

Elevate™



Elevating  
the internationalisation  
of higher education  
in Moldova

Country profile

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## Country profile (data analysis):

### Internationalization of Higher Education in the Republic of Moldova

In the period of September 2017-September 2020

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## Introduction

Internationalization as a concept and strategic agenda is a relatively new, broad, and varied phenomenon in tertiary education, driven by a dynamic combination of political, economic, sociocultural, and academic rationales and stakeholders. Its impact on regions, countries, and institutions varies according to their particular contexts. For Moldovan HEIs the concept of internationalization remains a central and strategic goal for the long run. The implementation of the ELEVATE project's activities, realization of studies, dissemination and exchange of perspective realized during the international education and research events and moreover involvement of the Ministry of Education Cultural and Research of the Republic of Moldova as one of the ELEVATE project Partner helped all Higher Education Institutions on establishment of the internationalization strategies, as a core objective which are regarded as necessary steps towards consolidation of the HEIs capacities through offering a broader and deepened perspective.

The internationalization concept, introduced on national level intersects with other national higher education programs priorities and often based on narrow prejudices limited to one in its own way - attracting international student, 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.

The repeated implementation of the internationalization questionnaire, elaborated within the ELEVATE project has given the Moldovan HEIs possibility to realize the benefits internationalization and its complex parts offers to the institution and draft a step-by-step plan in order to eliminate the gaps underlined in previous report and find the ways to work on the improvement of the internationalization indicators, taking in to account the level of higher education institutional on Regional Arena.

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 internationalevents*. Each participating university was supposed to fill in the required information, and on the baseof which the country profile is assessed.

## Participating institutions

<i>No</i>	<i>Name of the institution</i>	<i>Acronym</i>
P1	Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova	ASEM
P2	Technical University of Moldova	TUM
P3	State Agrarian University of Moldova	SAUM
P4	Alecu Ruso State University of Balti	USARB
P5	Cahul State University "Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu"	USC
P6	Comrat State University	KDU

P7 – National Rectors` Council of the Republic of Moldova, represented by:	
Academy of Music, Theatre and Fine Arts	AMPTAP
State University of Physical Education and Sport	USEFS

## Analysis of Chapter I: Internationalization policy/strategy

In comparison with the responses from for the previous period (2010-2017), in year 2020 all 8 responding institutions have elaborated the Internationalization strategy and Action plan.. Based on the answers highlighted in the second question, the majority of the reposing institutions still consider Rector responsible for internationalization of the higher education (7 out of 8), where only 1 institution thinks that internationalization is a full responsibility of the head of the international office. However, the majority of respondents agree that internationalization of their university is responsibility not only of the Rector or Head of International office, but of the Rectorate members and Deans and Members of the administration and the Senate Council.

Analysing the top priorities for internationalization with the possibility of choosing, only one option the majority of responding institutions (5) has selected the internationalization of teaching and learning as the main importance factor of internationalization, the rest of the respondents has given a priority to offering the possibility to students to experience studying abroad (1); to create ant internationalized study environment at home (5) and to attract foreign professors and academics. With the same aspect being analysing with a multiple choice answers, the internationalization of teaching and learning still remains the priority for all HEIs (6 out of 8), including attracting students at all levels of studying (4 out of 8) and developing learning and teaching partnerships with other institutions (4 out of 8) two the most popular responses. Sources of funding is a very sensitive but thus very important matter, the respondent still mention institutional budget and EU programmes are the fundamental sources for supporting international efforts in Moldovan HEIs.

Internationalization provide the following benefits for the Moldovan HEIs, which include Increased international cooperation and capacity building; Improved academic research and knowledge; Increased internationalisation of the curricula; Increased competitiveness of provided teaching and learning; Improved image of the institution. All of the following still represents a great importance for the reposing HEIs. Lack of language proficiency among students and academics remains the most common limits for internationalisation at the responding institutions (7 out of 8), followed by Lack of funding provided to potential participants in mobility programmes (5 out of 8) and Lack of regulatory framework to assess the quality of foreign programmes (3 out of 8). Majority of the responding institutions has registered a significant shift when underlying the priority activities regarding internationalization, those included as Outgoing student/academic mobility, International research/innovation cooperation and partnership, Strategic institutional partnerships being the mostly chosen.

The strategic reasons Moldovan higher education institutions become involved in internationalisation process has also registered a shift in comparison to previous study period and now mostly include international and inter-cultural aware graduates, Increased student enrolment in specific programmes, Improve the prestige of the institution, Stimulate research activity. More and more institutions start to pay attention to the institution's positioning on international arena. A special attention is played to the provision of the joint/dual degree programmes, where has been registered a significant growth. Even though the majority of respondents (7 out of 8) has registered the negative

trends in providing education programs to students located in the other countries, the majority are working on the internationalization of e-learning. Taking in to account regional development and partnership the regions representing the biggest interest for the Moldovan HEIs are North and South America, Western European Union and Eastern European Union. The programmes and initiatives for institutions have received funding or financing are still the same and 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 has registered a positive trends and evaluated as rather medium to high. When analysing the employability policies, the majority of the respondents have shifted towards the language skills when hiring/ promoting university administrative or academic staff.

Moreover, we can conclude that internationalization of Moldovan HEIs plays crucial role and registers positive trend over the time. The majority of universities play special attention when hiring personnel able to promote educational offer on international arena to foreign citizens, all HEIs are constantly and on yearly bases evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in reaching the internationalization goals set up at the Action Plans

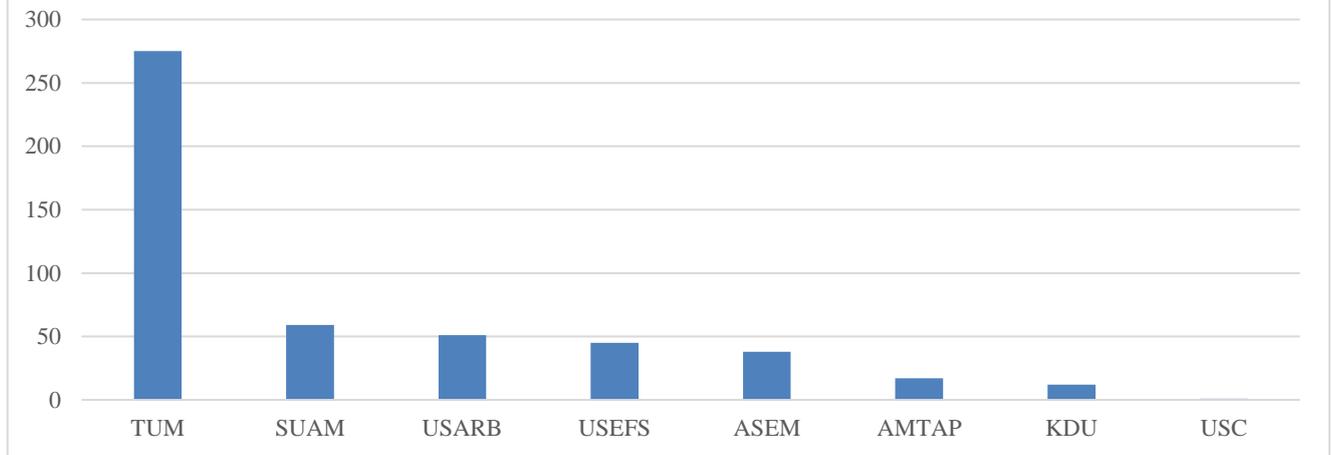
## **Analysis of Chapter II: Internationalisation/ Internationality level in terms of student mobility**

Universities exist in a market-oriented world with economic values, and competition prevails in the education business. The university ranking system forces many HEIs to take on students from abroad, who pay for their education, because this not only generates income but at the same time contributes to an institution's high reputation of being an international university. The incomes, together with a well-managed economy, also enable the institution to employ researchers or academic staff with an international experience. However, internationalisation of higher education institutions starts from the student community that can be reached through active participation in international exchange and mobility programs. Therefore for the Republic of Moldova increase of student mobility means offering its students facilitate the development of new perspectives from abroad for home students, provision in terms of developing intercultural exchange and awareness among all students.

As it can be observed in *Chart 1*, during the researched period, the leading position in terms of outgoing mobility still holds TUM followed by SUAM and USARB which succeeded in involving 275, 59 and 51 students respectively in outgoing mobility programmes. The rest of the universities register modest results, sending very few students during the whole period.

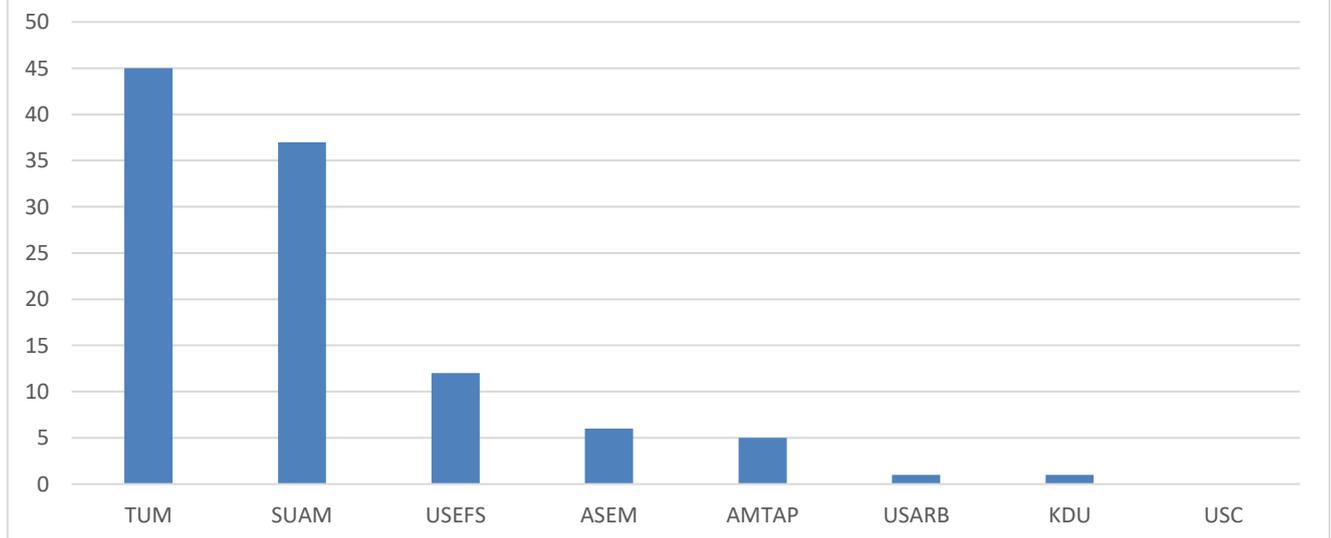


**Chart 1.** Number of students from the institution who participate in outgoing exchange or mobility programmes, September 2017 - September 2020



*Chart 2* provides information regarding incoming mobility, as it can be remarked, TUM remains an absolute leader, hosting 45 foreign students during the researched period, it is followed by SUAM, 37 students. USARB hosted 12 students respectively, USEFS and ASEM registered very moderate results while the rest of the universities registered almost no activity in this area.

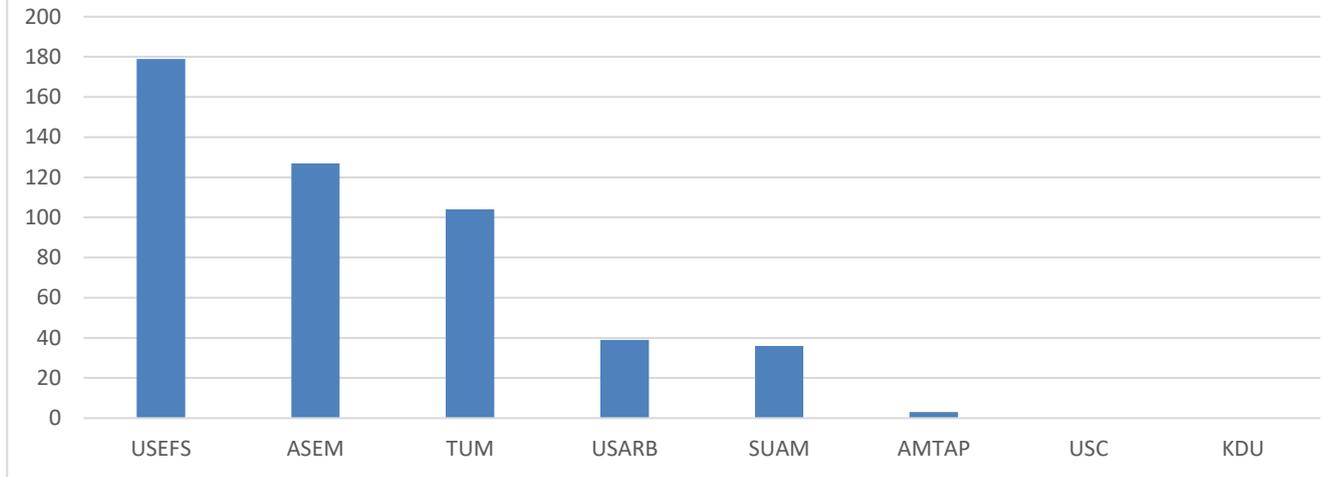
**Chart 2.** Number of incoming international exchange students or participants in mobility programmes, September 2017 - September 2020



USEFS has registered a significant increase and is the absolute leader in terms of international applications for study programmes, receiving 179 applications, followed by ASEM with 127 applications and TUM with 104, USARB (39) and SUAM (36) still maintain moderate results. The rest of the universities are weak in this regard registering low performance or failing in providing information, these results were marked with 0 (see *Chart 3*).

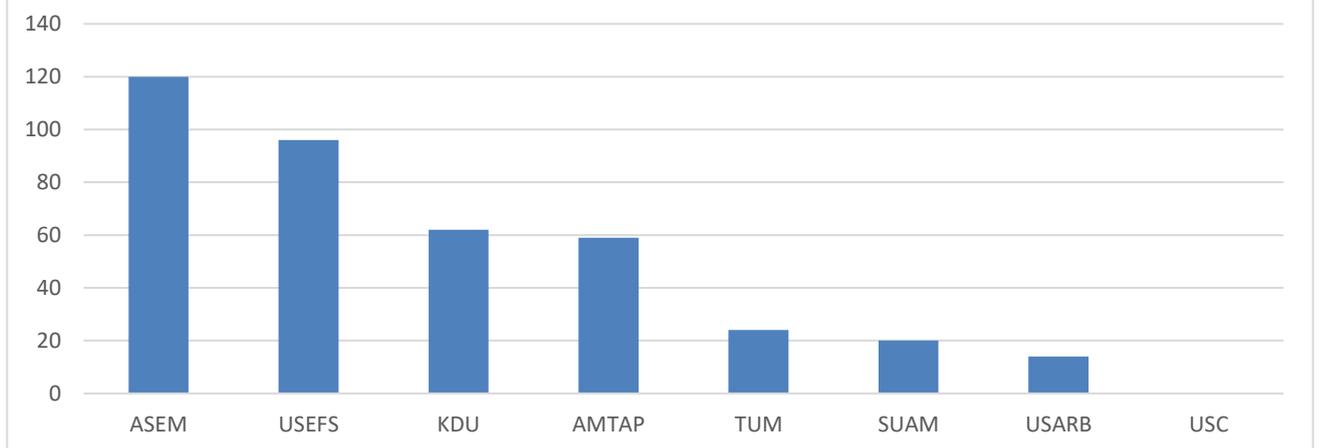


**Chart 3.** Number of international applications for study programmes (incl. doctoral programmes) September 2017 - September 2020

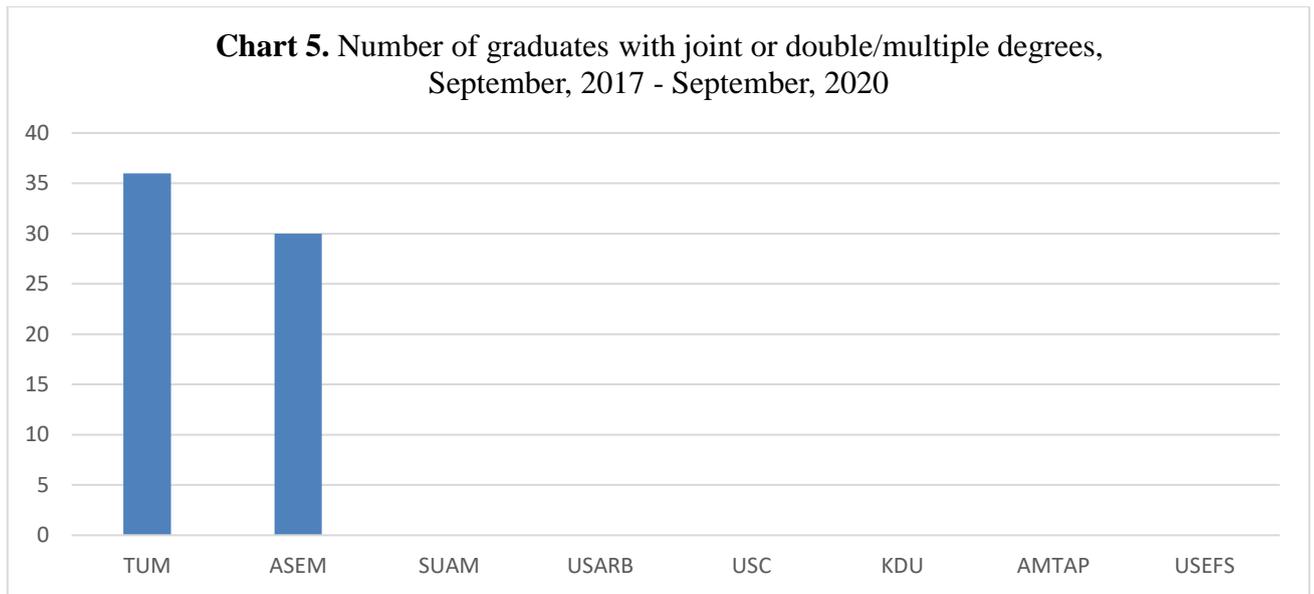


The same conclusions could be reached by examining *Chart 4*, where it can be observed that during the researched period ASEM was graduated by 120 students of foreign nationality followed by USEFS, 96, and KDU 62. AMTAP follows with 59, while TUM (24), SUAM (20) and USARB (14) maintain moderate results.

**Chart 4.** Number of graduates of foreign nationality (international graduates with a non-Moldovan education) September 2017 - September 2020



*Chart 5* provides information regarding the graduates with joint or double degrees and as it can be remarked, TUM gained a leading position in comparison with previous research period with total of 36 graduates and is followed by ASEM with 30 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 remains a leader in terms of students with international internship, 131, followed by USEFS 61, KDU 56, SUAM 18, and USARB 11. Other universities has registered a significant decrease or failed to provide the data, the results were marked with 0.

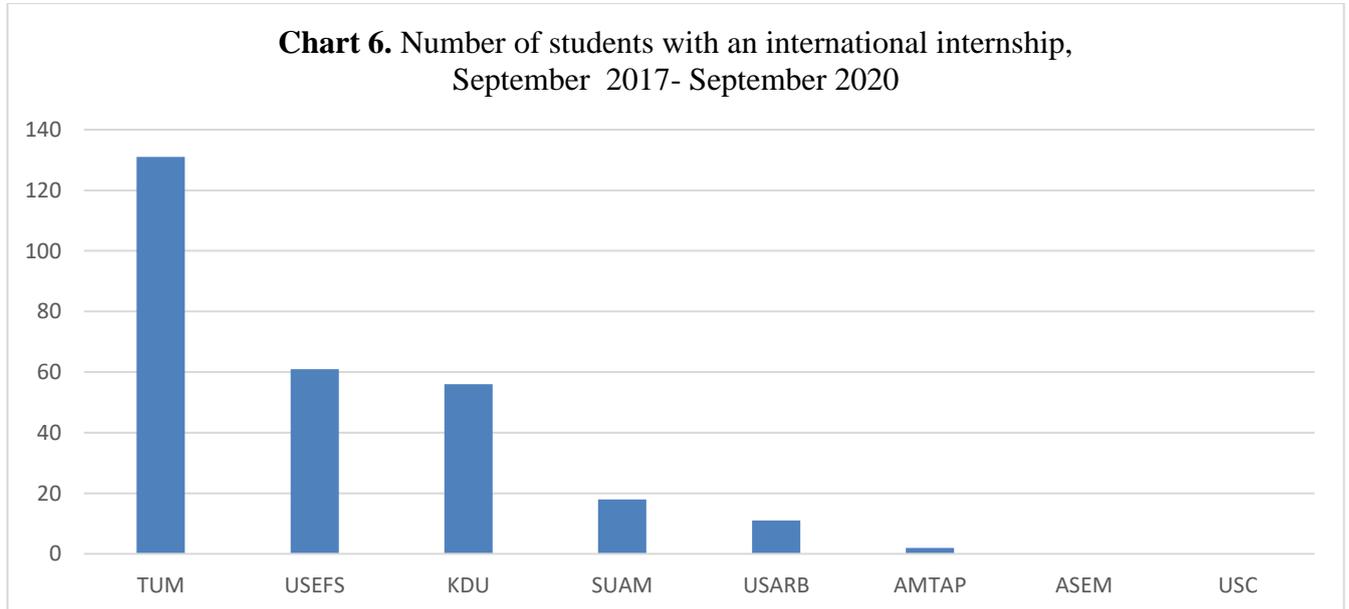
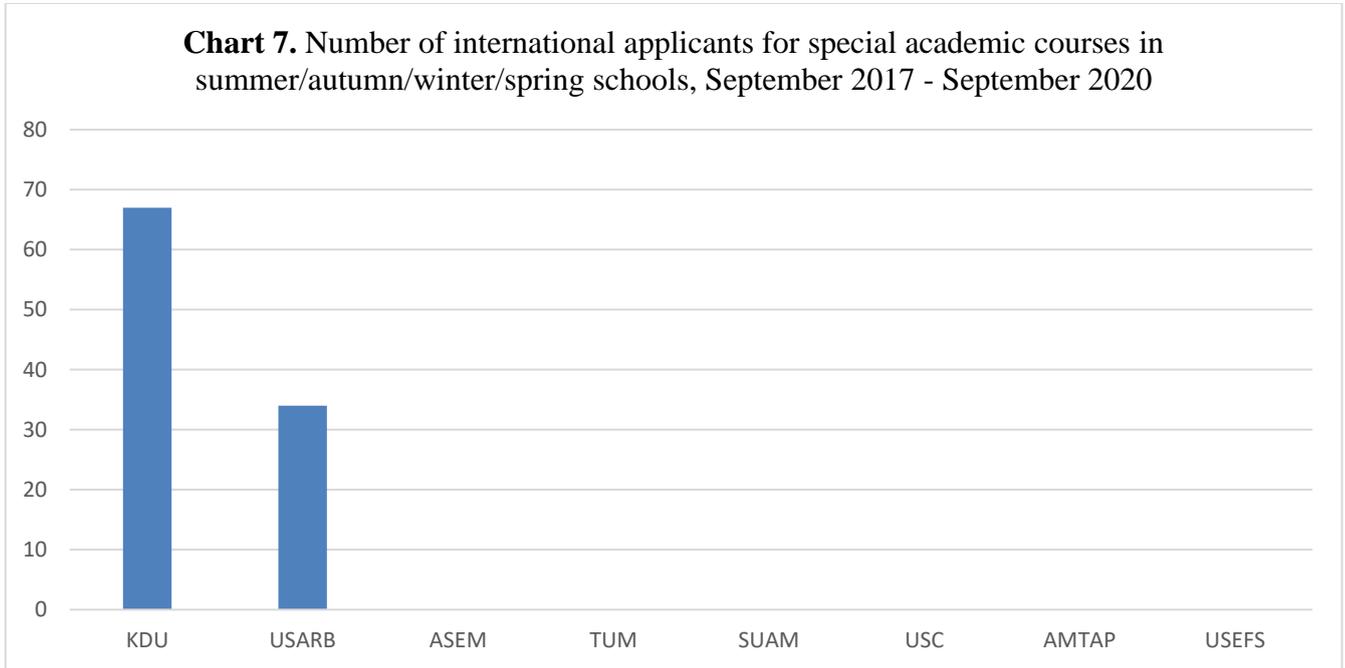
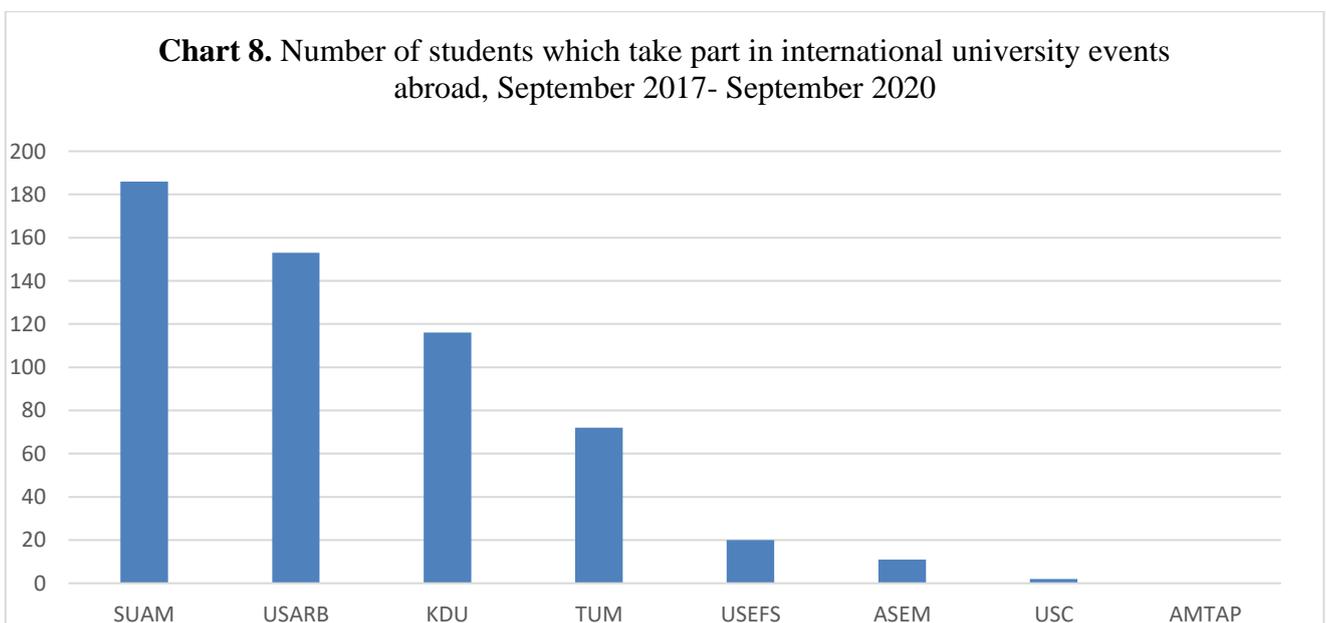


Chart 7 underlines only two universities university where it was undertaken a summer school with consistent international participation, KDU (67) and USARB (34) being received during the whole researched period, the rest of the universities report either low or not performance in this regard.



One of the important points of internationalization for each higher education institution in Moldova remains the student community reached through support and encouragement of students with Moldovan nationality to participate in international activities. In the Chart 8 we can observe that SUAM took a leading position between the researched Moldovan HEIs in terms of students who participated at international university events abroad, with the total of 186 students being involved in this activity, followed by USARB (153), KDU (116) and TUM (72). A significant decrease has registered ASEM, with a dropdown to 11 participations. The rest of the universities register lower performance in this area.



However, it is important to mention that usually universities use specific policies to encourage and increase the total number of participation in events realized on international arena, those being mostly university students' mobility guidelines and ECTS recognition guidelines pointed out in the study by the majority of respondents and considered not so much effective. Another important factor for all researched HEIs is keeping the student community informed about international work/study/research opportunities, this being achieved by elaboration and implementation of operational plans.

Each Moldovan HEI invest in providing a constant support and preparing the candidates for international academic experienced by offering compulsory language courses, workshops, conferences organized within the university with an international speakers and training seminars because of the storing believe in the importance if the international experience and the opportunities it can offer to student. In conclusion we can denote, that constant support of the European union offered to Moldovan HEIs through Erasmus+ program is of significant importance for increasing the internationality level in terms of student mobility.

### **Analysis of Chapter III: Internationalisation in terms of academic mobility**

Recent policy initiatives in the Republic of Moldova suggest that major developments are needed in the field of academic mobility. On a global scale, issues of transnational education increasingly shape discussions on the future of academic mobility. Universities from countries with well-developed higher education systems export their study programs to countries where the national demand for study places cannot be met by local institutions. A further trend to be noted is that international competition becomes increasingly complementary to intercultural learning and cooperation as rationales for the political support of academic mobility.

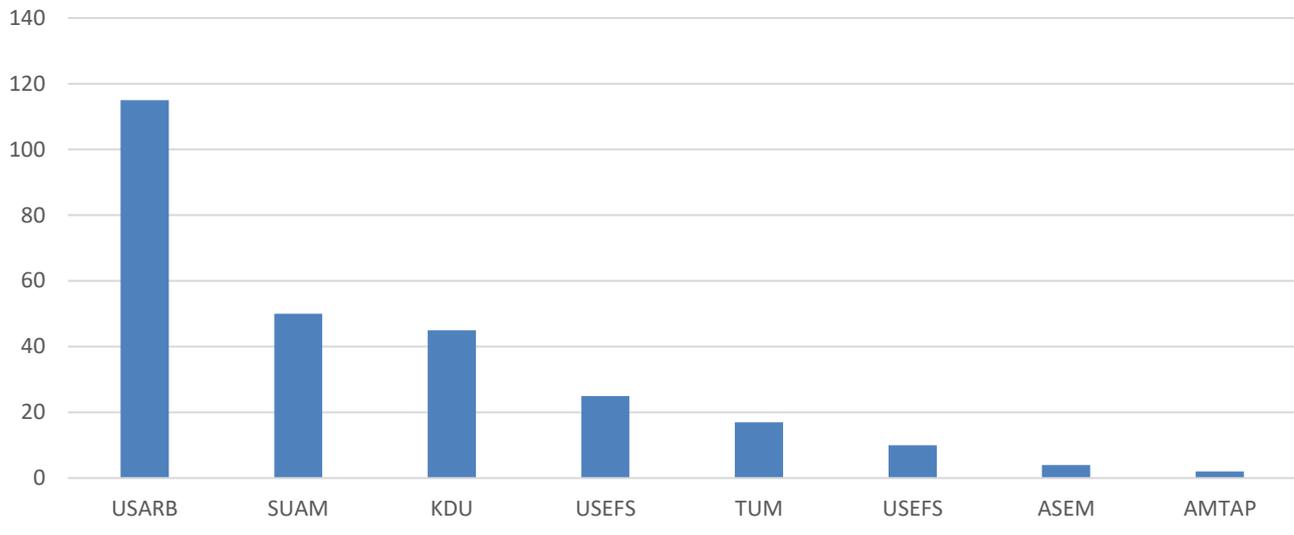
For Moldovan HEIs internationalization in terms of academic mobility remains very important being addressed not only individually on institutional level, but on international one as well. The repeated analysis realised within the ELEVATE project gave the Moldovan HEIs an opportunity to see internationalisation development trends and tackle the issues revealed during the first study period (2010-2017).

Based on the research realised, all the Higher Education Institutions of Moldova are supporting the internationalisation of the academic staff through possibilities of studying a language of international circulation. It can be observed, that a significant number of academics is interested in upgrading the foreign language skills and are using opportunities offered by the institution. The foreign language proficiency offers the whole academic community an opportunity to benefit from academic mobility, deliver courses in foreign language to students with local prominence and foreign citizenship. Based on information provided, ASEM is an absolute leader and behold a total of 150 people teaching in foreign language, other institutions have moderate results, while 2 institutions showed a negative trends, but demonstrated that their academic community is learning a foreign language.

Based on the information provided in *Chart 9*, it can be mentioned that ASEM gained a leading positions in terms of academic staff mobilities for the period of at least 1 semester (19), it being followed by USC (8) and USARB (7). The rest of Universities has maintained positions and registered moderate results, while 2 shown a negative trend.

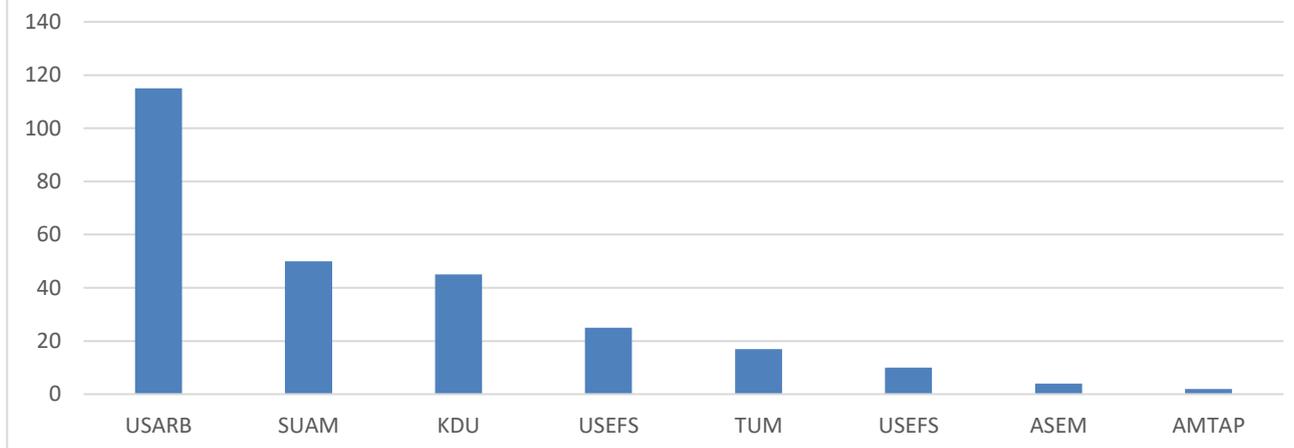


**Chart 9.** Number of academic staff who has spent at least 1 semester abroad, September 2017- September 2020



In terms of visiting lectureship abroad (chart 10), the leading position is occupied by SAUM followed by ASEM, KDU and UTM. The rest of the universities register modest performance in this regard.

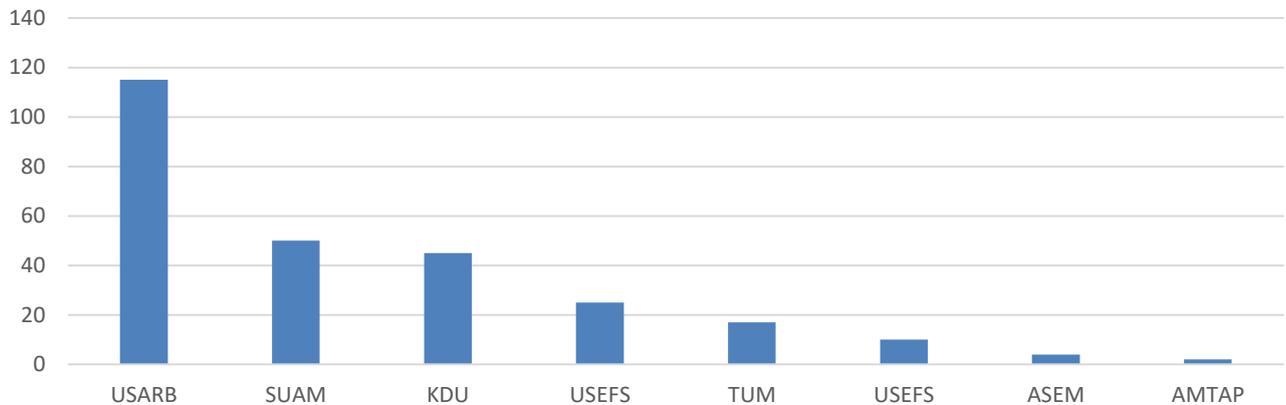
**Chart 10.** Number of academic staff who has held at least a visiting lectureship abroad, September 2017- September 2020



Given the increasing international mobility among academics and the internationalisation of higher education more generally, the present study points to some key concerns for the management and recruitment of international faculty and educational institutions in the country in general. Those concerns are particularly pertinent given the demand for an increasingly international faculty in many institutions of higher education of Moldova and the potential contribution that such faculty could make. The recruitment of staff with an overseas experience offers the institution a possibility to expand the educational horizons to its student community and fasten the internationalization of higher education institution. *Chart 11* states, that USARB is a leader position in terms of the staff with international work experience, followed by SUAM, and KDU. The rest of universities maintain moderate results in this regard.



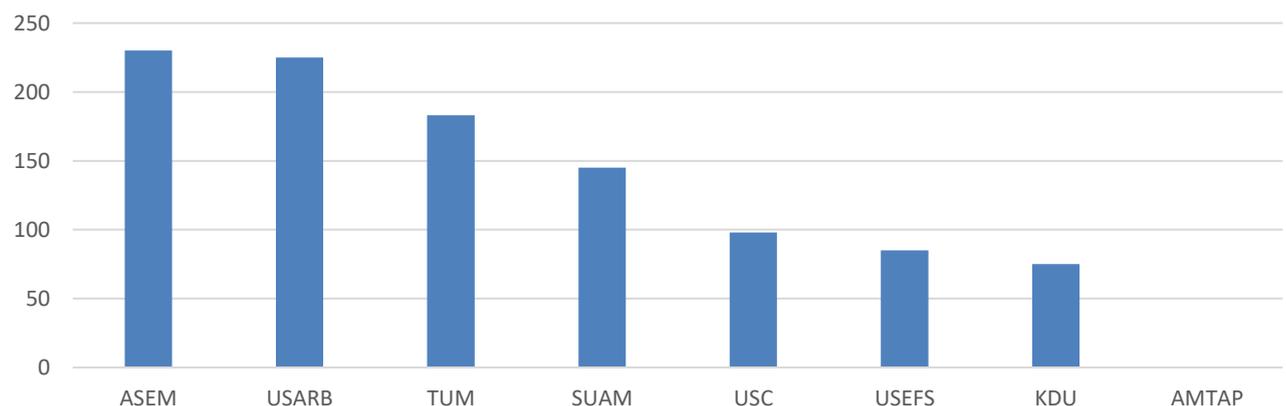
**Chart 11.** Number of academic staff with international work experience, September 2017- September 2020



The subject of internationalization of academic staff within the higher education institutions of Moldova is approached by the engagement of academics in the international events, lectures provided by academics from abroad. Moreover, another important aspect registered by Moldovan HEIs in qualification received by their staff from abroad, which directly contribute to the development of the internationalization of education delivered by institution.

In terms of participations of staff in international conferences with qualified contributions, the absolute leader is ASEM (230), it is followed by USARB (225), TUM (183), SUAM (145), USC (98), USEFS (85) and KDU (75). Only one institution noted that data for the following subject could not be provided and has been marked with 0.

**Chart 12.** Number of participations of academic staff in international conferences (with qualified contribution), September 2017- September 2020



The highest numbers staff, which was recruited from abroad, has been registered by USEFS, thus, in the researched period, followed by USARB and UTM. The rest of institutions has registered negative trends with no recruitments.



Higher education institutions from Moldova are using a sheer or instruments in order to increase and improve the internationality level through academic programs, exchange opportunities, internationalized curricula, elaboration of joint and doble degree programs, visiting lecturers and scholars. Of course there are other instruments that can influence the internationalization of education and institution itself, where increasing the internationality of the staff engaged in educational process represents one of the objectives.

In order to promote internationalization among the academic staff, a crucial role is played by the involvement of HEIs in to European Union programs, such as Erasmus+. CEEPUS, AUF, Horizon 2020. Moreover, Moldovan HEIs are using such mechanisms as research partnership, publications, organization of information sessions and other informative events in order to keep the academic community informed not only about the possibilities institution beholds in terms of internationalization to stimulate the participation of academics in international events.

One of the most common barriers for higher education institutions of the Republic of Moldova represent the lack of funding, insufficient language opportunities of academic staff, misinformation, some personal reasons, and if the financial matter is resolved with the support and funding through the European Union programs, the other issues are being tackled by HEIs through the implementation of the Internationalization policies, not only on institutional, but on national levels.

## **Analysis of Chapter IV: Internationalisation in terms Educational Programmes**

Internationalization of higher education institutions has become comprehensive and complex phenomenon in the Republic of Moldova. Leaders in higher education institutions worldwide have increasingly acknowledged the need to prepare globally educated graduates who can not only understand global issues, but also communicate effectively across cultures. During the first wave of internationalization of higher education, institutional efforts to internationalize higher education were dominated by the “component approach” or the “activity approach” consisting of a variety of curricular and extracurricular programs and activities under the umbrella term international education. In the

Republic of Moldova this topic has been approached by the internationalization of the academic staff, increased level of international language and diversification of study programs. For higher education institutions of Moldova the concept of joint/double degree programs has been new for several years. Thus, comparing to the previous studies a sheer of universities started to work on elaboration of international curriculum.

An absolute leader among the researched institutions remains ASEM, that continue to deliver a share of 79.6% from total amount of courses in foreign language. Other HEIs continue to maintain moderate positions in this regard, but register better results in courses partially taught in foreign language.

Internationalization of higher education should be considered as an on-going process and integrated into overall functions of higher education in terms of teaching, research, and service. Availability of study programs oriented towards international arena, the availability of extra-curricular opportunities for students, recognition of degrees offered by Moldovan HEIs are top elements used by the researched institutions in order to attract the international students and increase the internationality of the higher education institution itself.

The Moldovan HEIs have faced many challenges for internationalization of their institutions in teaching, research, and service and are constantly undergoing institutional reform in order to meet the standards imposed by globalization. When speaking about internationalization of study programs, there are several activities considered by HEIs, and the most often mentioned are availability of curricula, comprising international and intercultural dimension; internationalisation courses/programmes; International field studies and research.

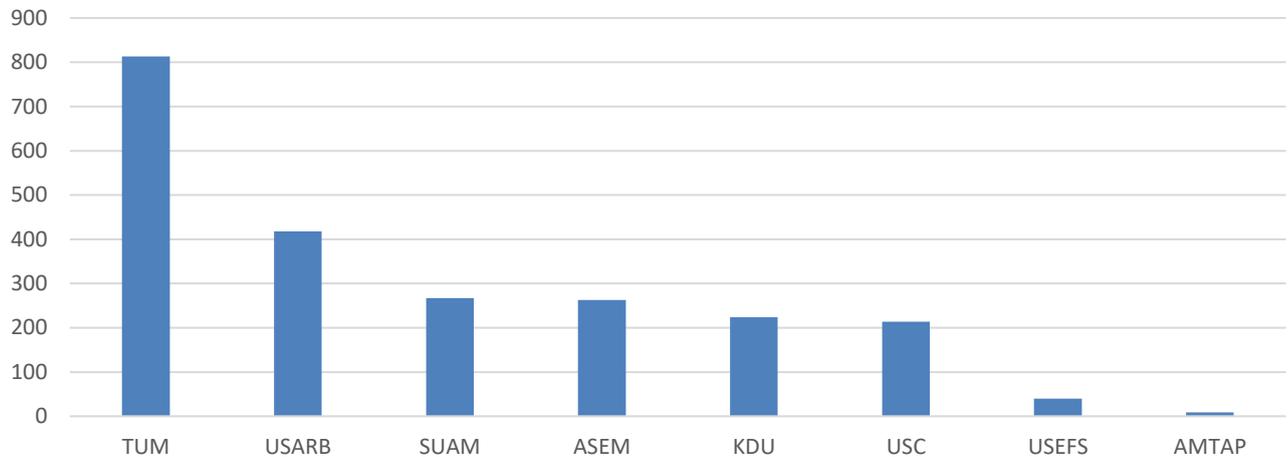
## **Analysis of Chapter V: Internationalisation in terms of research and international events**

In the field of science and technology, globalization enhances a tendency for higher reliance on external sources, international collaboration and networking. The greatest benefits will accrue to those countries that can most efficiently access, adopt and exploit new technologies on institutional level, that include strengthening research excellence and innovation performance, publications in international journals made by institution's researchers, international citations, organization of international scientific conferences and events, international research projects with international cooperation partners.

TUM is the leader in terms of the number of publications made in international journals, 813 of them being made in the period of September 2017 and September 2020. This university is followed by USARB (418), SUAM (267) and ASEM, (263). (see *Chart 14*).

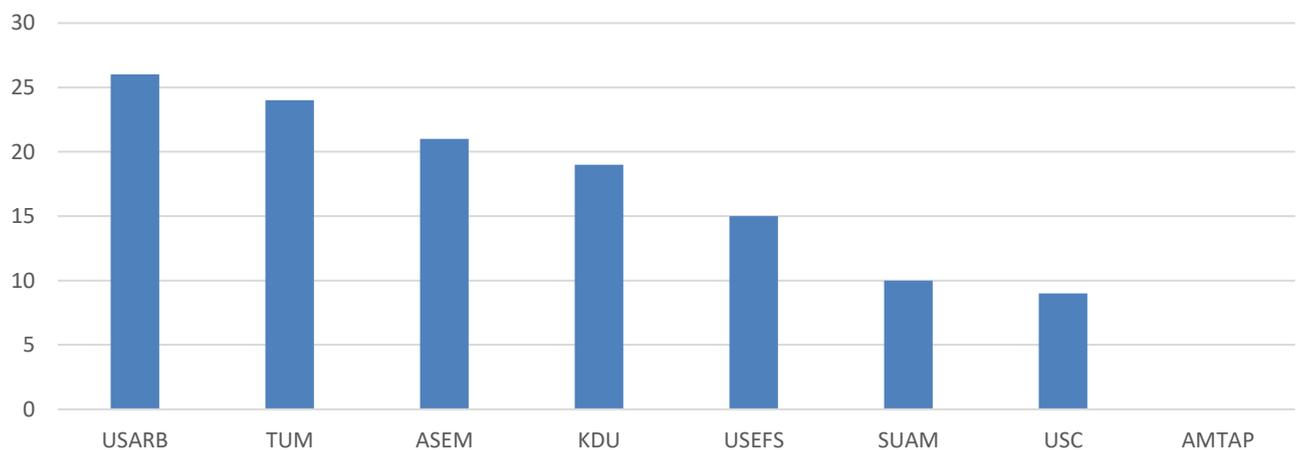


**Chart 14.** Number of publications in international journals made by institution's researchers, September 2017- September 2020



Organization and realization of the international events is one of the mechanisms used by the Moldovan HEIs in improvement of university internationalization level. Based on the information provided in chart 15, USARB still remains a leader in terms of the number of international conferences organized within the institution within the researched period, it is followed by TUM and ASEM, 21 and respectively 20 conferences.

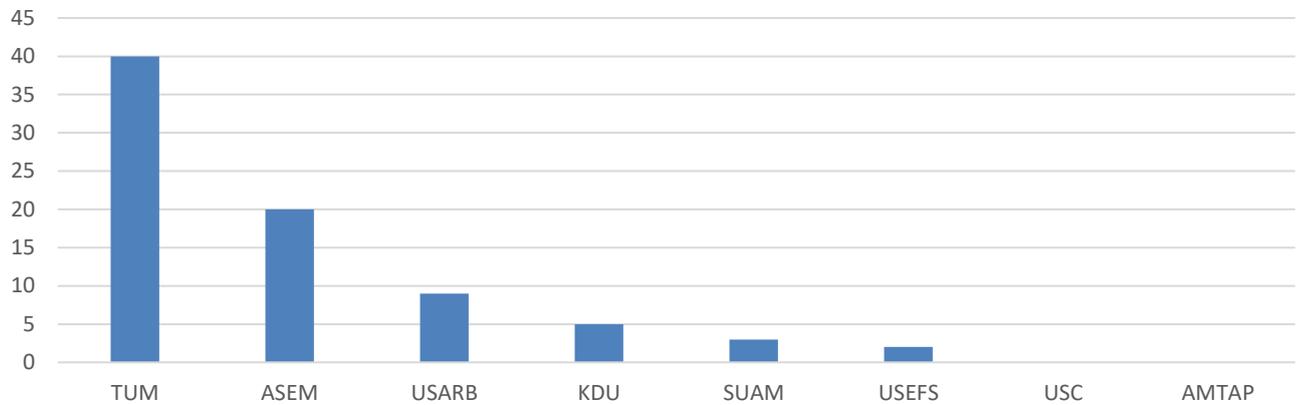
**Chart 15.** Number of international conferences organised within the institution, September 2017- September 2020



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 (see *Chart 16*).



**Chart 16.** Number of international research projects with international cooperation partners, September 2017- September 2020

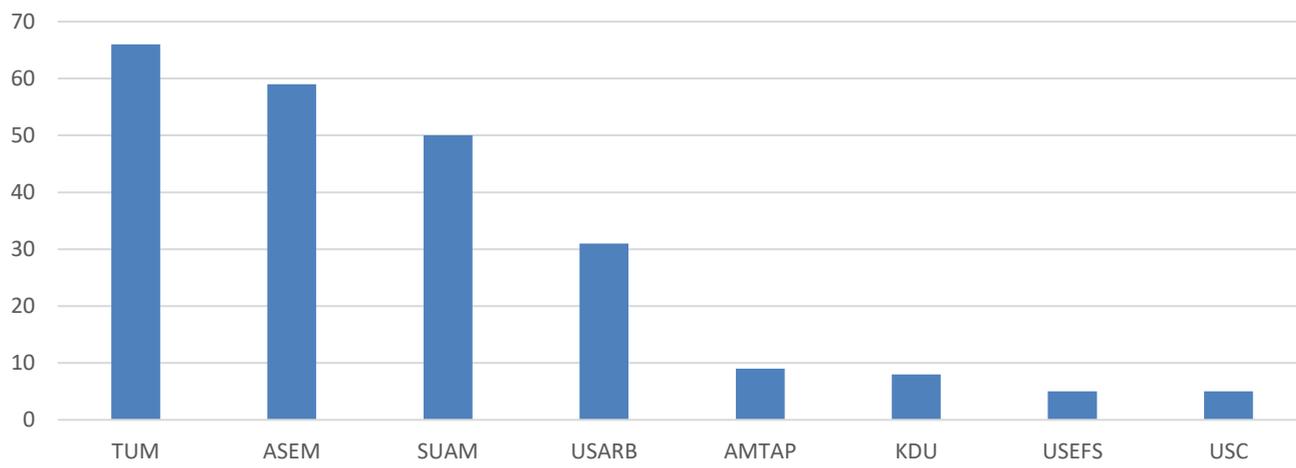


In order to promote and internationalize research the Moldovan HEIs participate in international research networks, as European Higher Education Area, European Research Area, Bilateral Research Programme Romania-Republic of Moldova, Federal Ministry of Education and Research of Germany-RM, National Council for Research of Italy, and receive specific funds for internationalization of higher education activities through AUF, DAAD, CEEPUS, Erasmus+, Programme of the Council of Europe US programs.

The implementation of international research project is a very important matter for each Moldova HEI that brings a lot of benefits. In terms of internationalization of education in general, and institution in particular. Knowledge and studies realized during the mobilities and training based on Erasmus+ partnership, gives young researchers, academic and administrative staff knowledge and experience that can be brought and implemented on home grounds.

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. (*Chart 17*). Number of ERASMUS partnerships in which at least one mobility has taken place, September 2017 - September 2020

**Chart 17.** Number of ERASMUS partnerships in which at least one mobility has taken place, September 2017 - September 2020



Higher education Institutions of Moldova stimulate production of internationally published scientific articles and institution's performance in organizing and benefiting from international research, conferences and seminars through specific services and infrastructure exist to support and develop international activities of the institution. These services include existence of the Scientific Research Department, Research Centres, Space for organization of the international and intercultural events, scientific libraries with access to international databases. Researched institution underlined that they are constantly provide assistance to your researcher in order to stimulate the internationalization and research development on both institutional and national levels. This is realized through assistance of researches with accessing international research funds, promotion academic research collaboration opportunities, providing advice on international tech transfers and negotiations.

## Conclusions

The present report addressed the main characteristics of Moldovan Higher Education Institutions considering the area of internationalisation of higher education and tried to identify the main challenges, limitations and opportunities during the process.

It is important to mention, that state universities in the Republic of Moldova are located at the centre of the global outreach higher education polices. Moldova is paying a serious attention to internationalization of higher education as a major tool to supply the educational system with current international curricular and methodological innovations. Moreover, international outreach creates a foundation for up-to-date research and development in the transitional economies and built regional multi-level collaborations. Present report and studies realized show that academic institutions of Moldova generate knowledge for collaborative academic plans.

A widely intensifying and growing impact of internationalization of higher education on Moldovan universities explains the current efforts to improve the existing curricula, internationalize the academic community, research and developments, international organizational structures in order to meet the demand for the new transborder activities. Higher education institutions of Moldova tailors the internationalization strategies and polices according to the requirements of the foreign counterparts.

Moldovan Higher Education Institutions have shown remarkable results during the project's period, registering an existing internationalisation strategy. The scope of each Moldovan institution is to provide high quality education and attract student not only all over the Moldova, but be competitive on international arena. Numerous international partnership of Moldovan HEIs with institutions from Europe, Asia, North America, post-soviet states offer great opportunities in developing and joining the vibrant academic networks. Collaboration with international organisations and associations, such as American Council, British Council, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Erasmus+ provided Moldovan universities with opportunities to participate in international academic projects and fasten or for some universities initiate the internationalisation process.

In order to foster the internationalisation process Moldovan educators participate in new international initiatives, push their universities towards the global outreach by establishing strong personal connections with foreign universities, use very opportunity to persuade the participation in international programs, use international exchange opportunities offered to academic and student community in order to influence the internationalisation process from inside. Commitment of

international education brought reforms in curricula and study programs. Based on study realised it can be noted that some higher education institutions are advanced in internationalisation and register increase over time in terms of services and products offered by their institution, position they have taken on national and international education arena, while some institutions are still new to this concept, but has already introduced internationalisation on the list of priorities.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the following investigation and one of them relates to the fact that the majority of Moldovan HEIs enhance the internationalisation efforts. At institutional level, universities suffer from insufficient financial and human resources, but are building up human capacities through realisation of free foreign language courses, invest in initiation in international collaboration and partnerships, increase the mobility of staff and students, enlarge in internationalisation of education offer on all levels of education by offering courses taught on multiple languages, encourage academics and researchers to participate in international events, scientific symposiums, publish in international journals.

Internationalisation forms commitment to improve global standing of the Moldovan universities, embracing all of its benefits. Higher Education institution express their current mission to prepare not only local students, but an international academic community to face the challenges and meet the opportunities imposed by globalization. The universities of the Republic of Moldova, through the characters provided have demonstrated the optimistic forecast to investigate, analyse and further internationalize the system.