



Internationalization of Higher Education in the Republic of Moldova: drawing country profile

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The questionnaire on which the present report is based was prepared with the purpose of analysing the level of internationalisation of higher education, research and innovation in the Republic of Moldova. The questionnaire development was achieved through methodological workshops on questionnaire drafting. The questionnaire drafting was produced by partners for each Partner University: P-1, Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova (ASEM), P-2, The Technical University of Moldova (TUM), P-3, State Agrarian University of Moldova (SAUM), P-4, Alecu Russo State University of Balti (USARB), P-5, Cahul State University “Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu”, P-6, Comrat State University (KDU), with the support of European partners including, P-7, The Maastricht Graduate School of Governance (MGSOG), P-8, Mykolas Romeris University (MRU), P-9, Buckinghamshire New University (BUCKS), P-10, University of Maribor (UM), and P-11, European Policy Development and Research Institute.

This report analysis the current state of higher education internationalization in the Republic of Moldova based on the study outcomes.

General information

- The data is provided for the period of September 2010-September 2017.
- 12 universities answered the external questionnaire in Moldova out of 12 universities planned.



Introduction

Internationalization in higher education and the tasks to be done within this context are becoming more and more of an issue in many countries, the Republic of Moldova is not an exception in this regard, HEIs' internationalization being a potential solution to the long run sustainable development of the sector. Internationalization is a need considering the present demographic and socio-economic challenges the country confronts with. Internationalization of higher education is the highest level of international relations between universities, the Republic of Moldova on overall, embracing this opportunity later due to the lack of prioritization of this area during the previous years. Internationalization cannot be seen only as an independent goal, for instance increasing the number of students, but as an improvement in the whole system with the main aim being the quality of education. The benefits of internationalization of higher education are cost and knowledge procurement, talent mobilization, support for global research and the appearance of the curriculum with international models, which tend to adapt to the permanently changing global environment. Although internationalization brings with it a number of positive outcomes in higher education, this multifaceted and growing phenomenon entails serious risks, including commercial benefits, university colonization and the difficulty of providing qualitative education, which the HEIs from the Republic of Moldova are well aware of. Internationalization is therefore multifaceted and influences the entire university sector and all who work within higher education institutions.

Despite HEIs internationalization remains a central and strategic goal for the long run for country's HEIs. An aim which due to its complexity, many higher education institutions practitioners continue confuse, this why establishing strategies is a core objective which are regarded as necessary steps towards consolidation of the HEIs capacities through offering a broader and deepened perspective. For instance, it is interpreted and intersected with a lot of other national higher education programs priorities and often based on narrow prejudices limited to one in its own way - attracting international student to pay fees, which is important yet it represents only an effect of growing quality and internationalization of curricula, research and of institutional administrative services. It is important, therefore, to position internationalization within certain mechanisms through which this will be achieved.

To comprehensively appraise the level of internationalization of Moldovan higher education institutions, a detailed questionnaire was undertaken consisting of 96 questions divided into five



chapters covering the key areas of internationalization including: Chapter I: Internationalization policy/strategy, Chapter II: Internationalisation/ Internationality level in terms of student mobility, Chapter III: Internationalisation in terms of academic mobility, Chapter IV: Internationalisation in terms Educational Programmes, Chapter V: Internationalisation in terms of research and international events. Each participating university was supposed to fill in the required information, and on the base of which the country profile will be assessed.

Participating institutions

No	Name of the institution	Acronym	
P-1	Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova	ASEM	
P-2	The Technical University of Moldova	TUM	
P-3	State Agrarian University of Moldova	SAUM	
P-4	Alecu Ruso State University of Balti	USARB	
P-5	Cahul State University “Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu”	USC	
P-6	Comrat State University	KDU	
P-7	Through the framework of Rectors Council	Ion Creangă State Pedagogical University of Chisinau	UPS
		Academy of Music, Theater and Fine Arts of Moldova	AMPTAM
		Cooperative-Commercial University of Moldova	UCCM
		State University of Physical Education and Sport, Moldova	UFIZ
		State University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Nicolae Testemitanu" of the Republic of Moldova	USMF
		Tiraspol State University, Chisinau	UST

Analysis of Chapter I: Internationalization policy/strategy

Out of 12 respondents 5 HEIs mentioned that they have an internationalization strategy already in place, 1 institution said that it does not have a specific strategy in this area, however, it is working on one, while 6 universities underlined that they are currently working on one. Based on the answers provided for the second question it can be highlighted that in the vast majority of cases, responsible internationalization of higher education in the Republic of Moldova



for internationalization of the university is the Rector (9 responses), a member of the Rectorate (9), head of the international office (9), these are the base pillars on which the internationalization process of Moldovan HEIs is based. Also, a key role in the internationalization is played by the Deans for 7 universities. The minority of the universities mentioned also other persons who are in charge for internationalization i.e. member of the Scientific Council, member of the Administration Council and delegate of the academic Senate. The top priorities for internationalization are to develop learning and teaching partnerships with other institutions, to create an internationalised study environment at home and to internationalize teaching and learning (for question with only 1 option), When being asked the same questions and offered multiple options, as a priority has become to attract students at all levels of studying, to establish cooperation relations with other foreign institutions in research and to provide our staff with international experience opportunities. When being asked about the sources of funding for internationalization, the respondents mentioned that institutional budget and EU programmes are the fundamental sources for supporting international efforts in Moldovan HEIs. The benefits which internationalisation provide to the Universities include increased international cooperation and capacity building, increased competitiveness of provided teaching and learning, improved image of the institution and increased cooperation and networking with international professors and academics. The limits for internationalization which are most met by the Universities of the Republic of Moldova include lack of language proficiency among students and academics, lack of efficient international partnerships and cooperation, lack of agreements regulating the mutual recognition of ECTS credits as well as lack of funding provided to potential participants in mobility programmes. The priority activities regarding internationalization of Moldovan HEIs are outgoing student/academic mobility, strategic institutional partnerships building and incoming student/academic mobility. The strategic reasons Moldovan higher education institutions become involved in internationalization and willing to increase the level of include stimulate research activity in the institution, prepare international and inter-cultural aware graduates, and strengthen cooperation with institutions abroad. 5 universities provide institution joint/dual degree programmes, however, in the most cases not on regular basis, but when an opportunity occurs considering international partnership. 7 HEIs does not provide no joint or double degrees. The regions of the world which Moldovan Universities consider to be most important in building partnership include the European Union and the Community of Independent States. The programmes and initiatives for institutions have received funding or financing include capacity building and other development cooperation programs, Centres of Excellence programmes, student exchange programs and financing the professionalization of networks. The performance of the services provided to foreign students are



evaluated as rather medium to weak, few of the universities including a cross cultural dimension. The universities' management in majority of cases do not take into consideration foreign language skills when hiring/ promoting university administrative or academic staff, 7 of the institutions do not offering this area a priority, while only 5 consider this important. When being asked whether the institutions offer free foreign language courses for administrative staff the majority of the institutions responded affirmatively. Universities conduct regular assessment of the impact and/or progress of university internationalisation efforts, nevertheless, they do not maintain an international alumni database, only 4 universities from the total number maintaining one.

Analysis of Chapter II: Internationalisation/ Internationality level in terms of student mobility

As it can be observed in chart 1, during the researched period, the leader in terms of outgoing mobility in TUM followed by USARB and USMF which succeeded in involving 478, 207 and 190 students respectively in outgoing mobility programmes. The rest of the universities register modest results, sending very few students during the whole period.

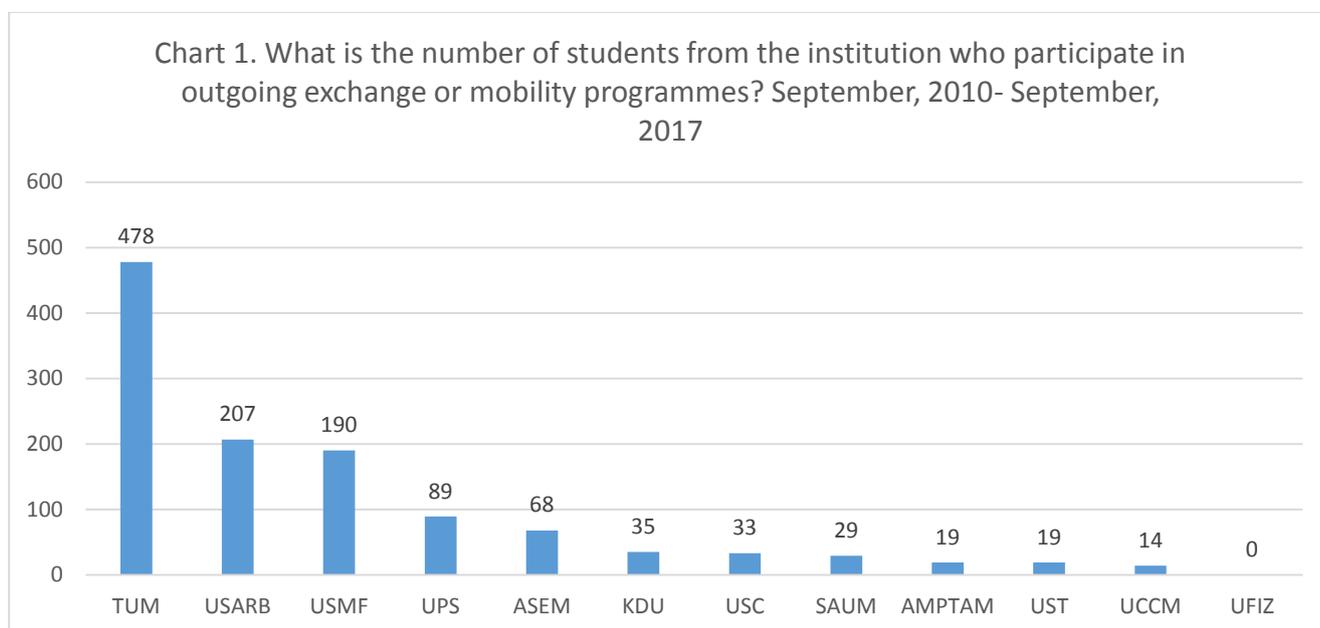
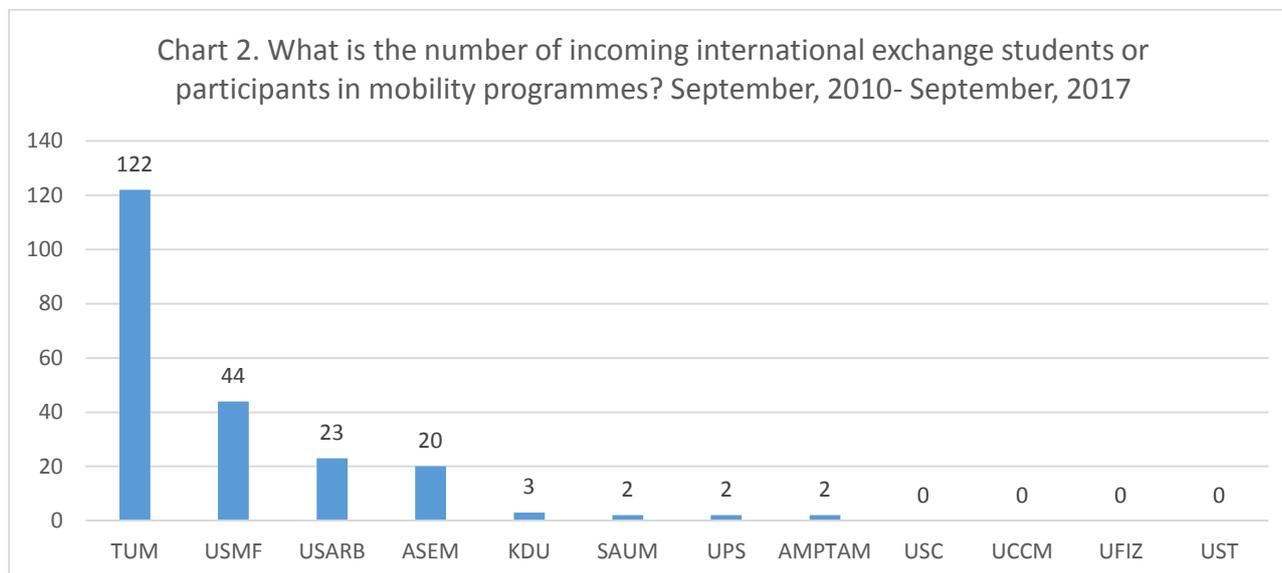


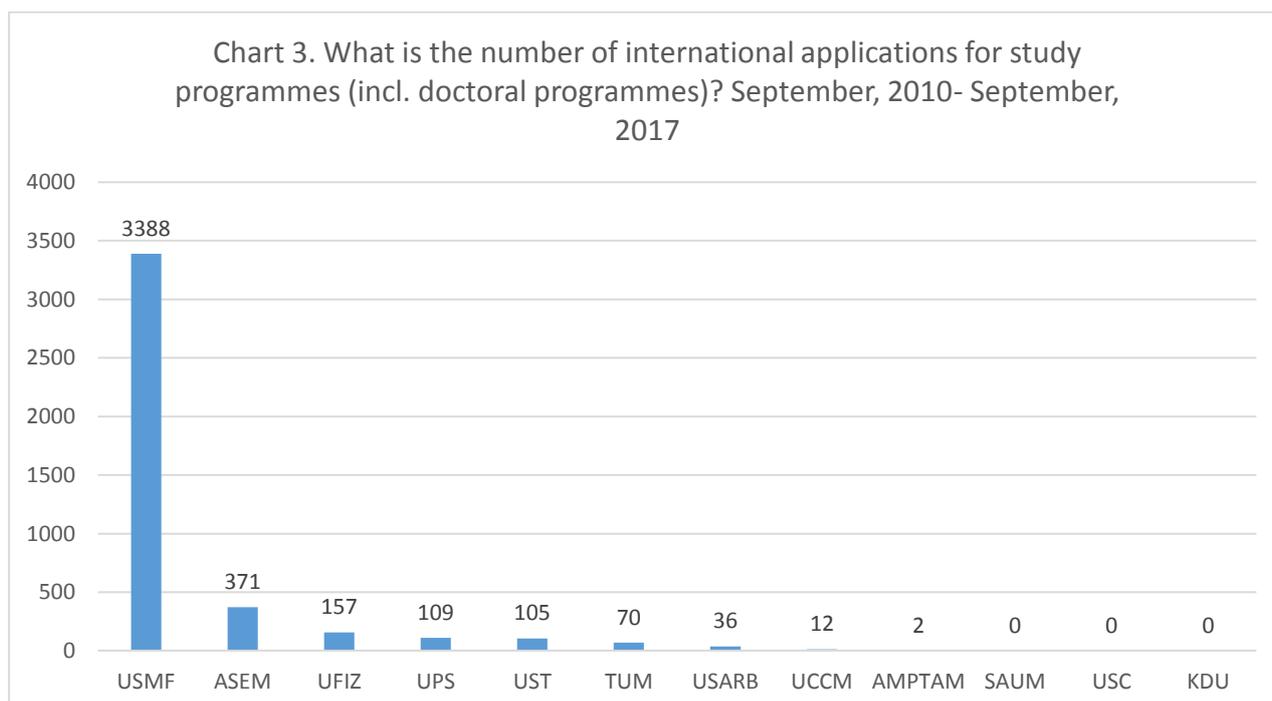
Chart 2 provides information regarding incoming mobility, as it can be remarked, TUM is also the leader, hosting 122 foreign students during the researched period, it is followed by USMF, 44



students. USARB and ASEM, which hosted 23 and 20 students respectively while the rest of the universities registered almost no activity in this area.



USMF is the absolute leader in terms of international applications for study programmes, receiving 3388, it is followed at a long distance by ASEM, 371 applications and UFIZ 157, UPS 109, UST 105, and TUM 70. The rest of the universities are weak in this regard registering low performance or failing in providing information, these results were marked with 0.





The same conclusions could be reached by examining chart 4, where it can be observed that during the researched period USMF was graduated by 1159 students of foreign nationality followed by ASEM, 118, and UPS 102. KDU follows with 96, while UFIZ, 74 and TUM 47.

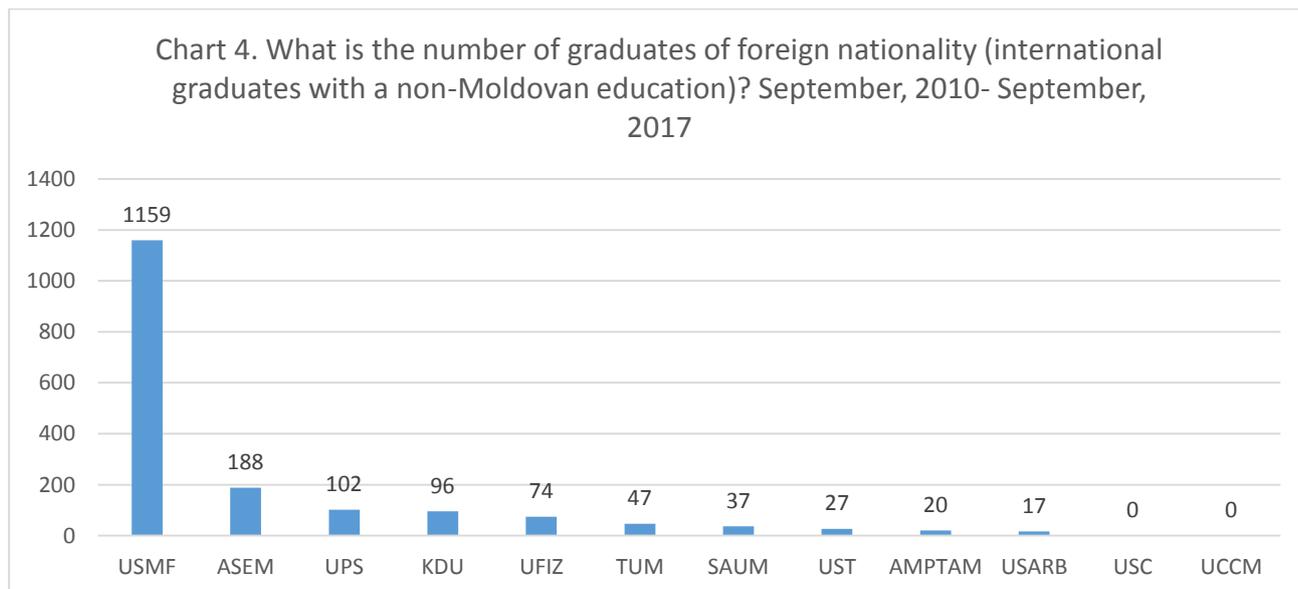
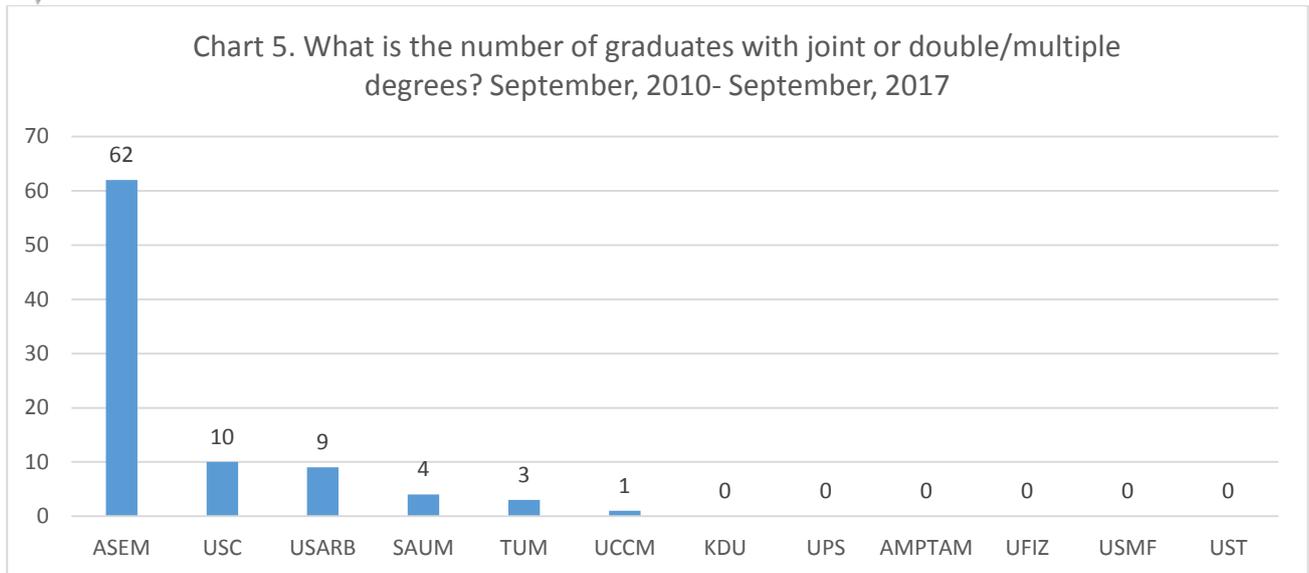


Chart 5 provides information regarding the graduates with joint or double degrees and as it can be remarked, ASEM is the absolute leader, 62 students receiving this type of diploma, it is worth mentioning that no university has stable provision of double degree education, it rather represents an opportunity dictated by cooperation agreements between the universities.



As it can be remarked in chart 6, TUM is the absolute leader in terms of students with international internship, 193, followed by UST 63, SAUM 35, and KDU 33 as well as ASEM 30.

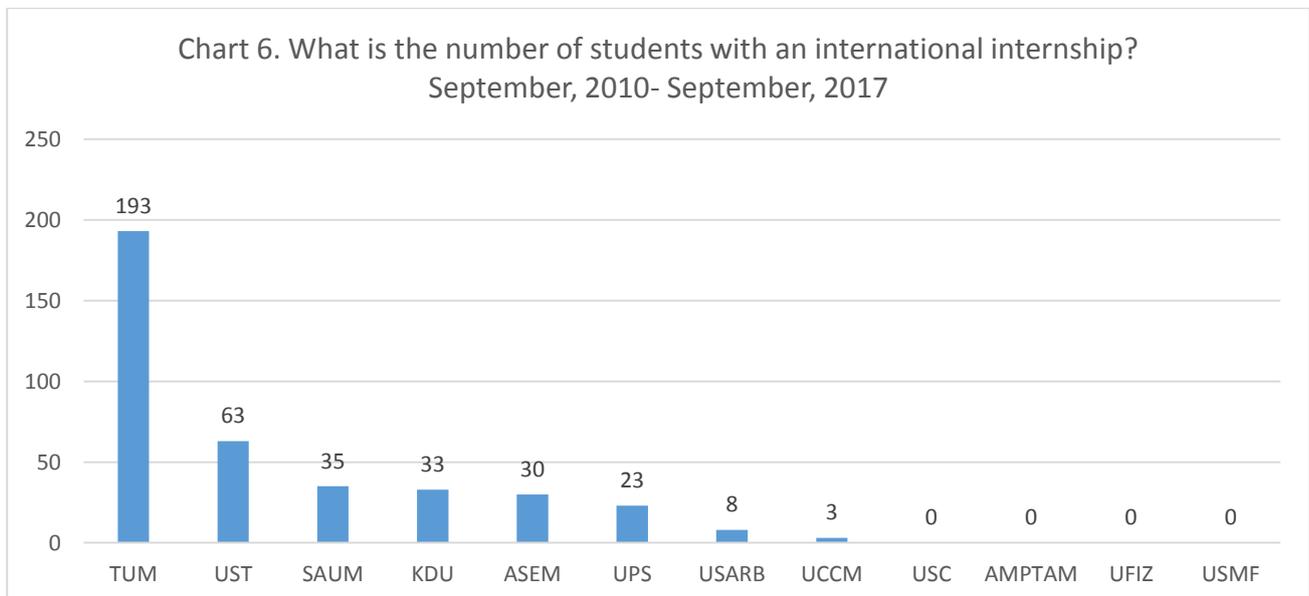
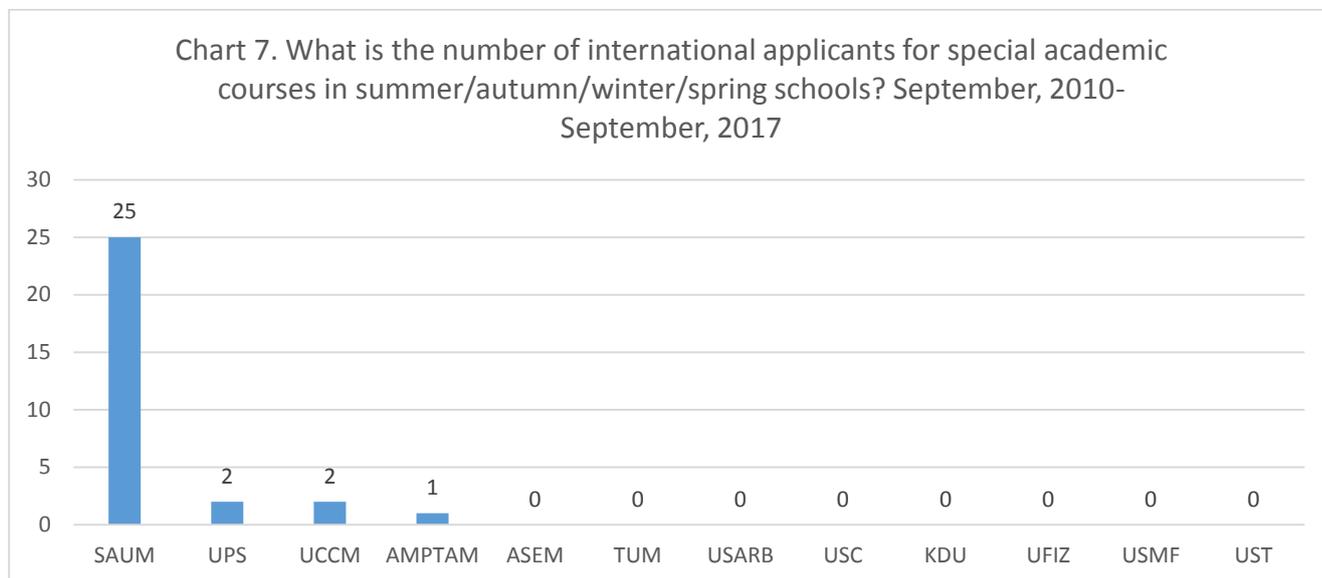


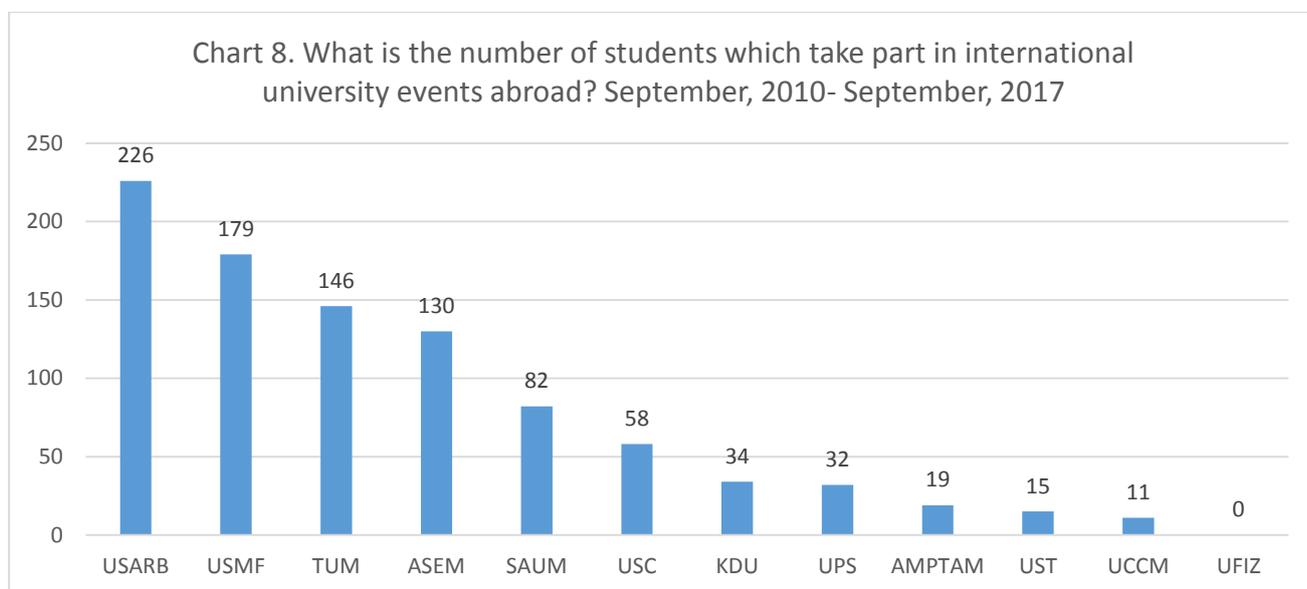
Chart 7 underlines the fact that SAUM is the only university in the country where it was undertaken a summer school with consistent international participation, 25 applications being received during the



whole researched period, the rest of the universities report either low or not performance in this regard.



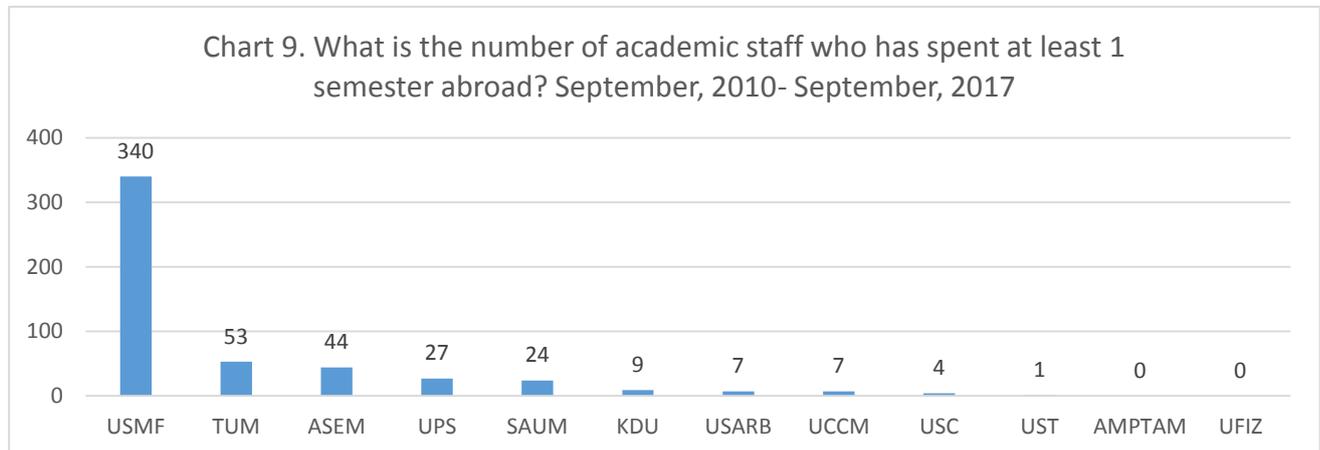
USARB is the leader in terms of students who participated at international university events abroad, 226 students being involved in this activity, followed by USMF, 179 students, TUM, 146 students and ASEM 130 students. The rest of the universities register lower performance in this area.



Analysis of Chapter III: Internationalisation in terms of academic mobility



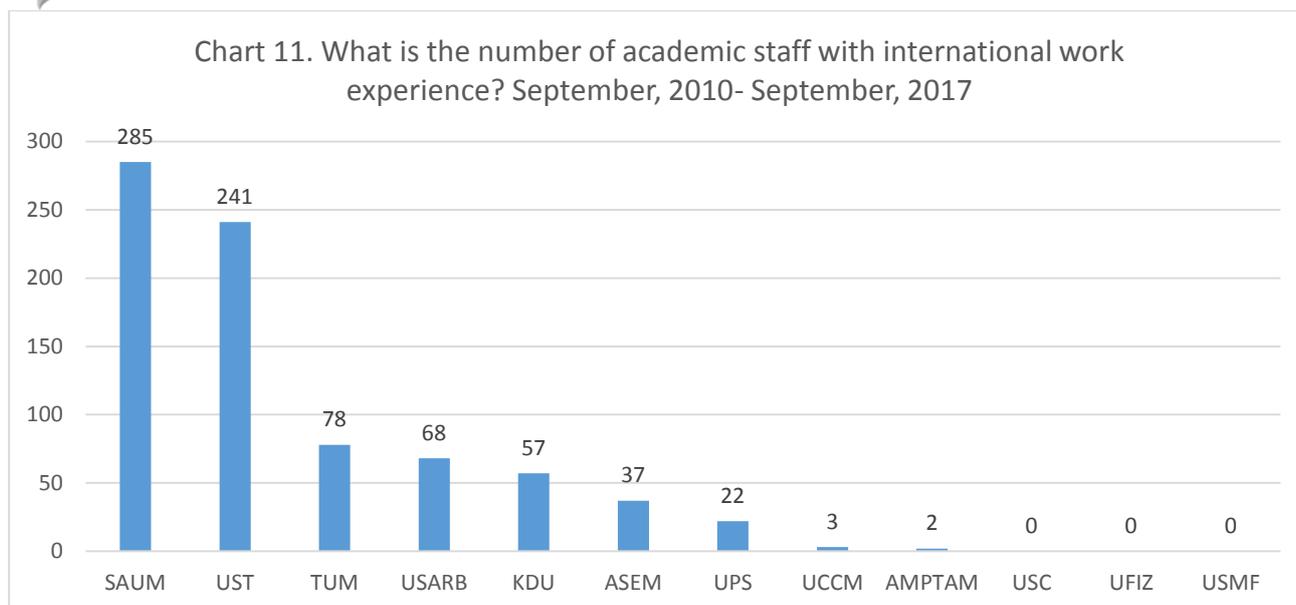
Based on the information provided in chart 9, it can be mentioned that USMF is the leader in terms of academic staff who spent at least 1 semester abroad in the period of September 2010-September 2017, it being followed by TUM and ASEM.



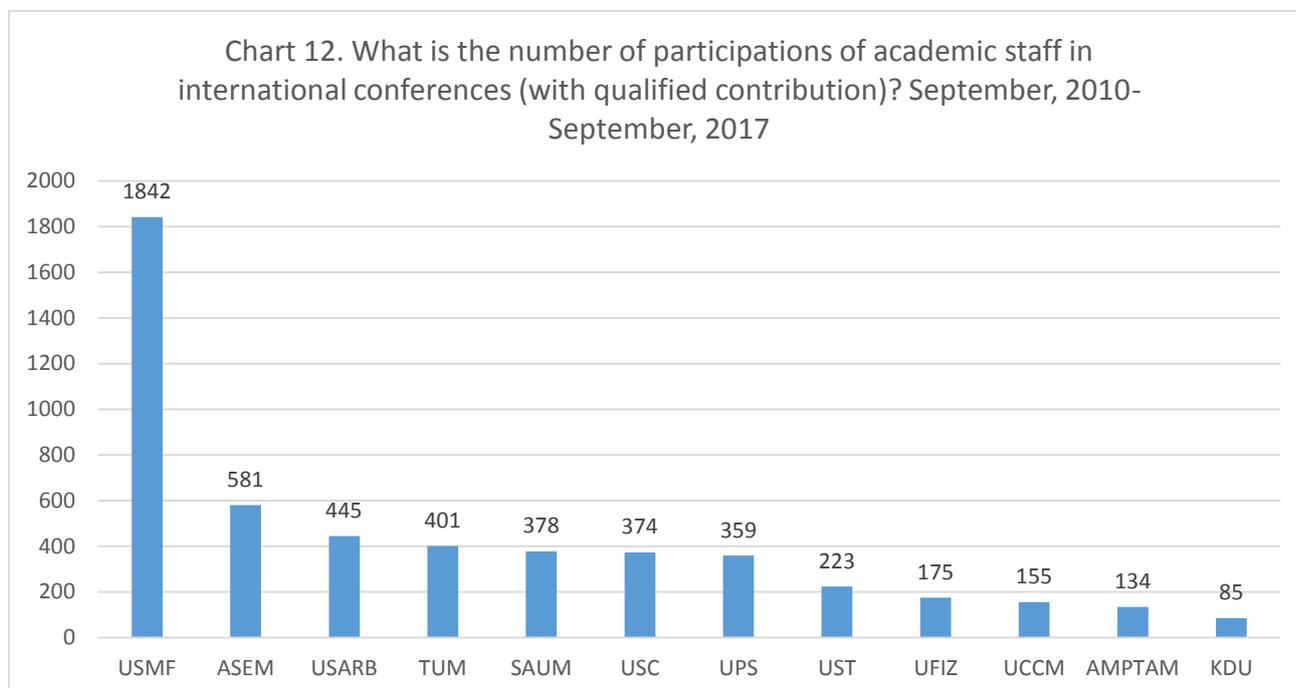
In terms of visiting lectureship abroad (chart 10), the leader is UPS followed by USARB, TUM and USC as well as UST. The rest of the universities register modest performance in this regard.



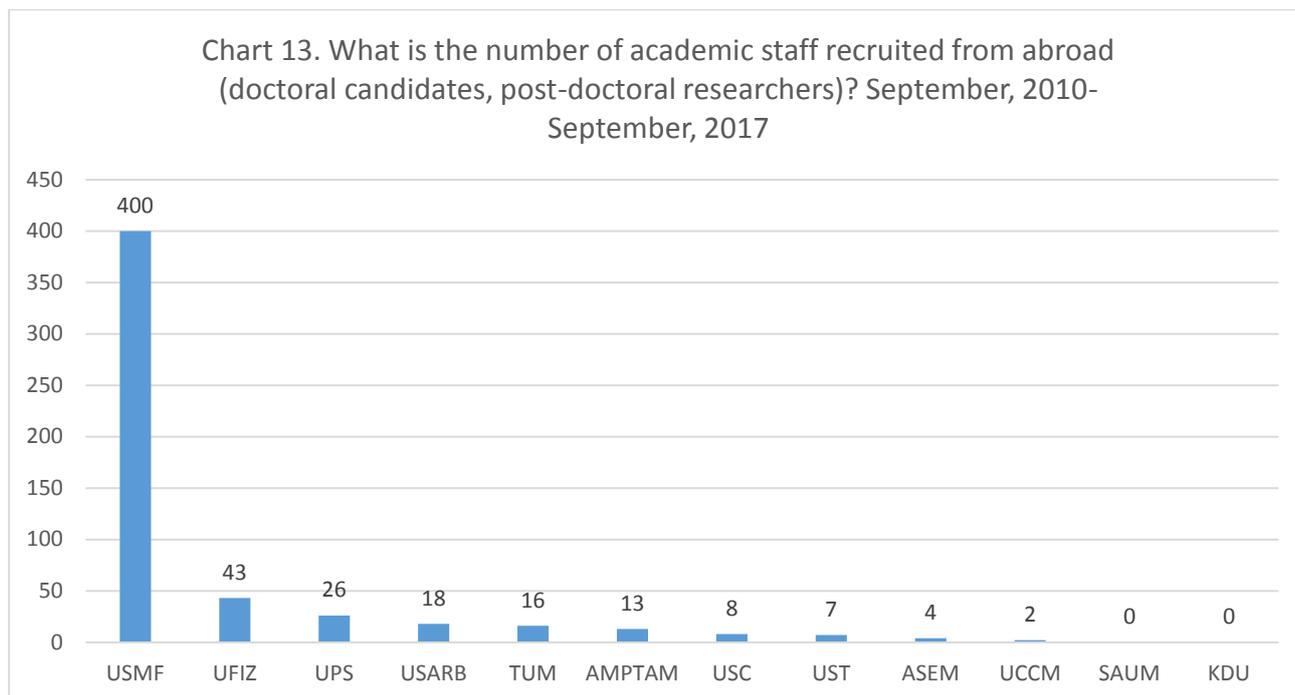
SAUM is the leader in terms of the staff with international work experience, followed by UST, and TUM. Some of the universities did not provide any information regarding this question or registered 0 performance in the respective area.



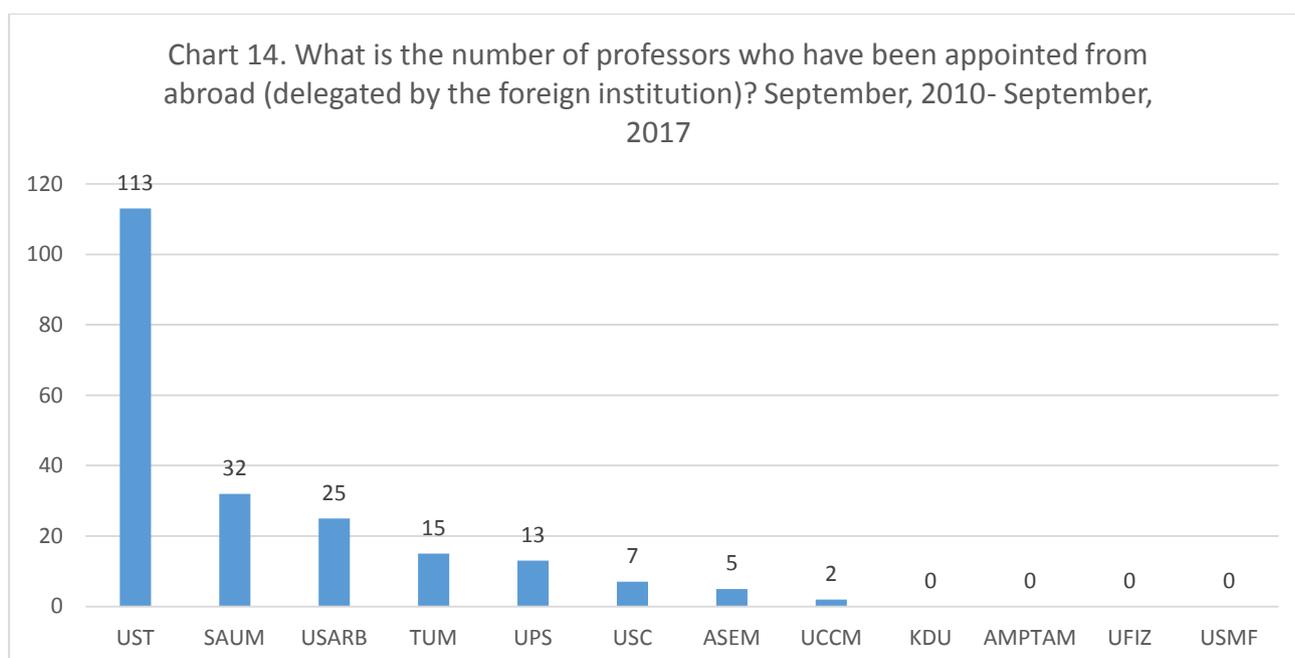
In terms of participations of staff in international conferences with qualified contributions, the absolute leader is USMF with 1842, it is followed by ASEM, 581, USARB, 445 and TUM, 401 as well as SAUM, 374 and UPS, 359.



USMF is the leader in terms of staff which was recruited from abroad, thus, in the researched period, 400 professors were involved in teaching in the university, this institution is followed at a great distance by UFIZ, 43 and UPS, 26.



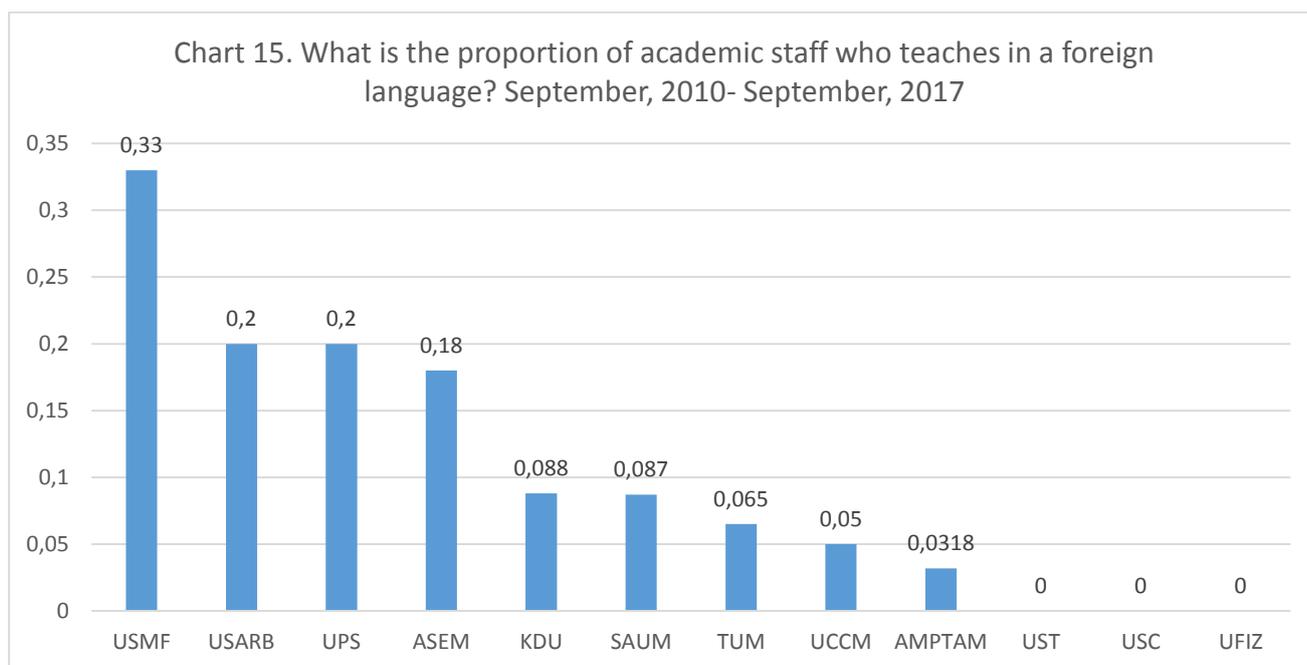
UST is the absolute leader in terms of professors who were appointed from abroad to conduct lectures in the university, this institution is followed by SAUM, 32 and USARB, 25. Some of the universities failed in providing information at this point or did not host any foreign professors.



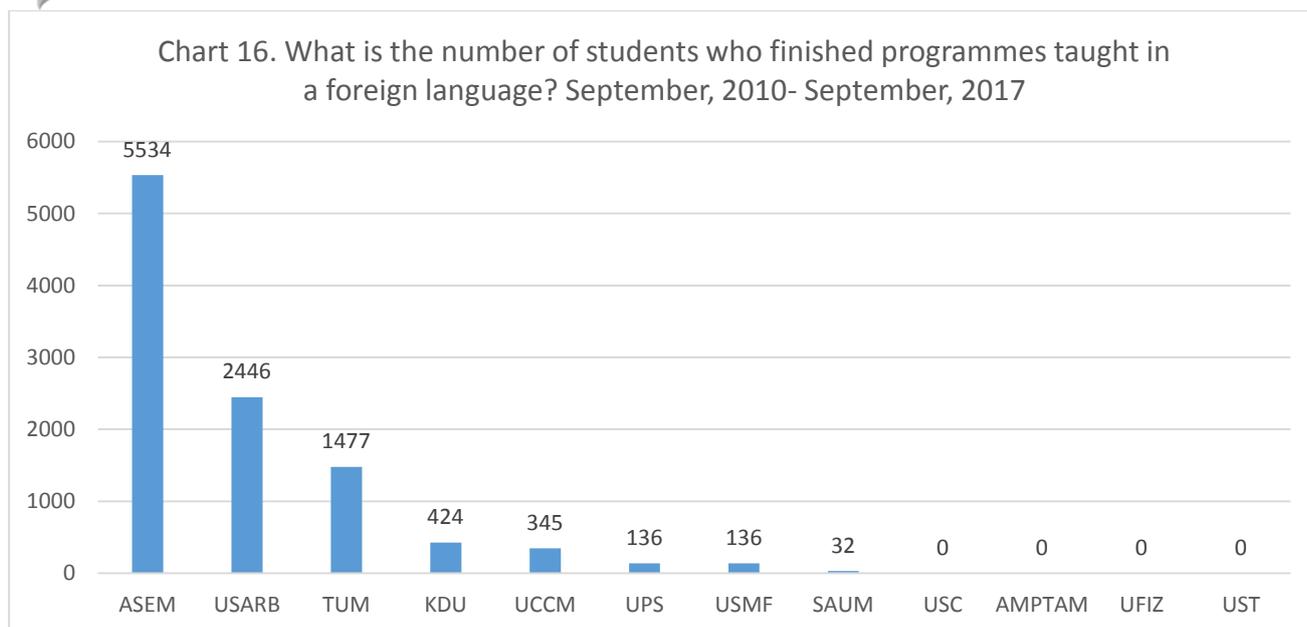
Analysis of Chapter IV: Internationalisation in terms Educational Programmes



7 universities out of 12 mentioned that they do not provide double/joint degree programmes opportunities for the students, while, only 5, said that they do provide such kind of possibilities, these institutions include TUM, SAUM, USARB, UCCM, and UFIZ, USMF mentioned that it provides several online studying opportunities. It is important to point that the provision of this type of diploma is held on irregular basis depending on the determined term agreements which the university has in place. One of the essential condition in provision of this type of studies is the availability of professors who can teach in a foreign language. As it can be remarked in chart 15, USMF is the leader in this regard, 33% of the professors being able to teach in a foreign language, this institution is followed by USARB and UPS, 20% as well as ASEM, 18%. UST, USC and UFIZ do not have any professors able to teach in a foreign language (Chart 15).

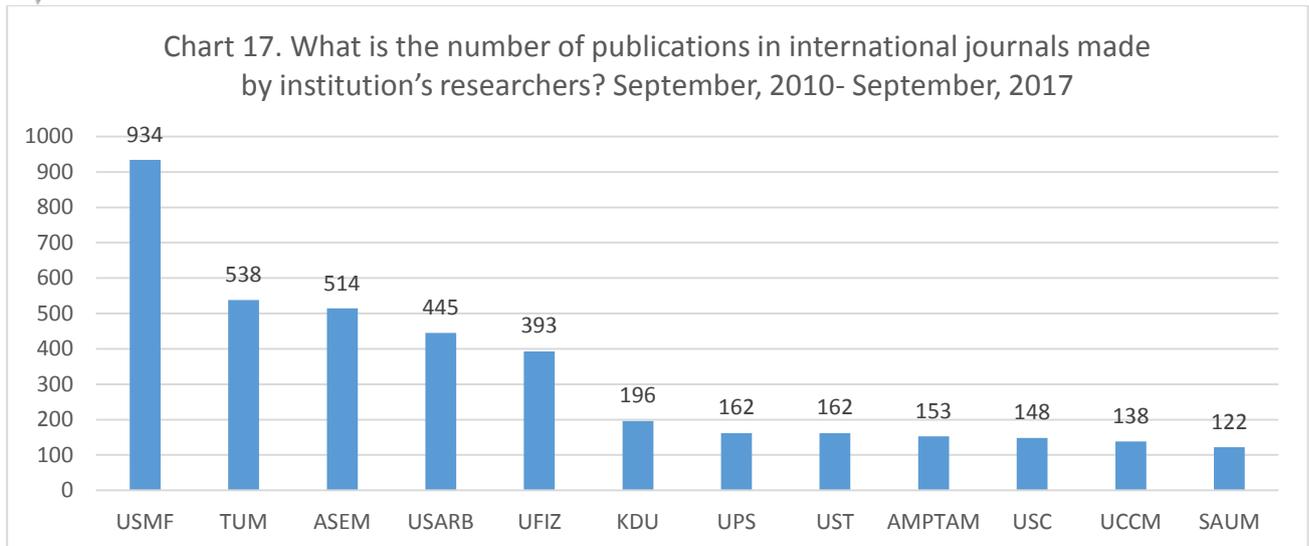


In terms of graduates of programmes taught in a foreign language, the absolute leader is ASEM with 5534 students, followed by USARB 2446 and TUM 1477 (Chart 16).

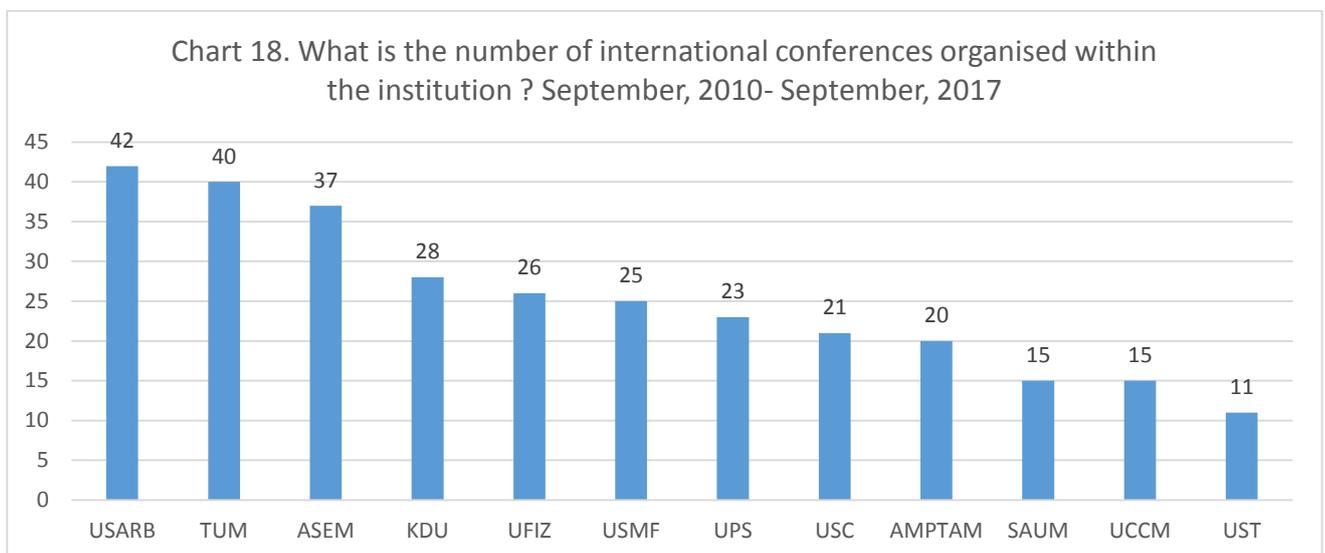


Analysis of Chapter V: Internationalisation in terms of research and international events

USMF is the leader in terms of the number of publications made in international journals, 934 of them being made in the period of September 2010 and September 2017. This university is followed by TUM, 538, and ASEM, 514 as well as USARB, 445 (chart 17).



Based on the information provided in chart 18, USARB is the leader in terms of the number of international conferences organized within the institution within the researched period, it is followed by TUM and ASEM, 40 and respectively 37 conferences.



USMF, TUM and ASEM are the leaders in terms of the research projects with international cooperation partners, reporting 107, 85 and respectively 67. The rest of the institutions register lower performances in this regard or are not involved in any research projects with international cooperation partners (chart 19).

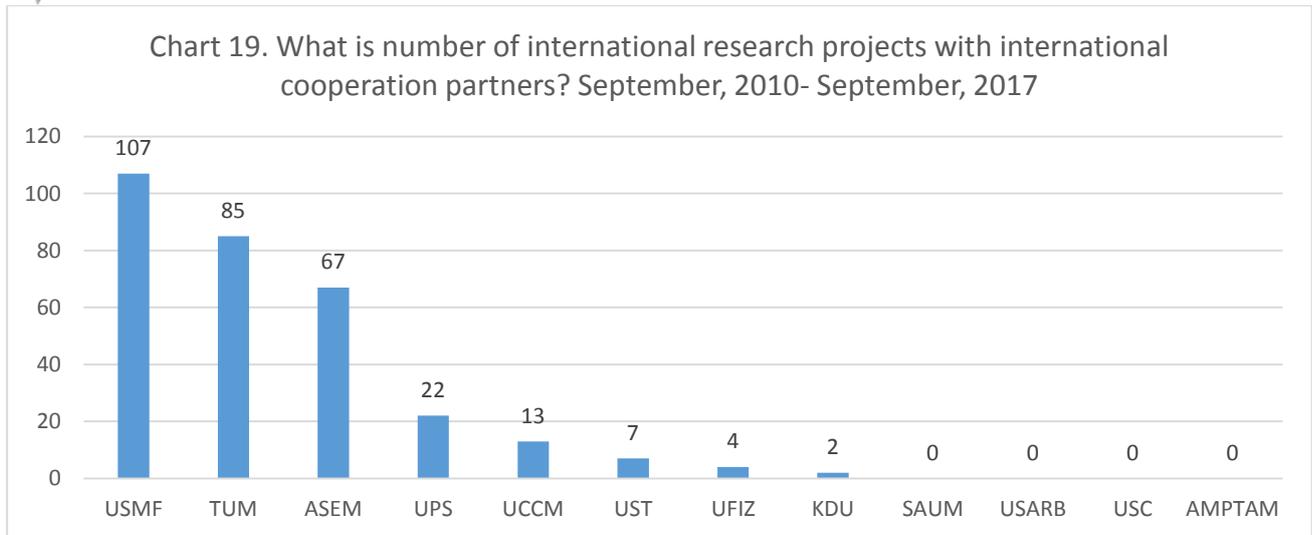
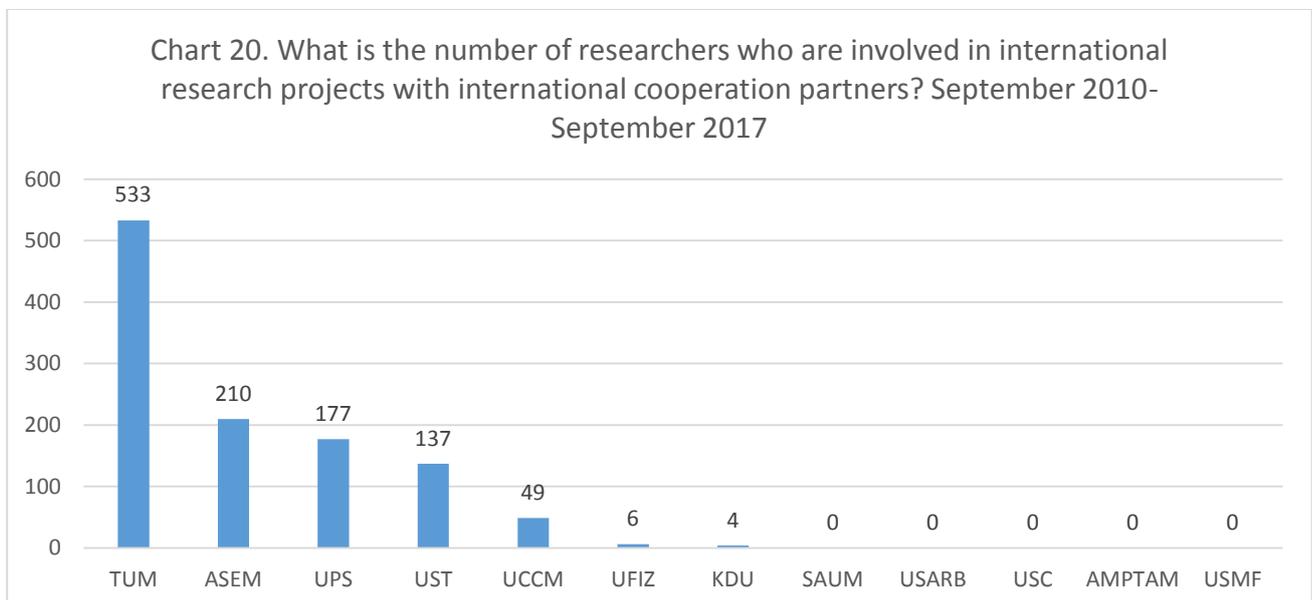
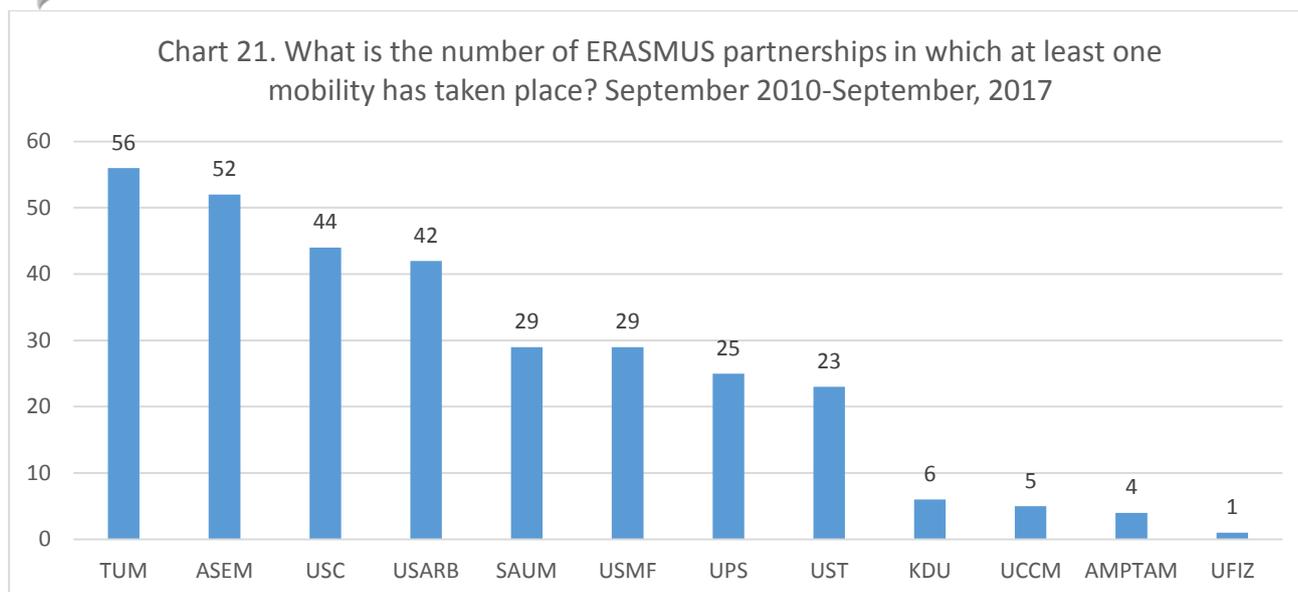


Chart 20 highlight that TUM, ASEM and UPS are the leaders in terms of the number of researchers involved in international research projects with 533, 210 and respectively 177 academic staff. Some of the universities failed in providing data regarding the number of researchers who are involved in this type of activities.



As it can be observed, TUM and ASEM are the leaders in terms of the number of Erasmus partnerships in which at least one mobility has taken place, they being followed by USC and USARB as well as USARB and SAUM.



European perspective on the internationalization of HEIs

Internationalization of Higher Education (IoHE) is a relatively new phenomenon. Nevertheless, over the past 30 years, research and education programs in Europe, particularly the Erasmus program and research programs like Marie Curie, have become a global approach to higher education in Europe and beyond. Institutions, countries and regions in other parts of the world. The universality of higher education is influenced by the globalization of the economy and culture. The importance of knowledge and expertise in the area of internationalization has become of increasing importance. This is the result of a combination of continuing political, economic, educational, cultural and academic studies. These considerations have different shapes and dimensions in different regions and countries as well as in their institutions and projects. The model is not suitable for everyone. Regional and national differences are different, and they are constantly evolving.

In a study for the European Parliament, the Universidad de Catalunya del Sacro, in collaboration with the International Association of Universities (IAU) and the European Association for International Education (EAIE), which includes 17 of the reports country (ten in Europe and seven in the rest of the world), identified important trends in current national and institutional strategies regarding the future internationalization in Europe. These 10 major trends in Europe and around the world are. 1. The increasing importance of internationalization at all levels (including a wide range of measures, more strategic approaches and new national orientations and aspirations); 2. Increasing institutional strategies for internationalization - with associated risks, such as homogenization and limitations, for example, focus only on quantitative results; 3. The problem of funding is everywhere; 4. The



tendency to increase privatization in IoHE by increasing revenue; 5. Consequences of competition pressed by globalization with greater convergence of ambitions if it does not exist actions; 6. The obvious shift from (only) cooperation to (more) competition; 7. What appears to be regionalization and Europe is often seen as a model for other regions of the world; 8. Increase the number of stakeholders and actors involved in internationalization worldwide, causing a problem of quantity and quality; 9. Lack of adequate data for comparative analysis and decision-making; 10. New significant activities, including internationalization of curricula, transnational education and digital learning.

In Europe, it is clear that internationalization as a strategic process started with ERASMUS. In most countries, the program has created a common understanding and engines for internationalization, and this has been further enhanced by the Bologna process. Internationalization is currently a major problem at national and institutional level most countries in the world, especially in Europe. The rhetoric suggests a more comprehensive and strategic policy for internationalization, but in most cases much remains to be done. Even in Europe is considered worldwide as an example of good practice of internationalization is much to be done in different countries there are unequal performances, significant challenges in the South and especially in Central and Eastern Europe. Two internationalization reviews in Europe and the world, one of which is MAC, and the other - EARI, are a very encouraging picture for Europe. Moreover, the MAC study has shown that Europe is an area that often prioritises institutional internationalization activities in other parts of the world.

On the other hand, the strategic approach of internationalization within the Eastern Europe follows the pragmatic integration of a set of conditions specific to the process of internationalization as part of the strategic institutional process, namely characterized by the dynamic character of the internationalization processes and their growing relevance for institutional and national reforms, the growth in the demand for the responsibility of higher education institutions that are bound to prove the benefits of internationalization and the growth in the demand for financial support needed for the success of this process

trial. In this context, the internationalization of the Eastern Europe for the next 10 years is going to be focused on: (1) internal internationalization (linked to classroom, campus or academic community approaches that help the academic community develop internationally knowledge and understanding and intercultural competences), (2) internationalization abroad (focusing on those activities involving travel abroad, including the mobility of students, professors and researchers, the internationalization



of the curriculum), (3) internationalization of research (i.e. the set of actions to expand the collaborative research, development, innovation (RDI) networks of researchers to encourage the setting up of international research consortia or the membership of existing and functional consortia to ensure an effective framework for the training of researchers, in line with new RDI trends and (4) strengthening international prestige (in relation to the set of actions that increase the international visibility of Eastern European Universities and enable university to position itself as complete global players. The Republic of Moldova is not an exception in this regard, it following the general regional development direction.

Conclusions

The present report addressed the main characteristics of Moldovan Universities considering the area of internationalization of higher education and tried to identify the main challenges, limits and opportunities during this process. In the era of globalization, these universities are trying to link their systems to new realities. This adaptation requires knowledge, experience, commitment and competence to meet the growing challenges of international academic cooperation in higher education. The following conclusion can be reached considering this study. At the institutional level, universities have seen their internationalization efforts suffering from insufficient financial and human resources, capacities and knowledge as well as administrative concern. They have not reached a developed organizational and administrative capacity, except USMF, which reports higher internationalization level as compared to the rest of HEIs. Moldovan HEIs are not able to coordinate on equal terms with international university partners since they are weaker in terms of education quality, and managerial expertise. However, the existing problems of management, experience and established cooperation structures in terms of institutional framework have not stopped but forced Moldovan institutions to respond to challenges of international participation. Moldovans have a cohort of promising university departments willing to initiate and run collaborations. Moldovan HEIs international efforts will continue, within the framework of universities' environments not only through investing financial resources into this relatively new direction but also at the level of state through adoption of a relevant national strategy. Internationalization forms an obligation to improve the world position of Moldovan universities. Internationalization is the main focus for Moldovan universities, and those who embrace it will bring the greatest benefit. The international academic community to solve the problems and opportunities of our globalized life. Moldovan universities, while facing increasing degradation of their core values, are optimistic about the growing opportunities to explore and further internationalize their systems. Since higher education institutions



are key players that pursue balanced and constructive internationalization strategies, they should advocate changes at institutional level to encourage internationalization in areas that may serve long-term academic goals. In this respect, the most important and continuous challenge for all participants in Moldovan higher education remains the continuous test and evaluation of the consequences of internationalization. It includes studying the effects of a more open international program, classroom and educational institution about students and impact on the creation of new knowledge, influenced by researchers and researchers from other parts of the world and especially Europe. In addition, internationalization of higher education should not only be a single paper agreement. because the true nature of such cooperation requires implementation in an environment that promotes development international process. In assessing the consequences that the academics of these institutions will have on society or society in which they live, it is also all university executives who are responsible. Internationalization is now an integral part of higher education and cannot be avoided, as it was demonstrated through the report, it represents an important priority for Moldova HEIs. Important are transnational education, international student enrollment, mobility, international student grants, the internationalization of home students, and integrated approaches to the studies provided to the students and assurance of personal diversity.