
AN EXAMPLE FOR REGIONAL CO-OPERATION: ALECU RUSSO STATE UNIVERSITY'S EXPERIENCE

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Each university is an academic, scientific center that maintains collaboration with different structures on national and international levels.

Since the Republic of Moldova became an independent state, the majority of state institutions has entered a transition period that has caused each institution to be more active in the field of national, regional, and international collaboration.

After the Republic of Moldova joined the Bologna Process, each institution was able to create its own very unique mobility between collaborators and students.

At the same time, the universities suffered cuts in financial subsidy. This has meant that each university has had to develop not only its personal, unique collaboration but also its own way of finding resources with which to develop its administration.

For a time some powerful donator organizations existed in Moldova that for years supported the academic and scientific activities of Moldovan teachers/university professors and students. One example is the Soros Foundation¹ with its—Higher Education Support Program (HESP) programme.

For years many teachers/university professors and students were able to develop academic mobility and to make their own academic and scientific progress in different countries. Another way of ensuring academic mobility was the signed contracts and agreements of collaborations between universities. It was also a way of ensuring academic and scientific collaboration, the professional development of teachers/

¹ The Soros Foundation - Moldova (SFM) is a non-governmental, non-profit and non-political organization which was established in 1992 by the financier and the philanthropist George Soros to promote the development of an open society in Moldova by developing and implementing a range of programs and activities that address specific areas of needs including media, cultural policy, legal reform, public administration and good governance, media, civil society, public health, and European integration.

The mission of the Soros Foundation - Moldova is to promote open society values through support for its infrastructure and institutions. The Foundation works in its priority areas through grant and operational programs. Programs are launched at the decision of the Soros Foundation Board and represent the recognition of a field where the Foundation can contribute through technical assistance, consulting, training, or financing for specific projects. Programs are run over several years or a period necessary for improvement of the problematic situation. Each program proposes for one year a range of concrete activities, asking the National Board for a budget. The programs are administered by program directors. All the programs run by the Soros Foundation - Moldova are publicly advertised.

university professors and students and to ensure the success of the projects from the financial point of view.

Alecu RUSSO State University, BALTI, Republic of MOLDOVA has collaborated for many years with various institutions and scientific centers at national, regional and international levels, among them the “D. P. Hasdeu” State University, Cahul, Moldova; “Babes-Bolyai” University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania; “Al. I. Cuza” University, Iasi, Romania; “Dunarea de Jos” Univesity, Galati, Romania; “Iu. Fedkovici” National University, Cernauti, Ukraine; Humanitarian Crimean University, Yalta, Crimea, Ukraine; “I. Franco” National University, Lvov, Ukraine; the Institute of Radio-Physics, Nijnii-Novgorod, Russia; State University, Elets, Russia; the Pedagogical University, Mozyri, Byelorussia; Fachhochschule, Düsseldorf, Germany and State University, Fresno, California, U.S.A.. As the geographical neighbors of Republic of Moldova are Ukraine and Romania, collaboration is most intense with these countries. For historical reasons, collaboration with the Russian Federation is also developed.

Since the creation of the European Union, a number of structures have been created that have as their main goal the generation, maintenance and development of academic and scientific collaborations between different educational, governmental and non-governmental organizations. Successful among these has been the TACIS/TEMPUS program.²

The university has participated and is participating in many national and international projects:

- 1995- 1998, TACIS—“Studiengang Sozialwesen,” with Germany, Holland, Greece;
- 2004-2006, TEMPUS—“Transferring the EU Assessment to Moldova Universities (TAEM),” with Switzerland, Great Britain, Portugal;
- 2006-2007, TEMPUS—“The development of the Quality Assurance System within selected Universities in Moldova,” with Switzerland, France, Lithuania;
- 2006-2007, TEMPUS—“Developing Standards from post-graduate education in Moldovan Universities,” with Switzerland, Estonia;

² Tempus is one of a number of European Community programmes designed to help the process of social and economic reform and/or development in the Partner Countries. The Partner Countries currently included are the Western Balkan Countries, the Eastern European and Central Asian Countries, and the Mediterranean Partners. The Tempus Programme focuses on the development of the higher education systems in these countries through co-operation with institutions from the Member States of the European Community. The programme is based on the understanding that higher education institutions are of particular importance for the social and economic transition process as well as cultural development; they are also pools of expertise and of human resources and provide for the training of new generations of leaders.

- 2006-2007, TEMPUS—"Support to the creation and activities of the National Teams of Bologna Promoters," with Malta, Spain, Great Britain.
- 2007-2009, JEP—"Developing ICT capable Schools in Moldova (DICSIM)," with Moldova, Spain, Sweden, Portugal;
- 2009-2011, TEMPUS—"Professionnalisation des enseignements en travail social," with Moldova, Russia, Kazakhstan, UK, Bulgaria, Spain, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania.

Beginning in 1998, the university (through the "Educational Assessment" and the "National Center for assessment, Testing, and Educational policies" NGO) in realizing the international projects TIMSS and PIRLSS, organized by IEA (International Association for the evaluation of Educational Achievement).

The Moldovan universities were in a process of development. In 2003 a Section for Informatization, standards in Education and Technologies in Instructions was set up at *Alecu RUSSO* State University, BALTI, Republic of MOLDOVA. In 2006 it was transformed into a Section for Quality and European Integration and in 2006 it began belief as a Section for Academic Mobility and International relations. The Section was processing the information on national and international levels. Each week all interested students, university professors and university officials receive an electronic newspaper about all current grants, competitions, conferences, seminars and proposals for collaborations where citizens of Republic of Moldova are eligible to apply. In this way the aims of the section were to find, to maintain and to develop all opportunities for national, regional and international cooperation; to develop strategies for the improvement of cooperation in the region; to facilitate movement of academicians between other countries and *Alecu RUSSO* State University, BALTI, Republic of MOLDOVA; to foster relations among universities; to prepare events (including official visits at the national, regional and international level). The Section for Academic Mobility and International relations was in collaboration with Embassies accredited in Republic of Moldova.

Sometimes, the single disqualifying criterion that was impossible to overcome was citizenship. However, in recent years this condition has been slowly disappearing. An increasing number of competitions do not have citizenship as a criterion for eligibility. The single criterion begins to be the professional competence.

The most mobile part of *Alecu RUSSO* State University, BALTI, Republic of MOLDOVA is its students. These are accepted in many competitions and study abroad. The main danger is that some of them don't come back. This danger appeared for *Alecu RUSSO* State University, BALTI, Republic of MOLDOVA as soon as a common education space was created (according to the Bologna Process) During the time, the Section for Academic Mobility and International relations has had some other problems:

- mobility and the flexibility are slow;
- language learning and even Internet use has been slow;
- many Embassies are situated outside of Moldova, and so collaborators and the students have to go to Kiev, Moscow, Bucharest (for Romania we need a separate visa) to apply for a visa;
- financial sources are limited or there were no resources for developing the Section for Academic Mobility and International relations;
- poor experience in project-writing (grant-writing and fundraising);
- the mentality is still a problem; there are already two or three generations of academics (including students) that have different stereotypes and experiences in the field of academic mobility. Some of them are simply waiting for financial resources and information to participate in scientific and academic activities. They are not interested in finding information or financial resources for themselves. They are just waiting to be "given" something without any personal involvement. Another part of collaborators are more active. They receive information about opportunities for academic mobility, they participate in competitions, they write projects and, in the case of their being finalists in those competitions, they participate and achieve their personal academic and scientific mobility. The third part comprises those that are independently looking for possibilities for personal academic and scientific development, without any help. In this way there are *free-movers*—students that travel entirely on their own initiative, and *programme students*—students that use exchange programmes at department, faculty, institutional, national, regional or the international level;
- citizens of the Republic of Moldova are still leaving Moldova for other countries (they get scholarships, they go to study and they never return to Moldova);
- the level of poverty in the Republic of Moldova is still an impediment for successful academic and scientific development and for academic mobility.

The Section for Mobility and International Relations was officially closed on September 15th, 2010.

WEB-SOURCES

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_mobility

www.soros.md

http://www.eurostar.edu.ru/en/tempus_tacis.php

