

# From Policy to Practice: Evaluating the One-Year Outcomes of Moldova's Higher Education Reforms

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## Abstract

The present article aims to critically evaluate the outcomes of Moldova's ambitious higher education reforms initiated in 2022, emphasizing its effects on the national higher education system. This assessment is grounded in the recognition of higher education's pivotal role in advancing both economic growth and societal well-being. The reform was primarily undertaken to elevate academic standards and align the Moldovan higher education system with European norms. Despite some positive gains, the research identifies significant challenges that remain unaddressed, such as declining student numbers, demographic shifts, migration, and an aging academic workforce.

Utilizing a comprehensive review of government reports, policy documents, and academic literature, coupled with primary data from stakeholder interviews, the study employs a mixed-method approach. It examines key components and objectives of the reform, assessing its impact on the structure, content, and quality of higher education and research in Moldova.

While the reform has made strides in streamlining academic processes and partially aligning with European standards, it falls short in tackling larger issues such as declining enrollments and aging faculty. The article emphasizes the need for continuous monitoring and adjustment of reform measures, proposing two main avenues for ongoing change: developing highly specialized universities or further consolidating the higher education system into a single public university in Chisinau.

**Keywords:** Higher Education Reform, Moldova, Academic Quality, University Consolidation, Student Enrollment, Social Cohesion, Economic Development