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QFORTE

*Fortifying higher education quality in Moldova.
No boundaries for quality*

№. 2

October, 2022

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PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

Acronym: QFORTE (Enhancement of Quality Assurance in Higher Education System in Moldova)

Type of the project: National/Structural project

Total Budget: € 992.363,00

Project`s period: 15/11/2020 – 14/11/2023 (36 months)

Coordinating institution: Moldova State University

Link: <https://qforte.usm.md/>

Reference number:

(618742-EPP-1-2020-1-MD-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP)

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Meeting of QFORTE project's national coordinators

On 28 January 2022, Moldova State University organized a meeting of the national partners of the QFORTE project. It was held online, due to Covid-19 restrictions, and was attended by QFORTE project members, representatives of working groups from partner universities from the Republic of Moldova: QFORTE grant coordinator, QFORTE institutional coordinators, Vice-Rectors for Education, Heads of QA Departments, QA officers. The main point of discussion was the elaboration of the institutional strategies and the action plans on quality assurance for the next five years. Each university representative made a presentation about the institutional legal acts on quality assurance.

The participants were asked to present general information about the existing documentation on the QA within each Moldovan partner university. Having presented the information about the QA documents, all partners agreed that there is an evident lack of a strategic institutional document that would cover all levels of an institution, with indicators of performance and detailed action plans.

Nadejda Velişco, QFORTE grant coordinator presented a PPT, containing information on the recommended format of the institutional QA strategy: structure and components by offering detailed description and requirements for each item. The strategy will be based on the concept of the university integrative function, which seeks to find solutions able to benefit all fields, sectors and actors of the university as a whole. Senates will be in charge of adopting university strategies once a consensus has been reached within the university.

Suggestions and recommendations on the elaboration of institutional QA strategies developed by WP3 Leader University of Leipzig and co-leader University of Salamanca were introduced to the meeting participants and discussed.

It was agreed that the draft version shall be finished by 25 March 2022, the final draft version by 15 May 2021 and institutional discussion and approval till 15 June 2022.



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Study-visit to the University of Salamanca - a good practice activity on institutional accreditation within the QFORTE project

A study-visit to the University of Salamanca, Spain, hosted by the BISITE research group, within the project QFORTE was organized during the period of 8-10 November 2021. The event is an initiative promoted by the Erasmus+ Programme, co-financed by the European Union and coordinated by Moldova State University.

The purpose of the visit was to study and research the ways for improving the quality of studies in higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova through strategies used in the European space, as well as the exchange of good practices on institutional accreditation. The meeting was held in hybrid format due to restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moldova State University was represented by dr. Irina Gîncu, Head of the Studies Department; dr. Georgeta Stepanov, Dean of the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences and Violeta Cotilevici, Head of Curriculum Development Unit.

The program of the visit included topics on:

- Characteristics of the Spanish national quality assurance framework, national institutional accreditation procedures and external evaluation.

- Principles, process, and organization of the internal quality assurance process within the Spanish universities.

- Institutional quality assurance strategies of the University of Salamanca, the tools and methodology applied.

- Spanish experience in completing the process of accreditation of study programmes, but also of institutional accreditation.

The meeting was opened by Mr. José Miguel Mateos Roco, Vice-Rector for Research and Knowledge Transfer of the University of Salamanca, accompanied by Mr. Salvador Rus Rufino, Director of the Castilla y León Community Quality Agency and the Representative of the VISIT Group Mr. Juan M. Corchado Rodríguez with a greeting message.

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Dr. Salvador Rus Rufino, Director of the
Community Quality Agency of Castilla y León



Dr. Juan M. Corchado Rodríguez, Representative
of the VISIT Group

The Agency for the Quality of the University System Castilla y León (ACSUCYL) and the National Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality (ANECA), whose aim is to contribute to the improvement of the quality in the higher education system, were presented during the event. This takes place through



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evaluation, certification, and accreditation of all research fields and institutions, as well as the evaluation and certification of academics.

Mateos Roco, in his speech, emphasized that quality assurance has become a way to formalize the communication and to equalize different education systems, providing an adequate, stable, and secure framework for the exchange of knowledge, research and human resources.

Mr. Juan Manuel Corchado presented the quality assurance process at the University of Salamanca mentioning the innovation methodologies and the five steps for strategic innovation planning, followed by the ANECA representative who reported on the national accreditation framework in Spain and on the evaluation of Spanish higher education institutions. The procedure was described as a complex one, consisting of three stages: self-evaluation, a visit by a group of experts and evaluation for accreditation.

During the study visit, there were discussed the methods of evaluation and accreditation of higher education programmes (Cycle I - Bachelor, Cycle II - Master, Cycle III - Doctorate), institutional accreditation and teacher evaluation. In addition, the institutional system of surveys, suggestions and complaints were presented.

The study visit ended with a communication on the evaluation of scientific publications and the evaluation of research activities followed by a round table where good practices in the field of quality assurance were discussed.

Moldova State University, the QFORTE coordinating institution, expresses its gratitude to all the organizers who were actively involved in the study visit. Therefore, we are grateful and appreciate the efforts of:

Dr. José M. Mateos Roco,

Dr. Salvador Rus Rufino,

Dr. Juan M. Corchado Rodríguez,

Dr. José Antonio Cordon García

Dr. Enrique Herrera Viedma,

Dr. Ana Belén Gil, Marta Plaza,



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Dr. Pablo Oñate Rubalcaba,
María José Echeverría Cubillas,
Sandra Blanco González,
Lucía Duarte Álvarez,
Felipe José Lorenzo Blanco.

Study Visit to the University of Montpellier within the QFORTE Project

On 18-22 October 2021, within the QFORTE project (Enhancement of Quality Assurance in Higher Education System in Moldova, reference number: 618742-EPP-1-2020-1-MD-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP) representatives from PCUs, Ministry of Education and Research, ANACEC visited the University of Montpellier, France. The main goal of the event was to ensure the transfer of the best practices of the University of Montpellier in introducing various models of QA strategy development at university level. These practices are of great importance for internal and external quality assessment systems and for institutional accreditation. Considering the COVID-19 restrictions, the event was organized in a hybrid format.

Moldova State University, the coordinating institution was represented by dr. Otilia Dandara, Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, dr. Irina Gîncu, Head of the Studies Department and dr. Maria Hămuraru, Dean of the Faculty of Economic Sciences.

The programme of the study-visit included topics on:

- Information on the French QA framework, national institutional accreditation procedures and external evaluation.
- Organization of the internal QA process within the French universities.
- Institutional QA strategies of the University of Montpellier, the tools and methodology applied.
- French experience in completing the processes of accreditation of study programmes and institutional accreditation.

A topic of major interest for the participants of the study visit were the indicators for monitoring the internal

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processes of the University of Montpellier in terms of the impact on the performance of university management and the placement of the university in international rankings. It was mentioned that QA and the monitoring processes at the University of Montpellier are based on the holistic approach, being carried out within the implemented projects. Mr. Patrick Caron, UM Vice-President for



International Relations and Ms. Celine Delacourt – Gollain, Head of International Relations Department welcomed the participants of the study visit and presented a short description of the University of Montpellier, the youngest medieval university. In this presentation it was mentioned the university's strategy for creating a thematic research-intensive university, which will be recognized internationally for its impact on agriculture, environment, and health.

During the study visit, the university's development strategy was mentioned, which consists in promoting partnerships with the most famous universities in Europe and other non - EU countries. The expected results are new academic opportunities for students, more accessible studies, and the increase the university's attractiveness.



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Also, UM institutional quality assurance strategies were discussed, the tools and the action plan were presented by Ms. Sylvie Narejos, Head of Quality Department. In addition, the French national institutional accreditation and external evaluation procedures were examined and presented by Ms. Nadia Lagarde.

All participants agreed that experiencing this type of exchange visits contributes to the mutual knowledge and maintenance of collaborative relations between international and local partners, which is an exceptional experience that opens new academic opportunities and contributes to the improvement of internal insurance processes of the quality of studies at the Moldova State University. Thus, detailed knowledge of university systems in the European Union will certainly bring the Republic of Moldova closer to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Moldova State University, the coordinating institution would like to thank the colleagues from the UM for their continued support and generosity during in the study visit. We extend deep gratitude and thanks for all efforts of our colleagues from the University of Montpellier:

Dr. Patrick Caron, Vice-President for International Relations

Dr. Céline Delacourt-Gollain, Head of International Relations Department

Dr. Manon Martinez, QFORTE Project Manager

Dr. Guilhem Culotte, Head of the Management Control and Performance Analysis Department

Dr. Sylvie Narejos, Head of the Quality Department

Dr. Irène Georgescu, Montpellier Management School Professor in charge of professionalization and accreditations

Dr. Nadia Lagarde, Deputy Head of the International Relations Department and Quality Assurance European Expert

Dr. Autcharaporn Somsing, Montpellier Institute of Business Administration Head of International Accreditation

Dr. Elliott Chollet, Project Manager

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Dr. Roisin Smith, CHARM-EU Quality Officer

**Study - Visit to the Leipzig University within the
QFORTE Project**

Moldova State University together with other local universities benefited from an exchange of experience organized by the University of Leipzig, Germany a partner in the Erasmus+ project, Enhancement of Quality Assurance in Higher Education System in Moldova - QFORTE, reference number: 617490-EPP-1-2020-1-MD-EPPKA2- CBHE-SP.



The event took place in online format, between 14 -16 March 2022, and was attended by representatives of the

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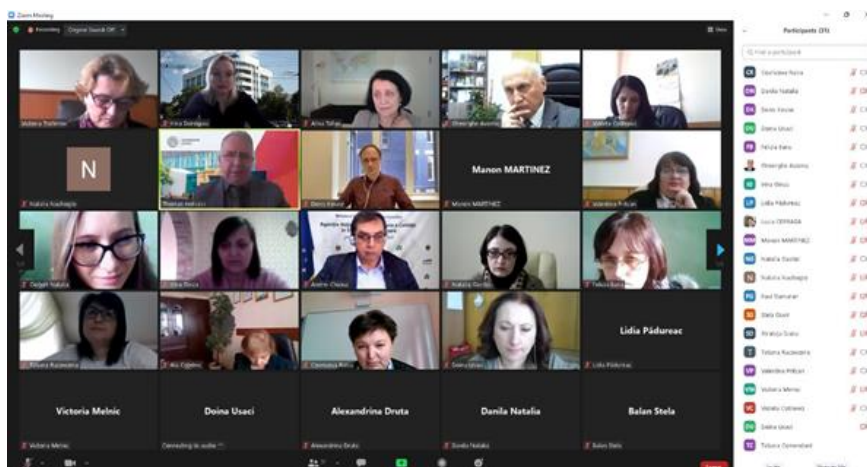
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Ministry of Education and Research, ANACEC and partner universities from Germany, France, Spain and Slovenia. USM was represented by dr. Otilia Dandara the First Vice-Rector, dr. Irina Gincu, Head of the Studies Department, and members of the Quality Management section.

During the first meeting, Prof. Dr. Thomas Hofsass, Vice-Rector for Education, and International Relations at the University of Leipzig, addressed the topic of quality management at the University of Leipzig, namely: the accreditation system and the introduction of Quality Assurance in the Development Strategy of the University of Leipzig, actors and structures for quality assurance and evaluation and certification of university diplomas.



Also, the representatives of the University of Leipzig made an analysis of the Quality Management system within the Faculty of Social Sciences and Philosophy, as well as the process of development and evaluation of national or international study programs and the accreditation of joint study programs.

Another topic discussed was the process of International Accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSSB) at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Philosophy of the University of Leipzig, presented by Prof. Dr. Gregor Weiss. At the end, the participants discussed the development strategies addressed in the institutions they represent.



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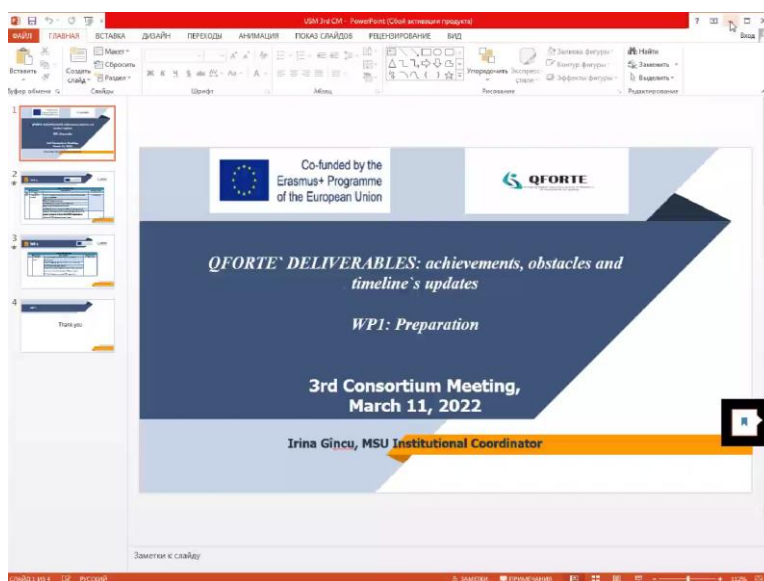
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We mention that the main results to be obtained by Moldova State University of, within the QFORTE project, are: the international institutional accreditation of the Moldova State University; improving the external quality assessment methodology for institutional accreditation, as well as the external quality assessment methodology of joint higher education programs based on European experience in the field, developing quality guidelines, improving the capacity of internal quality assurance structures, promoting quality culture nationally.

3rd Consortium Meeting within the QFORTE project



The members of the Erasmus+ project “Enhancement of Quality Assurance in Higher Education System in Moldova - QFORTE”, met in a working meeting on 11 March 2022 at the 3rd Consortium meeting within the project.



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The meeting was led by Dr. Nadejda Velişco, grant coordinator of the "QFORTE" Project. The event was attended by representatives of higher education institutions from the Republic of Moldova, local project partners and representatives of European Union partners.

During the event, the work packages and their level of implementation were reported and analyzed. Some new objectives of the project were also outlined, including some updates to the work packages, which are responsible for increasing the institutional capacity to implement the study quality assurance (QA) reform and project management.

We mention that Moldova State University is the coordinator of the project, and the main purpose of the project is "Improving Quality Assurance in the Higher Education System of Moldova". It aims to promote and strengthen the culture of quality assurance in the Republic of Moldova; to build the national consensus on development issues by November 2023; to develop and promote the national legislative framework and to stimulate regulatory changes regarding quality assurance in higher education institutions in Moldova by November 2023.

Local partners:

- Moldova State University (USM) - coordinator
- Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova (MERRM)
- National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC)
- Academy of Economic Studies (ASEM)
- Academy of Music, Theater and Fine Arts (AMTAP)
- "Alecă Russo" State University of Bălţi (USARB)
- Cahul State University (USC)
- Comrat State University (KDU)
- "Constantin Stere" University of European Political and Economic Studies (USPEE).

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- Institute for European Policy Development and Research in Maribor, Slovenia (EPDRI)
- Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies (CEENQA)
- University of Montpellier, France (UM)
- University of Salamanca, Spain (USAL)
- University of Leipzig, Germany (ULEI)

“Dialogue on national policy and development of institutional Quality Assurance system”- the second Country Workshop at the national level



On 11 March 2022, Moldova State University organized the 2nd Country Workshop within the Erasmus+ project "Enhancement of Quality Assurance in Higher Education System in Moldova -QFORTE", reference number (618742-EPP-1-2020-1-MD-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP). The agenda of the event focused on the “Dialogue on national policy and development of institutional Quality Assurance system”

On behalf of MSU, the workshop was attended by dr. Otilia Dandara, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, dr. Irina Gîncu, Head of the Studies Department, and the members of the Quality Management section.

The event was opened by dr. Nadejda VELIȘCO, grant coordinator of the “QFORTE” project. She mentioned that one of the main objectives of this project is the integration of the Republic of Moldova in SEIS/ EHEA



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(European Higher Education Area) by improving quality assurance. in the higher education system.

During the workshops, the following topics were addressed:

- Analysis of the current internal quality assurance systems at higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova, presented by Jan Philipp Engelmann and Natasa Kramar (CEENQA representatives).
- Recommendations for reforming the national Methodology on institutional QA accreditation - implementation stage, presented by the President of ANACEC, Andrei Chiciuc and the representative of CEENQA.
- Amendments to the Code of Education of the Republic of Moldova - implementation stage, presented by Lilia Parhomenco, Senior Consultant at the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova.

Results of the QFORTE project

- ✓ Analysis of current quality assurance systems in higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova presented by Mr. Jan Philipp Engelmann and Mrs. Natasa Kramar (CEENQA representatives).
- ✓ Recommendations regarding the improvement of the National Methodology regarding institutional accreditation (by ANACEC, CEENQA).
- ✓ Changes in the Education Code of the Republic of Moldova (developed by ANACEC, MERRM),
- ✓ 5 institutional strategies for quality assurance elaborated.
- ✓ The agency registered in EQAR - ARACIS - selected for the realization of the international institutional accreditation.



More information about project activities can be found on:

- ❖ The official site of QFORTE: <https://qforte.usm.md/>
- ❖ QFORTE project links of partner universities:

<https://mec.gov.md/ro/content/erasmus>

<https://anacec.md/ro/projects>

<https://uspee.md/proiecte/qforte/>

<https://bri.ase.md/enhancement-of-quality-assurance-in-higher-education-system-in-moldova-qforte/>

<https://kdu.md/ru/nauka-i-mezhdunarodnye-svyazi/proekty/proekt-qforte>

<https://amtap.md/ro/qforte/>

<https://www.ceenqa.org/projects/qforte-enhancement-of-quality-assurance-in-higher-education-system-in-moldova/>.

<https://epdri.com/index.php/projects/>

<https://bisite.usal.es/es/investigacion/proyectos/internacionales>

<https://usarb.md/despre-qforte/>

<https://proiecte.usch.md/despre-qforte/>

[https://www.sozphil.uni-](https://www.sozphil.uni-leipzig.de/fakultaet/studienbuero/#collapse593141)

[leipzig.de/fakultaet/studienbuero/#collapse593141](https://www.sozphil.uni-leipzig.de/fakultaet/studienbuero/#collapse593141)

<https://www.umontpellier.fr/international/projets-internationaux>

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