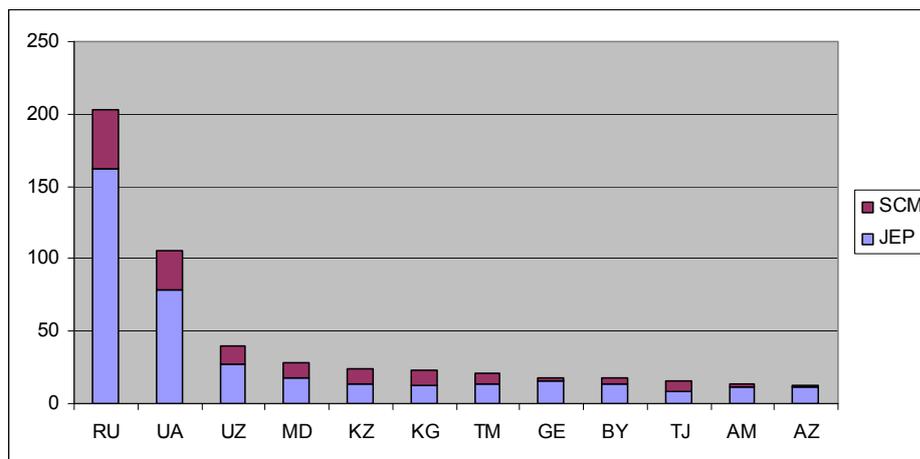
Figure 3. The population of the New Independent States (NIS)



Source: <http://ru.wikipedia.org/>

Despite its small size, the Republic of Moldova occupies the fourth place by the number of Tempus projects won within the Tempus III phase (2000-2006). (See Figure 4)

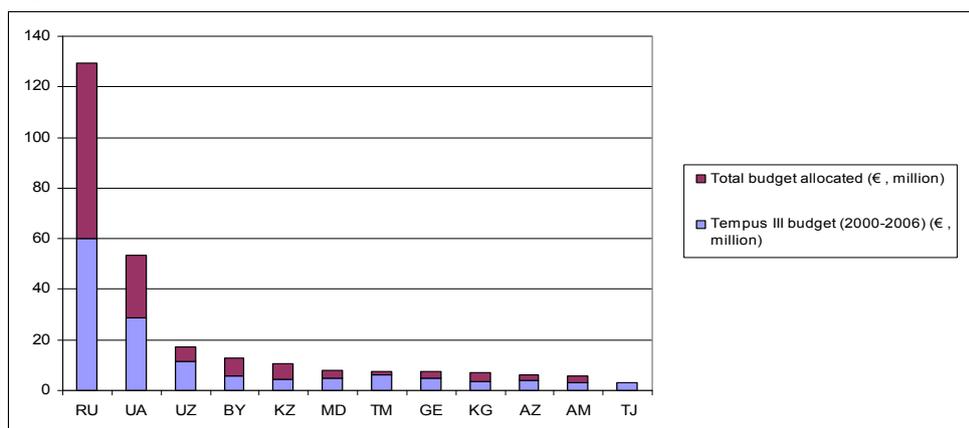
Figure 4. Number of projects within the Tempus III phase



Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/tempus>

Although, as it is shown in Figure 5, Moldova occupies just the sixth place by the overall amount of funds allocated within the Tempus projects, one shall not forget that annual Tempus budgets are first of all earmarked by the European Commission in dependence on “the scale of higher education system” (EC, Executive Summary, p. 4) and only a small part of the budget is ‘open’ for the true competition.

Figure 5. Funds allocated within the Tempus projects



Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/tempus>

The active performance of Moldova in the Tempus programme is estimated and recognised by the European Commission. This fact can be clearly traced from the Tempus IV First call for proposals published in January 2008. According to the document, the total indicative budget earmarked for the co-financing of projects from Eastern Neighbouring area (under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument) amounts 11.2 million Euros (EAC/04/2008). An indicative minimum percentage out of this budget is earmarked by the European Commission in the following distributive order, presented in the table below (Table 3). The earmarked distribution of the indicative budget clearly illustrates the favorite position of Moldova located on the third place after the two largest countries - Russia and Ukraine.

Table 3. Tempus IV indicative budget

REGION	INDICATIVE MAXIMUM BUDGET
Eastern Neighbouring area (under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument)	<p><i>Subtotal: € 11.2 million out of which an indicative minimum percentage of</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2% for Armenia - 2% for Azerbaijan - 4% for Belarus - 3% for Georgia - 6% for Moldova - 36% for Russia - 22% for Ukraine

Source: FIRST CALL FOR PROPOSALS N° EAC/04/2008

6.5 Tempus impact in Moldova

Upon the completion of the Tempus III phase, the European Commission initiated and undertook a comprehensive study to explore “the impact that Tempus has had as a whole on higher

education institutions, on individuals involved in higher education and organisations linked or benefiting from the higher education systems of the partner countries” (EC, Executive Summary, p. 2). Several important findings of the study can be brought here to outline the Tempus major impacts over the academic world in EU partner countries and in the Republic of Moldova particularly.

One of such impacts is the unity of the national academic community. This impact is confirmed by one of the respondents interviewed during the fieldwork for the present thesis, who stated that the participation in the tempus project was the most important factor which served as a ground for tighter collaboration among the representatives of national higher education institutions and pushed the universities for the continuous interaction even beyond the issues of the Tempus projects (R4).

The following effect of Tempus is either establishment or enhancement of tighter link among universities and educational authorities. Besides that, the overall networking with other higher education stakeholders: civil society, business, industry, social partners is also relevant to be mentioned here. As it was noted by Vera Stastna, the implementation of the Tempus projects created many contacts between various categories of people, and provided a unique opportunity to establish contacts and cooperate with local authorities (Stastna, 2001, p. 476).

Therefore, based on the findings of the ‘Impact Study’ undertaken by the European Commission as well as on the opinions and views expressed by the respondents interviewed during the fieldwork for present research, several principle impacts of the Tempus programme over the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova can be listed. These are the following ones:

- Internationalization of Moldovan universities primarily through partnerships with foreign higher education institutions;
- Networking and better links among national higher education institution and, therefore, the enhanced unity of the national academic community;
- Tighter links between universities and governmental bodies and, in the first place - better interaction with the Ministry of Education and Youth;
- Spreading throughout the whole higher education system of the positive results achieved due to the Tempus projects implementation and, therefore, improved overall performance of the system;

- Essential support of the Bologna-related reform processes primarily due to the role of the programme as a source and a mean of European level educational policies and practices transfer.

Therewith, discussing the effect of the Tempus programme in more general terms the following shall be emphasized first of all. As it is pointed out in the impact study, “the Tempus intervention was often broader than national reform” (EC, Executive Summary, p. 5). This fact can be confirmed by the following deduction. Theorists, researching the Bologna-related policies and practices in the country specific context of Central and Eastern European states, frequently emphasize that “in many cases legislature has followed the dynamics of events in the sector in a reactive way” (Slantcheva, 2007, p. 171). Such situation is quite understandable and explicable, specifically, in case of countries in transition and can be relevantly applied to the circumstances of the Republic of Moldova. As it has been already discussed in sections 2.2.2 and 4.1, national educational authorities do not have sufficient institutional and financial capacity to constantly and efficiently perform as a leading element of all prospective initiatives, innovations, and reform processes in the field of higher education. That is why it is often the case that the national universities become “more important than ever as mediums for a wide range of cross-border relationship” (Marginson, van der Wende, 2007, p. 5). Performing this role of mediators between the international and national levels the universities use any means and all available instruments (international assistance and/or cooperation programs) to absorb knowledge, best practices and experience of their western counterparts and thereby they gradually transfer overall principles of higher education policy development.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the Tempus programme is the most important and, in the majority cases, the only available (EC, Executive Summary, p. 6) instrument of policy transfer, while the latter primarily occurs through the internationalization of universities. This concluding remark is highly relevant for the circumstances of the Republic of Moldova where, as discussed earlier (e.g. in §5.4), universities are the principle actors of policy transfer and, as it follows from the current chapter, they extensively use the opportunities offered through the Tempus program.

In addition to the above, the second major and overall impact of the Tempus programme is its role as a factor which essentially pushes forward and speeds up the national Bologna-related higher education reforms. The following statement reaffirms the latter idea. “Tempus has become a key instrument in university reform. Interest in the Bologna process originated as an

initiative of the higher education institutions, which have systematically used Tempus projects to explore and pilot elements of the process, eventually proposing implementation at the national level. The academic community confirms that Moldova's speedy implementation of the Bologna principles has been possible because of the practical experience gained in Tempus projects.”
(Moldova, Country profile)

7 CONCLUSION

The current chapter is aimed to present the final conclusions of the present research. Some reflections on the reliability and validity of the study, along to several limitations of the conducted research are presented therewith.

7.1 Overall conclusions

Nowadays nobody doubts the essential influence of international developments over the national policy-making processes. In the context of globalization and internationalization this obvious fact hardly needs any proofs. But, at the same time, it is possible to argue that the degree of influence and the overall impact resulting from this influence differ essentially from country to country. Thus, for instance, the traditional democracies for a long time operating in an internationalized environment are to a lesser extent subjected to the international impacts, while the developing countries or countries in transition with still immature democratic systems are highly sensitive to various international influences. One of such highly influential political development occurring at pan-European scale is the Bologna process.

The undertaken study was aimed to conceptualise the way the international developments in the area of higher education policy and, specifically those stipulated in the Bologna documents, are transferred to the level of national policy formulation. The research objective of the study is primarily explored by the focusing on the case of the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova. Therefore, it was conceived to answer the following research questions:

1. *By what means and through what kind of instruments are the Bologna-related ideas and practices transferred to the level of national higher education policy formulation in Moldova?*
2. *Which actors of the national higher education system of the Republic of Moldova perform as the principle mediators between international and national levels?*

The process of Bologna-related reforms in the Republic of Moldova is a flux mixture of two processes taking place simultaneously and, evidently, not in the isolation from each other. Central political authorities adopt political goals and the follow-up decisions on their implementation, while higher education institutions ‘striving for survival’ are constantly internationalizing, establishing long-lasting and fruitful partnerships with foreign universities

specifically within the Tempus program. The initial incentive for such cooperation was far from being dictated by the central power. The cooperative arrangements were initiated and developed by the leading higher education institutions placed in harsh economic conditions. Therewith, joining the Bologna process by the Republic of Moldova can be hardly determined as a pure political initiative centrally proclaimed and fulfilled by the political authorities. Rather the Bologna membership shall be defined as a gradually evolving event were the national higher education institutions can be perceived as those which paved the way toward greater internationalization of the national higher education system. The latter fact permits us to conclude that the transfer of the Bologna-related ideas has not occurred as a coercive development, but primarily as a voluntary initiative objectively facilitated by the peculiar national circumstances.

Therefore, when drawing a conclusion about the means and instruments by which the internationally spread higher education policy ideas and practices are transferred to the national level of policy formulation in Moldova, we shall first of all mention the Tempus programme which, as it was shown and concluded in Chapter 6, is the most important tool and instrument of higher education policy transfer in the Republic of Moldova. As it has been specified by the European Commission in the Progress Report, aimed to assess the level of implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2007 in the Republic of Moldova, “higher education institutions systematically used Tempus projects to explore and pilot elements of the Bologna Process, eventually proposing implementation at the national level.” (EC, 3 April 2008, p. 17)

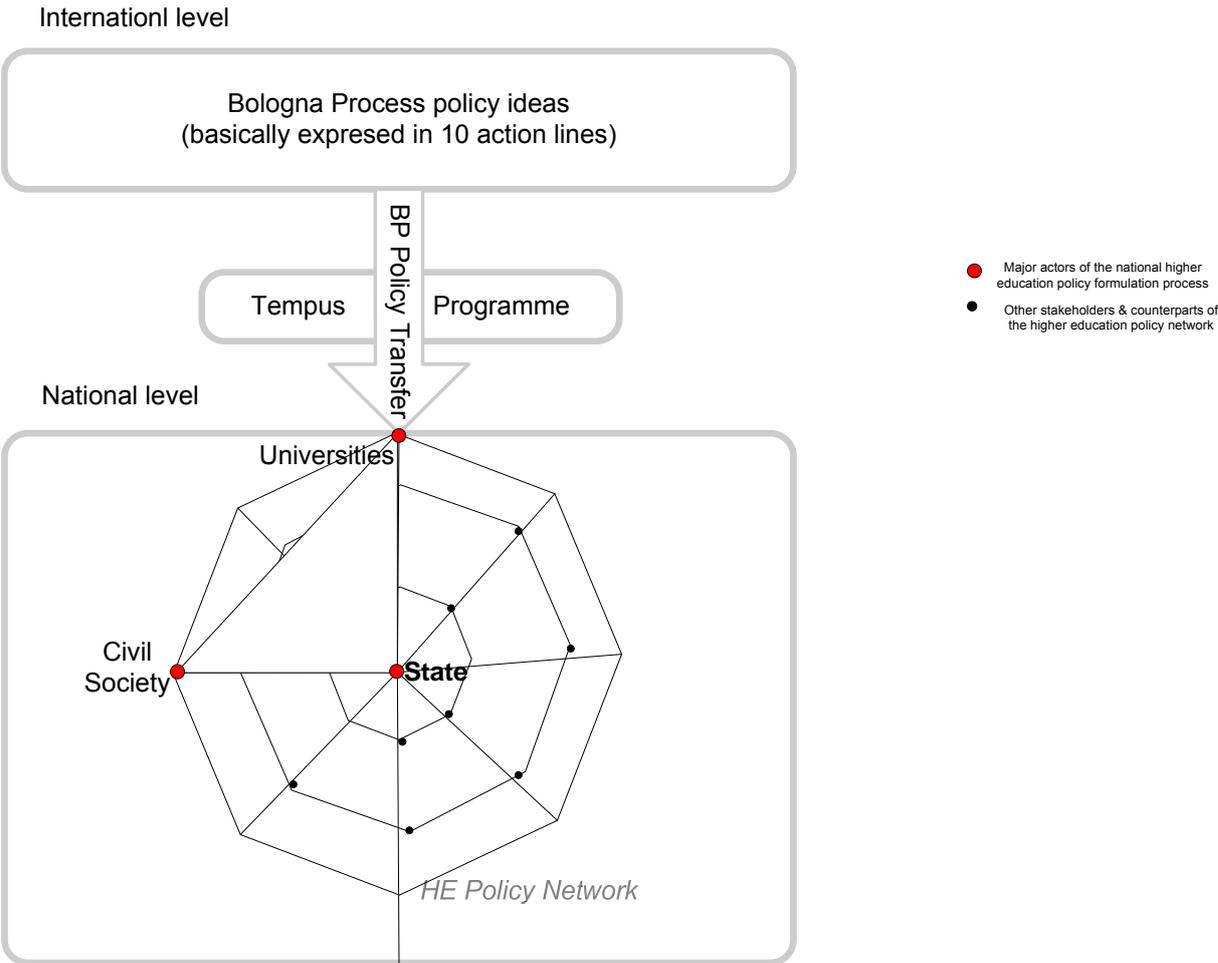
Furthermore, it has been argued and exemplified throughout the study that the policy transfer is essentially facilitated by means of higher education policy network which comprises multiple stakeholders, such as for instance scientific associations, foundations, training institutes, NGOs, consultants, and other knowledge actors, who stimulate the spread of policy ideas through persuasion and advocacy but also through co-operative engagement with official actors (Stone, 2000, p. 24). The multiple actors operating and interacting within the national higher education policy network of Moldova undoubtedly construct the intellectual infrastructure for cross-national learning and, therefore, inevitably create justifications for the transfer of Bologna-related policy ideas, incentives and practices.

The second research question was conceived to identify which of these multiple actors are particularly active and important as the principle mediators between the international and

national levels of higher education policy. As it comes out of the conducted study, the universities of the Republic of Moldova can be considered as those highly ‘important mediums’ (Marginson and Van der Wende, 2007) assuring the transfer of international best practices and facilitating their assimilation within the national circumstances. Thus, for instance, by the time the Bologna process related goals were declared as a national priority for further higher education system development, the leading universities of Moldova were ready to share their practical experience in such areas as e. g. ECTS implementation, Diploma Supplement issuing, institutionalization of internal quality assurance structures, and university management.

In line with the above conclusion, it seems relevant to interpret the figure which has illustrated the overall theoretical framework of the current study (see § 2.4) applying it to the higher education context of the Republic of Moldova. (See Figure 6)

Figure 6. Higher education policy transfer in the Republic of Moldova



The above figure illustrates the process of higher education policy transfer which occurs including by means of the Tempus programme and is primarily carried out and facilitated by the national universities of the Republic of Moldova. Therefore, the internationally spread higher education policy ideas and practices are transferred to the national level of policy formulation in Moldova primarily by means of the Tempus program, and the universities of Moldova perform as: *mediums* between the international and national levels, *mediators* of Bologna process ideas transfer and *facilitators* of these ideas absorption, assimilation, adoption, and embodiment in institutional practices and domestic higher education policies

7.2 Validity, reliability, and limitations of the study

Throughout the undertaken study a goal to assure better validity and reliability of the research was pursued. Webb et al. claim that all research methods are biased and, therefore, just the use of the collection of methods, or multiple operationalism would reduce the effect of the peculiar biases of each one (Webb et al. in Blaikie, 2000, p. 263). This undeniable fact is also confirmed by Denzin who states that “the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another, and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each, while overcoming their unique deficiencies” (1970, p. 138). In line with the above argumentation, it was intended to combine during the study several research methods in order to support greater credibility of the research. Thus, the empirical data obtained through qualitative interviewing has been cross checked with the data available from the document study and statistic analysis. Taking into account the fact mentioned in section 1.2, and namely my personal involvement into Bologna-related activity of the Ministry of Education and Youth of Moldova, observation or a ‘prolonged engagement on-site’ can be referred to as another research method. Therewith, utilization of multiple sources of evidence (Kivistö, 2007, p. 134), such as documents, interviews, country reports, national surveys, and studies, might be mentioned here as an activity underpinning better validity of research. Moreover, the empirical data has been analyzed through the prism of two theoretical concepts the major of which has been operationalized into four variables. Therefore, it can be argued that “the use of multiple triangulation that involves the use of a variety of data sources, theories and methodologies” (Blaikie, 2000, p. 263) assured greater validity and reliability of the research findings.

Although many feasible actions were undertaken to achieve better credibility of the conducted study, it is important to recognize a number of limitations which bound and restrict any research

project including the present one. The major limitation derives from exploratory and descriptive nature of the study. As it has been mentioned already in section 1.4, qualitative explorative interviews, which have served as the basic source of primary empirical data, have a whole range of weaknesses related for instance with the bias of the interviewer. Besides, the conducted research is primarily based on a case study analysis and, therefore, it presents not quite possible to generalize the research findings to other cases, because “case studies are not useful for generalizing”, including due to the fact that “it is difficult to demonstrate whether a particular case study is typical rather than unique” (Blaikie, 2000, p. 263). Along to the above, there are several so to say ‘technical’ limitations which have affected unfavourably the researcher’s possibilities as well as the research process. This is first of all utterly tight time frames to conduct the study. Secondly, this is a scarce amount of reliable sources and transparent information on the current political developments in the field of higher education in the Republic of Moldova and, therewith, a highly limited amount of scholarly studies on the issue of Bologna-related reforms in Moldova. Therefore, in line with the rationale for the present study, it is hoped that the conducted research will serve as a source of valuable information for both categories of informants: academically concerned students, researchers, and scholars as well as higher education practitioners – university administrators and national policy-makers.

References

- AlmaMater. The Higher Education from the Republic of Moldova in the dimension of the European university area, <http://almamater.md/en.html>. Retrieved 01.02.2008 – 15.05.2008.
- Bergen Communiqué (2005). The European higher education area Achieving the goals. Retrieved 30.01.2008 from <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main doc/050520 Bergen Communiqué.pdf>
- Berlin Communiqué (2003). Realizing the European higher education area. Retrieved 30.01.2008 from: <http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Communiqué1.pdf>
- Blaikie, N. (2000) *Designing Social Research*. Polity Press.
- Bologna Declaration (1999). Joint declaration of the European ministers of education. Retrieved 26.01.2008 from: <http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/bologna declaration.pdf>
- Bologna Process National Report (2005). Retrieved 14.03.2008 from http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/EN/national_impl/New/0411_Moldova.pdf
- Bologna Process National Report (2007). Retrieved 14.03.2008 from http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/links/National-reports-2007/National_Report_Moldova2007.pdf
- Bologna Process Stocktaking Report, (2007). Report from a working group appointed by the Bologna Follow-up Group to the Ministerial Conference in London, Retrieved 1.04.2008 from http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/WGR2007/Stocktaking_report2007.pdf
- Bryman, A. (2004). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford University Press.
- Cabac, V. (2007). Bologna Process- creation of European Higher Education Area. [Romanian] In: *The Bologna Process: National and International experience*. Chisinau.
- Caisin, S., V. Cabac, and E. Muraru (2007). The Bologna Process: achievements, challenges and perspectives [Romanian] In: *The Bologna Process: National and International experience*. Chisinau.
- Canto, I. (2004). Book reviews. Integrating Europe Through Co-operation Among Universities – The Experience of the TEMPUS Program. *Higher education Policy* 14, pp. 91-98
- Cerych, L. (2002). Sorbonne, Bologna, Prague: Where Do We Go From Here? In (Ed) Enders Jurgens and Fulton Oliver. *Higher Education in a Globalizing World. International Trends and Mutual Observations*. Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Coded interviews: R1-R10. (2008).
- Coleman, W. D. (2001). Policy Networks. In: *International Encyclopaedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences*, Elsevier Science Ltd.

- Coleman, W. D. and A. Perl (1999). Internationalized Policy Environments and Policy Network Analysis *Political Studies*, XLVII, pp. 691-709.
- de Boer H. (May 2007). Presentation: "Shifts in Governance: Public sector reforms in Western Europe", Center for Higher Education Policy Studies University of Twente, the Netherlands.
- Denzin, N. K. (1970). *The Research Act in Sociology*. London: Butterworth.
- Dolowitz D. P. and D. Marsh (2000). Learning From Abroad: The Role of Policy Transfer in Contemporary Policy Making. *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration*. 13(1), pp. 5-24.
- EAC/04/2008, First Call For Proposals, Tempus IV Reform of Higher Education through International University Cooperation. Retrieved 10.04.2008 from http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/tempus/call08/call_en.pdf
- Enders J. (2004). Higher education, internationalization and nation-state: recent developments and challenges to governance theory. *Higher education* 47, pp. 361-382
- Enders, J., Jeliaskova M., & Maassen P. (2003). Proceedings from 16th Annual CHER Conference: *Higher education policy formulation and implementation: a framework for case analysis*. Porto, 4-6 September. Dordrecht: Springer.
- EURIDICE (2006) *Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe - 2006/07*. National Trends in the Bologna Process. Brussels: EURIDICE
- European Commission (3 April 2008). Progress Report Moldova. 'Implementation of the European Neighborhood Policy in 2007'. Retrieved 15.04.2008 from http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/progress2008/sec08_399_en.pdf
- European Commission (EC), 2008, official Web page: <http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/tempus>. Retrieved 01.02.2008 – 15.05.2008.
- European Higher Education in a Global Setting. A Strategy for the External Dimension of the Bologna Process. Retrieved 15. 02. 2008 from: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/WGR2007/Strategy-for-EHEA-in-global-setting.pdf>
- Executive Summary of the Impact Study, European Commission (EC), Retrieved 15.04.2008 from <http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/tempus/doc/impact.pdf>
- Figel' J. In: IP/06/998 Higher education: the Commission supports university reforms in neighbouring countries Brussels, 17 July 2006. Retrieved 15.04.2008 from <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/998&format=PDF&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>
- Glonti, L. and M. Chitashvili (2007). The challenge of Bologna: The Nuts and Bolts of Higher Education Reform in Georgia. In: Tomusk, V. (eds.) *Creating the European Area of Higher Education: Voices from the Periphery*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Gornitzka Á., S. Kyvik and B. Stensaker, (2005). Implementation Analysis in Higher education. in Á. Gornitzka et al. (eds.), *Reform and Change in Higher Education*. Netherlands: Springer.

- Gornitzka, S. Kyvik, & B. Stensaker. (2005). Implementation analysis in higher education. In: Gornitzka, M. Kogan, & A. Amaral (eds.) *Reform and Change in Higher Education Analyzing Policy Implementation*. pp. 35-56. The Netherlands: Springer
- Gorniyzka, Á., (2007). What is the Use of Bologna in National Reform? The Case of Norwegian Quality Reform in Higher Education. In: Tomusk, V. (eds.) *Creating the European Area of Higher Education: Voices from the Periphery*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Gzarniawska, B. and C. Joerges (1998). Winds of Organizational Change: How Ideas Translate into Objects and Actions. In N. Brunsson and J. P. Olsen (eds.) *Organizing Organizations*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Gzarniawska, B. and G. Sevón (eds.) (1996). *Translating Organizational Change*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Hakl, E. (2001). The Intrusion and Expansion of Community Policies in Higher Education 13(3), pp. 99-117.
- Human Development Report (2004). Published for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Retrieved 28.04.2008 from http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr04_complete.pdf
- Kenis, P. and V. Schneider (1991). Policy Networks and Policy Analysis: Scrutinizing a New Analytical Toolbox. In Bernd M. and R. Mayntz (eds.) *Policy Networks. Empirical Evidence and Theoretical Considerations*, Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.
- Kivistö, J. (2007). *Agency Theory as a Framework for the Government-University Relationship*. Academic Dissertation, University of Tampere.
- Knight, J. (2004). Internationalization Remodeled: Definition, Approaches, and Rationales. *Journal of Studies in International Education*.8 (1), pp. 5-31.
- Langan E. (2000) Book review. Integrating Europe Through Co-operation Among Universities – The Experience of the TEMPUS Program. *Higher Education Policy* 13, pp. 215-216.
- Law No. 71-XIV regarding the Amendments and Completions to the Law on Education [in Russian] Retrieved 21.04.2008 from <http://www.parlament.md/download/drafts/ru/2832.2007.doc>
- Marginson, S. and M. van der Wende (2007). Globalisation and Higher Education (Education Working Paper No.8), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development EDU/WKP(2007)3
- Marsh D. (eds.) (1998). *Comparing Policy Network*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Marshall, C. and G. Rossman (1989). *Designing qualitative research*. SAGE Publications.
- Mendizabal E. (2006). Understanding Networks: The Functions of Research Policy Networks (Working Paper 271) Retrieved 05.03.2008 from http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/working_papers/wp271.pdf
- MEY. Moldova: a year after the adherence to the Bologna Process. AlmaMater, June 12, 2006. Retrieved 11.02.2008 from <http://www.almamater.md/articles/1472/en.html>

- MEY. National Report on Education for 1990-2000. 2001. Retrieved 11.02.2008 [http://www.ibe.unesco.org/ International/Ice/natrap/Moldova.pdf](http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/Ice/natrap/Moldova.pdf)
- MEY. National Report on the Development of the Education System in Republic of Moldova. 2004 Retrieved 11.02.2008 <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/international/ice47/English/Natreps/reports/moldova.pdf>
- Ministry of Education and Youth (MEY) Formal Letter of “Proclamaion of the Republic of Moldova intention to sign the Boogna Declaration”.
- Ministry of Education and Youth (MEY) official Web page: <http://www.edu.md>. Retrieved 01.02.2008 – 15.05.2008
- Moldova, Country profile, Retrieved 15.04.2008 from <http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/tempus/countries/impact/moldova.pdf>
- Moldovan-Batrinac, V. (2005). Recent achievements in the reforming of higher education from the Republic of Moldova.” *AlmaMater*, December 21, 2005. <http://www.almamater.md/articles/1110/en.html>
- Moldovan-Batrinac, V. (2007).D evelopment of higher education in the Republic of Moldova [Romanian] In: *The Bologna Process: National and International experience*. Chisinau.
- National Bureau of Statistics official w-site: <http://www.statistica.md/index.php?lang=en>
- Newman, I. and C.R. Benz (1998). *Qualitative-quantitative research methodology exploring the interactive continuum*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Nyborg, P. (2004). Challenges to members and potential new members of the Bologna Process, Council of Europe Mission to Armenia, Yerevan 25-26 October 2004. Retrieved 14.04.2008 from http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/03-PNY/041025-26_Nyborg_Armenia.pdf
- Olsen, J. P. (2002). The Many Faces of Europeanization. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(5), pp. 921-952.
- Oppenheim, A. N. (1999). *Questionnaire design, interviewing and attitude measurement*, London: Pinter.
- Paslaru, V. (2003). Education system reform in the context of European integration. In: *Reforming Education System* Institute for Public Policy, Chisianu: Epigraf.
- Peters, B. G. (2001). *The Future of Governing*. University Press of Kansas.
- Peterson J. (2003). Policy Networks. *Policy Networks*. IHS Political Science Series: 2003, No. 90. Retrieved 10.02.2008 form http://www.ihs.ac.at/publications/pol/pw_90.pdf
- Popa, A. (2007). Some reflection on the academic mobility strategy realization. [Romanian] In: *The Bologna Process: National and International experience*. Chisinau.
- Procesul Bologna, (2005). [Romanian] *Creating the European Higher Education Area*. Chisinau.

- Report for the Austrian Information Seminar on the Bologna Process, January 26, 2006, "Implementation of the Bologna Process priorities within the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova" Retrieved 04.04.2008 from http://www.dfes.gov.uk/londonbologna/uploads/documents/BFUG8_12_RepublicofMoldovaReportontheBolognaProcess.doc
- Report of the Deputy Minister of Education and Youth of the Republic of Moldova, Mrs. Viorelia Moldovan-Batrinac, at the informal Conference of the ministers of education from the 5 states-members of the Bologna Process, 12 December 2006.
- Rhodes, R.A.W. (1997). *Understanding Governance. Policy Networks, Governance, Reflexivity and Accountability*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Robinson S. E. (2006). A Decade of Treating Networks Seriously. *The Policy Studies Journal*, 34(4), pp. 589-598.
- Rusnac, G., E. Muraru, and V. Gutu (2007). Higher Education of the Republic of Moldova in the Context of the Bologna Process. [Romanian] In: *The Bologna Process: National and International experience*. Chisinau.
- Slantcheva, S. (2007). Restructuring Bulgarian Higher Education: The Bulgarian Strategy Towards The Bologna Declaration In: Tomusk, V. (eds.) *Creating the European Area of Higher Education: Voices from the Periphery*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Speech of the Minister of Education and Youth (May 2005), Bergen Conference of European Ministers of Education.
- Stasna, V. (2001). Internationalisation of Higher Education in the Czch Republic – the impact of European Union Programmes. *European Journal of Education*, 36(4), pp. 473-491.
- Stone, Diane (2000). Learning Lessons, Policy Transfer and the International Diffusion of Policy Ideas. Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation. Retrieved 25.02.2008 from <http://poli.haifa.ac.il/~levi/res/stone-2000.pdf>
- Strategy on the higher education in the Republic of Moldova within the framework of the Bologna Process. Retrieved 20.01.2008 from http://www.almater.md/cgi/jump.cgi?DB=Document&view=File_en&ID=495
- Tanja A. Börzel (1997). What's So Special About Policy Networks? – An Exploration of the Concept and Its Usefulness in Studying European Governance. *European Integration online Papers (EIoP)* 1(16). Retrieved 03.02.2008 from <http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/1997-016a.htm>
- The declaration of the participants in the international conference "The modernization of the higher education from the Republic of Moldova in the context of the Bologna Process", Chisinau, November 27, 2004. Retrieved 20.01.2008 from http://www.almater.md/cgi/jump.cgi?DB=Document&view=File_en&ID=510
- The EU Moldova Action Plan, Retrieved 1.02.2008 from http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/action_plans/moldova_enp_ap_final_en.pdf
- The State University of Moldova official Web page: <http://www.usm.md/start.aspx> Retrieved 12.04.2008.

- Tiron S. (coordinator), V. Arion, M. Paiu, V. Scalnii, V. Stan (2003). Higher Education in the Republic of Moldova, UNESCO-CEPES Monographs on Higher Education.
- Toderas, N. (2006). *Aspects of bringing in correspondence of the higher education system with the standards of the European Union member-states: education and youth policies*. [Romanian] Expert-Grup, Adept. (Available at: <http://www.e-democracy.md/publications/aspectele-racordarii-sistemului/>).
- Tomusk, V. (Ed.) (2004). *The open world and closed societies: essays on higher education policies "in transition"* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tomusk, V. (Ed.) (2006). *Creating the European Area of Higher Education: Voices from the Periphery*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- UNESCO conference report (2006). State policy in the area of rights for education in the Republic of Moldova. [in Russian] Retrieved 11.03.2008 from http://www.vo.kiev.ua/files/ukr/outputs_334_ua_natreport_md.pdf
- Välismaa J., D. Hoffman, and M. Huusko (2007). The Bologna Process in Finland: Perspectives from the Basic Units. In: Tomusk, V. (eds.) *Creating the European Area of Higher Education: Voices from the Periphery*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Weitgruber, B. (2006). National Higher Education Systems and the Bologna Process. In *Higher Education Reform*. 1/2006, EUA, Raabe.
- Wende, M.C. van der (2001a). The Internal Dimension in National Higher Education Policies: what has changed in Europe in the last five years? *European Journal of Education* 36(4), p. 431-441.
- Wende, M.C. van der (2001b). Internationalization policies: about new trends and contrasting paradigms. *Higher Education Policy*, 14, p. 249-259.
- Wende, M.C. van der (2003). Bologna is not the only city that matters in European higher education policy. *International Higher Education*, 32, p. 15-18.
- Witte, J. (2004). The introduction of two-tiered study structures in the context of the Bologna process: A theoretical framework for an international comparative study of change in higher education systems. *Higher Education Policy*, 17, pp. 405-425.
- Witte, J. (2006). *Change of degrees and degrees of change. Comparing adaptations of European higher education systems in the context of the Bologna process*. Doctorate thesis. University of Twente: Enschede.
- 90/233/EEC: Council Decision of 7 May 1990 establishing a trans-European mobility scheme for university studies (Tempus) Official Journal L 131, 23/05/1990 P. 0021 – 0026. Retrieved 10.04.2008 from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31990D0233:EN:HTML>

APPENDIX 1

The list of persons interviewed during the fieldwork undertaken in the Republic of Moldova in January 2008

1. Deputy Rector of the State University of Moldova
2. Prime Deputy Rector of the Balti University A. Russo
3. Rector of the Medical State University of Moldova
4. Deputy Rector of the Technical University of Moldova
5. Former Deputy Minister of Education and Youth
6. Head of the Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Youth
7. Senior Expert at the Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Youth
8. Head of the National Tempus Office
9. Program Director of the Institute for Public Policy
10. Director of the Center Pro-Bologna

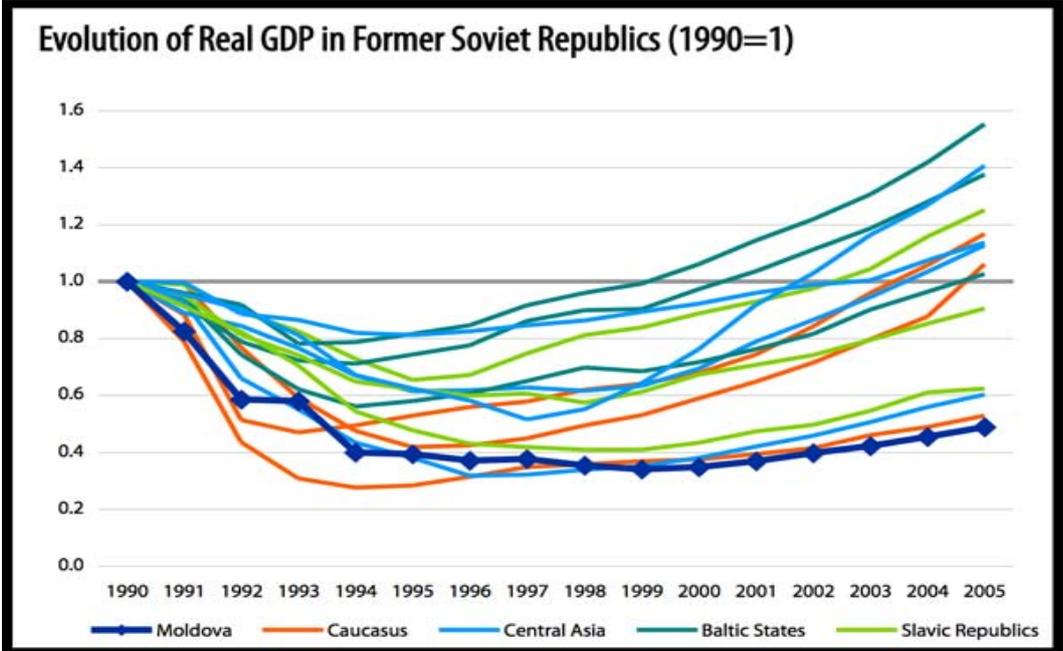
For the sake of anonymity the answers, opinions, and ideas of the interviewees, quoted and referred to within the present study, are codified and presented as Respondent 1 to Respondent 10 (R1...R10). The order of the interviewees in the above list do not correspond to the coding R1 through R10. The information on the coding principle is available exclusively to the author of the present research.

Basic categories/topics of discussion during the interviews conducted in Moldova

- The origin and rationale of the initiative and political decision to join the Bologna process.
- The role played by the parties (actors) involved into the process of the higher education policy formation/implementation.
- Major challenges and obstacles facing the process of implementation of the Bologna process objectives.
- Progress made and evident outcomes achieved so far.

APPENDIX 2

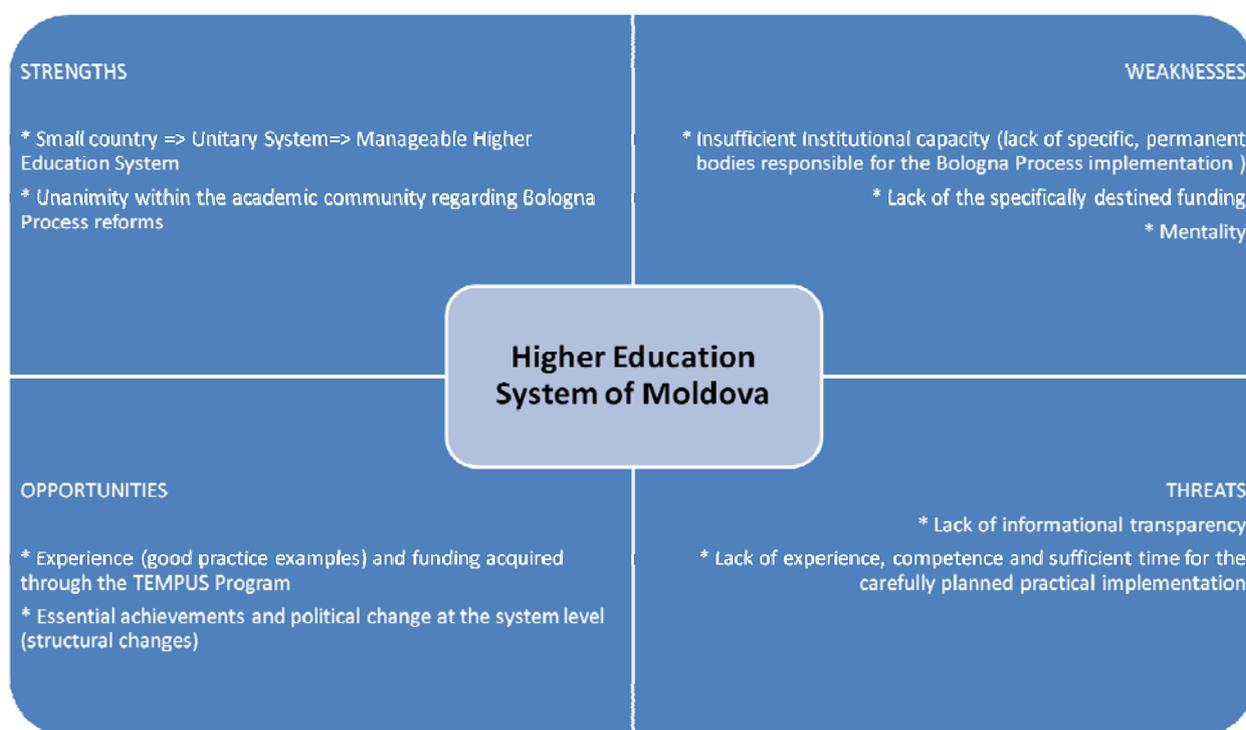
The level of real GDP in the Republic of Moldova



Source: Economist Intelligence Unit Data Service
(http://www.culiuc.com/archives/2006/01/gdp_dynamics.phtml)

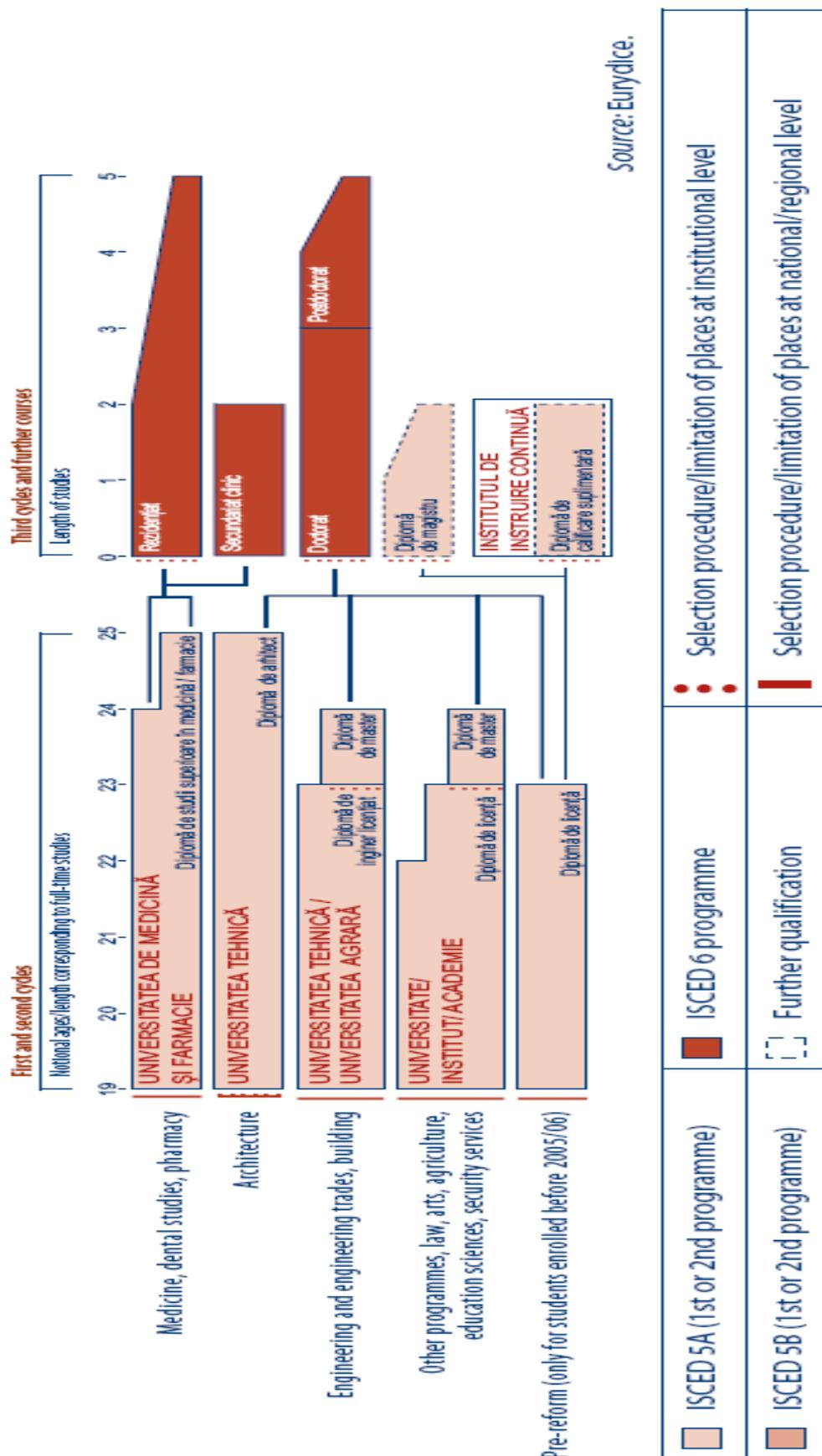
APPENDIX 3

SWOT analysis of the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova in the context of the Bologna process



APPENDIX 4

The Structure of the Higher Education System of the Republic of Moldova



APPENDIX 5

Programme of Actions

concerning the Implementation of the Objectives of the Bologna Process in the Republic of Moldova for 2005-2010

Main directions	Actions	Deadlines	Responsible institution
Adjustment of the legislative framework	Amendments to the Law on Education aimed to introduce higher education structure essentially based on cycles (Licentiate, Master)	2005	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport; Higher Education Institutions
	Elaboration of a legislative framework aimed to assure introduction and implementation of ECTS;	2005-2006	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport; Higher Education Institutions
	Elaboration and adoption of a new National List of fields of studies for the 1st and 2nd cycles of the national higher education.	2005 - 2010	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport;
	Elaboration of the statute of the pedagogical staff	2005	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport; Higher Education Institutions
	Elaboration of new curriculum. Adjustment and implementation of educational and professional standards For higher education based on cycles.	2005	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport; Branch Ministries
	Diploma Supplement implementation.	2005	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport; Higher Education Institutions
	Revision of structure and content of post-university education according to European requirements.	2006-2008	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
	Elaboration of legislative framework with regard to institutional, national and international academic mobility.	2005-2006	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport Higher Education Institutions

1	2	3	4
	Elaboration of national qualifications framework: - description of national qualifications framework essentially based on cycles; - Elaboration of methodology of old qualifications reconversion into the new ones.	2006-2007 2006	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport Ministry of labour and social protection.
	Elaboration of the strategy of higher education modernisation and adoption of the action plan for its implementation.	2006	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
Improvement of the recognition system.	Creation of the service for recognition and equivalence documents on education - Advanced training of staff acting in the field of recognition and equivalence.	2005 permanent	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
	Elaboration of recommendations regarding professional and academic recognition of degrees and study periods.	2005-2006	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
	Elaboration of the mechanism of issuing and recognition of joint degrees	2007	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
Quality Assurance	Improvement of the higher education admission mechanism in order to assure competent based selection.	annual	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
	Improvement of methodology of the teaching process in order to assure possibility of individual study paths and flexibility of study programmes.	2005-2006	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport Higher Education Institutions
	Introduction of modern teaching technologies. Improvement of methodology of knowledge evaluation.	2005-2006	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport Higher Education Institutions
	Normative and legislative framework for practical training	2006	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport Higher Education Institutions
	Improvement of the higher education evaluation and accreditation system. Assurance of transparency of the academic evaluation and accreditation processes.	2005-2006	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

1.	2.	3.	4.
Quality Assurance	Establishment and development of internal/institutional quality assurance systems.	2005-2006	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport Higher Education Institutions
	Improvement of internal and external evaluation mechanisms as major instruments of quality assurance	2005-2006	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
	Assurance of normative and legislative framework for the activity of specialised evaluation commissions.	2005-2006	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
	Promotion of international co-operation in view of attraction of foreign experts into the processes of academic evaluation and quality assurance.	Starting with 2006	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
	Establishment of National Quality Assurance Agency (with competence in evaluation accreditation and quality assurance.)	2006	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
Improvement of academic staff competencies and performances	Establishment of a system of continuing teacher training in higher education.	2006-2008	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport Ministry of labour and social protection. Ministry of Finance
	Elaboration of the mechanism of measurement of academic staff competencies and performances	2006	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport; Branch Ministries
	Elaboration of the mechanism of academic mobility promotion including the financial schemes of institutional and individual grants	2006-2008	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport; Branch Ministries
Social dimension	Elaboration of legislative framework for diversification of financial sources for higher education students.	2006	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport; Ministry of Finance
	Improvement of the existing schemes of scholarship awarding, in order to support socially disadvantaged students and increase the level of academic motivation	2005-2006	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport; Ministry of Finance
	Involvement of students into higher education governance as equal partners of educational process.	2005	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport; Ministry of Finance
	Elaboration of the mechanism of graduates employment including thought promotion of co-operation with social partners and stakeholders.	2005-2006	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport; Ministry of labour and social protection. Ministry of economy and commerce