

## Joint Study Programmes in the Educational Policy and Law of Eastern Partnership Countries

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**Abstract.** *This paper aims at analysing the policy and legal framework of joint study programmes in Eastern Partnership countries (EaP countries) in frames of the standards of the European Higher Education Area and providing the recommendations on its enhancement. It is concluded that the internationalization of higher education has been considered as one of the critical priorities of the educational policy in EaP countries. However, more emphasis on the role of joint study programmes is needed. The level of specification of legislative requirements on joint study programmes in EaP countries differs. The educational laws in Georgia, Moldova include special provisions devoted to joint study programmes, in Ukraine – basic framework, including the possibility to establish joint study programmes and awarding the joint degrees, while respective legislation in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Belarus – just general provisions regarding the international cooperation of higher educational institutions. It is suggested to implement the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in national laws and regulations in EaP countries, first of all, in part of the definition of joint study programmes and the recognition of the accreditation decisions of foreign quality assurance agencies.*

**Keywords:** *educational development, internationalization strategy, educational administration, joint study programme, quality assurance.*

**Raktažodžiai:** *švietimo plėtra, tarptautinimo strategija, švietimo administravimas, jungtinė studijų programa, kokybės užtikrinimas.*

### Introduction

European integration and globalization processes create new challenges and, respectively, new opportunities for the higher education area in Eastern Partnership countries (EaP countries). EaP countries have been implementing important reforms in the higher education area aimed at the enhancement of the educational policy and law in order to increase the quality of higher education and educational activity of higher education institutions, as well as the employability of their graduates at the national and international markets. The internationalisation of higher education in general and by means of joint/double degree programmes in particular significantly contributes to the success of such reforms.

Joint degrees are recognised as an essential tool for the future of internationalisation of higher education in Europe and beyond in the study on internationalisation of higher education commissioned by the European Parliament Committee on Culture and Education (European Parliament, 2015).

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine are full members of the Bologna Process / European higher education area (EHEA) since 2005, whereas Belarus became a member of the Bologna Process in 2015. The importance of joint programmes was emphasized at the European Ministerial Conference in Paris on 25 May 2018. According to the Paris Communiqué (Paris Communiqué, 2018), it is necessary to establish more joint study programmes throughout the whole EHEA and to enable and promote the use of the European Approach for Quality Assurance (European Approach, 2015).

Scholars, public officials, and other stakeholders worldwide have actively discussed issues of joint study programmes, in particular, referred to the peculiarities of their establishment and quality assurance (JDAZ, 2015; Institute of International Education, 2011; EQAF, 2012; JOIMAN, 2011), or their role in the internationalization of higher education within broader researches in the field (e.g., Alpenidze, 2015; Cantu, 2013; Clarke, Hui Yang, Harmon, 2018). However, the topicality of the administrative, organizational and legal issues of joint study programmes in EaP countries is undoubted, taking into consideration recent developments in the European Higher Education Area and lack of comprehensive regulation and research on this matter.

Therefore, this paper aims at comparative analysing the national policy and legal framework of joint study programmes in EaP countries and providing the recommendations on the enhancement of the regulation of joint study programmes.

This research has been based on theoretical approaches to the joint study programmes represented in modern scientific sources. Comparative legal analysis is one of the main methods of this research. National education strategies, education laws and other legal acts of EaP countries constitute the legislative basis of the research. Analytical reports and statistical data provide the empirical basis of the paper.

### Joint study programmes in national educational policies in EaP countries

In recent years, studies abroad have become very popular among citizens from EaP countries (see Figure 1). In particular, S. Kubiv paid attention that the number of Ukrainian students abroad increased by 186 % (approximately about 70 000 people) from 2009 to 2016 (Gazeta.ua, 2018). According to the data provided by the National Statistics Office of Georgia, 673 Georgian students studied abroad in the 2018-2019 school year (National statistics office of Georgia).

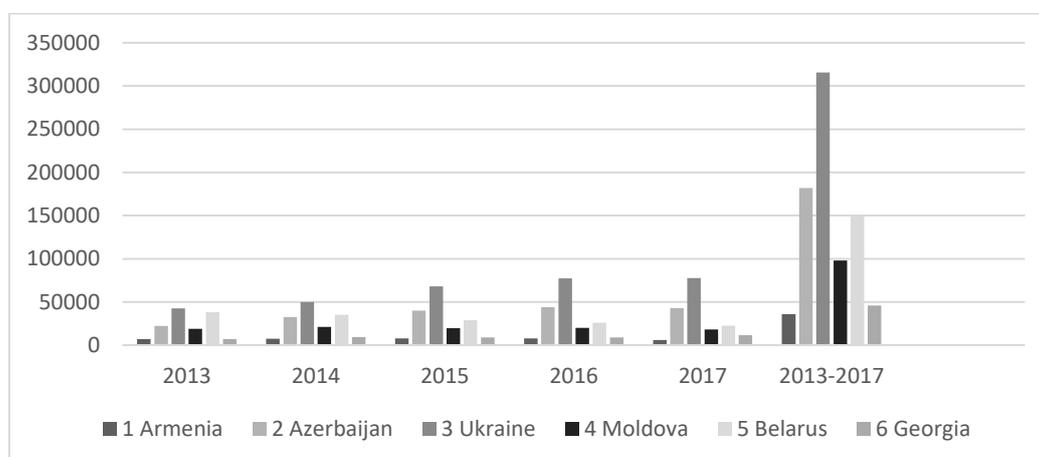


Fig. 1. Outbound internationally mobile students from EaP countries

Source: Calculated by the authors based on the data (UNESCO Institute for Statistics "Education. Outbound internationally mobile students by host region")

The establishment of joint study programmes between higher education institutions from the EU Member States with higher education institutions from EaP countries is mutually beneficial for all participants. First and foremost, it is a great opportunity for students to study in the domestic and foreign universities following the integrated curriculum, to dive into the international learning and cultural environment, to obtain knowledge and skills that will increase their employability at both at the national and international levels, in particular, due to the combination of different teaching and learning approaches, to improve their knowledge of foreign languages, and to be awarded double or joint degrees. Also, the teaching staff of the partner institutions shares the teaching experience, enjoys cultural diversity in the classroom, and develops research networks with foreign colleagues. The cooperation within the joint study programmes should be considered as one of the best ways to implement the EU standards, in particular, related to the quality assurance of educational activity, into the higher education sector in EaP countries.

For example, successful joint study programmes have been established by Mykolas Romeris University (Vilnius, Lithuania) and Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Kyiv, Ukraine) (Mykolas Romeris University, 2019).

However, there is no official statistic information on the number of students from EaP countries study within joint study programmes. The lack of the common understanding of joint study programmes both at the national and institutional levels is one of the reasons.

Scholars pay attention to the different nature of joint study programmes and separate so-called “stand-alone” (a programme exclusively developed as a joint or double degree arrangement, operated as a joint venture between two or more higher education institutions) and “add-on” programmes (the joint or double degree is an optimal add-on to an existing traditional study program, offering interested students an optimal track thought curricular cooperation with a partner university abroad) (Institute of International Education, 2011).

The European Approach suggests the common definition of a joint study programme as an integrated curriculum coordinated and offered jointly by different higher education institutions from EHEA countries, and leading to double/multiple degrees or a joint degree and provides the main requirements to joint study programmes for their accreditation. The existence of the cooperation agreement between the partner higher education institutions that covers, in particular, such issues as the denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme, coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation, admission and selection procedures for students, mobility of students and teachers, examination regulations, assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures in the consortium is among the key requirements stipulated by the European Approach. However, considering that the European Approach is not a legally binding act, its efficient application requires the implementation at the national level.

In recent years, the important steps have been made in order to establish the conditions necessary for the implementation of the joint study programmes in the EaP countries.

In particular, in Armenia (RA), during 2019-2021 years “mobility windows” shall be incorporated into study programmes (Programme of the Government of the RA: Annex to the Resolution of the Republic of Armenia No 646-A of 19 June 2017 (p. 11)) that should be considered as an important step towards the increase the number of joint study programmes. The importance of joint courses, as well as joint and double degree programmes for Armenian higher education, has been stressed in the Terms of Reference for a Higher Education Strategy 2016-2025. Public Strategy on Education Development in Azerbaijan approved by the Order of the President of the Azerbaijan Republic of 24 October 2013 (p. 3.3.3) mentions the recognition of international study programmes and their implementation in the educational institutions on payable basis alongside with public study programmes. The importance of the internationalization of higher education is also recognized in Moldova. K. Popovich argues that it is necessary to establish academic mobility scholarships in order to allow students to study both in Moldova and in the foreign countries and to be awarded two

diplomas – Moldovan and foreign (Sputnik Moldova, 2019). Increasing the mobility of teaching staff and students defined as one of the key directions in the National Development Strategy “Moldova – 2030” approved by Law No 333 of 14.12.2018. The participation in the programmes and projects of regional and international cooperation implemented by international organizations are among priority actions according to the Educational Development Strategy for 2014-2020 years “Education – 2020” “Education – 2020” approved by Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Moldova of 14.11.2014 (p. 7.4.6). Scholars in Belarus consider the establishment and implementation of joint study programmes with partner foreign higher education institutions as a topical target in the context of the increase of globalization trends for the education services market of higher education of the Republic of Belarus and suggest to elaborate the national strategy that will consider the European requirements (Shebeko, Druk, Khmel, 2015). The diversification of the export of educational services (enlargement of the list of study specialities taught in English, organization of distance-learning, the realization of joint study programmes and projects) is among key actions until 2020 according to the Conceptual approaches to the Development of the Educational System of the Republic of Belarus until 2020 and for the perspective until 2030 approved by Order of the Minister of education of the Republic of Belarus No 742 of 29.11.2017. Belarus Roadmap for Higher Education Reform (2015) stipulates a number of actions to be done by public authorities of Belarus and other stakeholders, in particular regarding the enhancement of the legislation in the education area. The Roadmap does not include special provisions concerning joint programmes with foreign higher education institutions; however, several provisions can be considered as important conditions for the establishment of such programmes (in particular, concerning the facilitating the student mobility). Draft strategic action plan on implementation of the major objectives of the education system development in line with the EHEA principles and tools (Appendix II to the Paris Communique of 25.05.2018) includes special provisions related to joint study programmes. In particular, mobility options for students and staff shall be revised and improved. Mobility windows shall be incorporated into the study process. The internal procedures on academic mobility outcomes recognition shall be developed by the higher education institutions. It has also been extending the number of higher education specialities with the option of studying in English. Special legal framework for implementing joint educational programmes and double diploma programmes, and for providing international students with educational grants for studying in HEIs of the Republic of Belarus shall be approved after the adoption of the new version of the Education Code.

Thus, the internationalization of higher education has been considered as one of the key directions of the national educational policy in all EaP countries. The concept of the internationalization covers, in particular, the issues of the cooperation with foreign higher education institutions and research organizations, mobility of students and staff, the establishment of joint programmes and projects, enrolment of international students, as well as recognition of diplomas awarded by foreign higher education institutions. However, more emphasis on the importance and the role of the joint study programmes is required, in particular, in the public strategic documents (e.g., national strategies, state programmes) refer to the higher education policy in the EaP countries.

### **Legal framework for joint study programmes in EaP countries**

The legal framework for the education area in EaP countries consists of education/higher education laws/codes, regulations of educational ministries, and quality assurance agencies (were established). However, the level of legislative specification in these countries is different.

Thus, in Armenia educational institutions can cooperate with foreign education, research and other organizations following the legislation and international treaties of Armenia (Law of the Republic of Armenia on Education of 20 May 1999, Art. 51 (2)). Promotion of international student mobility, enrolment of international students, participation in international educational and research programmes, recognition of foreign diplomas are regulated by the Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education of 14 December 2004. The statute on state accreditation of institutions and their academic programs in the RA (Appendix to RA Government Decree No 978-N of 30 July 2011)

has no provisions on joint study programmes. Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Education of 19 June 2009, Public Strategy on Educational Development in the Azerbaijan Republic approved by the Order of the President of the Azerbaijan Republic of 24 October 2013 provide the general legal framework for the implementation of international study programmes, joint educational projects of international level, student and staff mobility. Educational Code of the Republic of Belarus, No 243-3 of January 2011, includes basic requirements on internationalization of higher education in the Republic of Belarus, in particular, on the enrolment of foreigners to higher education institutions in Belarus, recognition of diplomas awarded by foreign higher education institutions and periods of studies abroad, use of foreign languages in the study process in Belarussian higher education institutions, academic mobility, recognition and confirmation of the compatibility of the study periods in organizations of foreign countries. The exchange of teaching staff and students is of temporal character and shall be implemented, as a general principle, on an equal basis. Moreover, participants of the academic mobility shall return to the country of permanent stay after the completion of studies, advanced training or improvement of teaching. In Ukraine, the legislation (primarily, Law of Ukraine on Education No 2145-VIII of 5 September 2017, Law of Ukraine on Higher Education No 1556-VII of 1 July 2014) provides the necessary legal framework for the establishment and implementation of joint study programmes (e.g., on academic mobility, the right to establish the joint study programmes and issue the joint diplomas, recognition of accreditation certificates issued by the recognized foreign accreditation agencies). Some issues of joint study programmes are stipulated by Regulations on the procedure of the realization of the right to academic mobility approved by Regulation of the Cabinet of Minister of Ukraine No 579 of 12 August 2015 (e.g., p. 6 regarding the issuing the joint and dual diplomas).

Thus, the establishment of joint study programmes with foreign higher educational institutions is possible in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine (even joint degrees can be awarded in accordance with Ukrainian legislation). However, there no special regulations and/or recommendations on joint study programmes provided at the national level in these countries. In particular, the Law on higher education in Ukraine mentioned above does not include the definition of a joint study programme that leads to different understanding even within one higher educational institution. Still, certain provisions of the legal acts mentioned above (e. g, regarding the enrolment of international students, foreign diploma recognition, and academic mobility) constitute a legal basis for the establishment of joint study programmes. Therefore, it is suggested to establish the special legal framework necessary for joint study programmes, e.g., regarding the definition of a joint study programme, the essential conditions of a cooperation agreement on a joint study programme etc. in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine.

In contrast, the legal framework for joint study programmes is more specified in Georgia and Moldova. In Georgia, Law of Georgia on higher education No 688-ES of 21 December 2004 provides definitions for “joint academic degree” and “joint higher education program”, as well as basic requirements on joint study programmes, primarily related to their establishment (based on an agreement) and accreditation. The joint higher education program is considered as an educational program that is implemented between Georgia's higher education institute(s) and/or the higher education institution recognized according to foreign legislation based on the agreement concerning the implementation of a joint higher education program and after the completion of which, there will be issued a document/documents certifying the higher education in the manner prescribed by the higher education. It is important to notice that the draft contract shall be agreed with the National Education Quality Development Center (Art. 491, part 3). After the graduation of the joint higher educational program, a joint academic degree shall be awarded by the higher education institution(s) implementing it that shall be determined by the respective contract. Joint higher educational programs may be accredited by the duly competent foreign organization recognized by the National Education Quality Development Center (Art. 63). The legal framework for quality assurance in education in Georgia has been primarily established by the Law of Georgia on Development of Quality of Education No 3531 – 66 of 21 July 2010. Accreditation requirements are established by Order No

65/N of the Minister of Education and Science of 4 May 2011 on approving accreditation provision of educational programs of educational institutions. Joint programmes are mentioned in Article 28 of this act for the purposes of the recognition of the accreditation granted by the foreign organization. In Moldova, Education Code of the Republic of Moldova No 152 of 17 July, 2014 provides a legal framework for joint educational programmes. Such programmes can be established at bachelor, master or doctoral level; the partner institutions are to be jointly responsible for: development and approval of a programme; organization of admission; academic supervision, awarding qualifications and quality assurance (Art. 92). Joint qualification shall be awarded, and the joint diploma shall be issued in one of the following ways: a) a joint diploma additional to one or more national diplomas; b) a joint diploma issued by the institutions providing joint study program without issuing the national diploma; c) one or more national diplomas officially issued and the certificate attesting the jointly awarded qualification. However, in our opinion, the third variant should be considered as a double degree, not a joint, in line with the European Approach. The abovementioned Code also stipulates that joint diplomas/certificates shall be issued in the languages set by partners and in the English language. The students from each partner institution may study a period of time in the partner institutions, but not necessarily in all institutions of the consortium. The period of study for students in the partner institutions or organizations of the higher education institution shall be a substantial part of the joint program. The periods of study and the exams passed in the partner institutions shall be fully and automatically recognized, under the law. Special provisions of the Code devoted to the master and doctoral theses supervision. Thus, a thesis shall be supervised by two scientific leaders, of which at least one is from Moldova. Their relations shall be regulated by the joint supervision agreement signed between the institutions organizing the joint higher education program. Regulation of the Government of Moldova No56 of 27 January 2014 on approval of the Model regulation on academic mobility in higher education prescribes that the mobility within joint programmes (double diplomas) implemented during bachelor, master and doctoral studies, as well as integrated educational programmes have been regulated by agreements between higher education partner institutions. It should be noticed that some peculiarities of joint master programmes have been stipulated by Regulation of the Government of the Republic of Moldova No464 of 28 July 2015 on approval of the Regulation on the organization of the second cycle of education – master studies. Several provisions of the Education Code have been reflected in this Regulation; however, there are some requirements different from the provisions of the Code. Thus, according to the Regulation, the students of each partner institution shall study in partner institutions (p. 39 “c”) and such a period shall constitute a significant part of a joint programme (p. 39 (d), meanwhile in accordance with the Education Code it is not necessary to encourage studies in partner institutions for students of all partner institutions. It should be emphasized that as referred to in p 39 “f” of this Regulation academic staff of the partner institutions shall jointly and equally contribute to the implementation of a joint education programme. Master thesis preparation and defence within joint programmes has some peculiarities such as double supervision and/or double review and defence before a joint defence committee. Therefore, the Regulation must include some requirements on the abovementioned issues. Thus, according to p. 67, a student of the II cycle can request to change a master thesis/master project topic only once within the period of studies, but no later than three months prior to the thesis defence; the joint approval by partner institutions is requested. Master thesis/master project is to be submitted to the educational institution where the studies took place in case of a positive review of the partner institution. In the case of double supervision, the reviews of both supervisors are to be provided (p. 68).

Therefore, the legislation in Georgia and Moldova stipulates the main requirements for joint study programmes in educational laws and subordinate legal acts. In our opinion, the Georgian approach can be considered as an example of the best practices among EaP countries in this direction. However, some provisions need more compliance with the European Approach (e.g., regarding the definition of joint/double degrees) in these countries.

## **Quality assurance issues of joint study programmes in EaP countries**

According to the European Approach, dependent on the national legal framework, the external quality assurance decision approved based on its standards should come into force or be recognised in all countries where the programme is offered, as agreed in the Bucharest Communiqué.

Recent reforms in the higher education area in the majority of EaP countries led to the establishment of institutions responsible for the external quality assurance of study programmes, including joint study programmes.

In Armenia, the public institution responsible for quality assurance in the higher education area is National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA). There are no special regulations and/or recommendations of joint and/or double degree programmes provided on the official web page of this institution. Still, promotion of the internationalization and mobility of students and staff is defined among key criteria for both institutional (point 3.4) and programme (point 1.5) accreditation stipulated by ANQA (ANQA. Institutional and programme accreditation criteria and standards). According to the information provided by the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR. Armenia), in Armenia, the European Approach is available to higher education institutions. However, there is no reference to the European Approach in the legal acts mentioned above.

In Georgia, the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement is a public authority responsible for quality assurance in the higher education area. No special regulations and/or recommendations on joint educational programmes provided on the official web page of this authority. According to the information provided by the EQAR, in Georgia, the European Approach is available to higher education institutions under certain conditions (e.g., on a draft agreement on a joint study programme) (EQAR. Georgia). Moreover, according to Article 3 of the Law on higher education, the state shall ensure full participation in a unified European educational and research area for the processes of learning, teaching and for conducting scientific research works. Also, as referred to in Article 21 of this Law the Academic Council (the highest representative body of a legal entity of public law higher education institution) shall facilitate integration into the European area of higher education, draw up educational plans and curricula, and programmes for cooperation, mobility, integrated studies and scientific research among educational institutions.

In Moldova, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research is an institution responsible for the quality assurance in higher education. It is stipulated by the Educational Code mentioned above that the procedure for provisional authorization and accreditation of the joint higher education programs should be established by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in the Professional Education (predecessor of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research). However, no special regulation on joint programs available on the web site of the Agency. It should be noticed that the development and implementation of accreditation standards for joint and double degrees in Moldova are among key outcomes of the Erasmus+ funded project ELEVATE (Elevating the internationalisation of higher education in Moldova) (the project's coordinator – the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova) (European Commission, 2016). According to the information provided by the EQAR (EQAR. Moldova), in Moldova, the European Approach is available to higher education institutions.

In Ukraine, National higher education quality assurance agency has been established following the Law of Ukraine “On higher education” and Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No 244 of 15 April 2015 and become operational in 2019. According to the information provided by the EQAR (EQAR. Ukraine), in Ukraine, the European Approach is not available to higher education institutions. However, we believe that the provisions of the European Approach can and should be applicable for joint study programmes established in the partnership with Ukrainian higher educational institutions considering the following arguments. The international integration and integration of the higher education system of Ukraine into the European higher education area providing the preservation of achievements and progressive trends of the national higher education according to Article 3 of the Law of Ukraine on higher education. As referred to in Article 16 (para.3

of part 3) of this Law, the system of external quality assurance of educational activity of higher education institutions and quality of higher education includes, inter alia, encouragement of the existence of announced criteria of decision making in accordance to guidelines and recommendations of quality assurance in the European higher education area. The Law on higher education also allows the independent higher education quality assurance institutions (private institutions accredited by the National Quality Assurance Agency) to cooperate with the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, in particular, in order to implement the European standards and recommendations on quality improvement of higher education in Ukraine (Art. 23, part 2). Moreover, under Article 74 of this Law Ukraine shall promote the implementation of higher education quality assurance mechanism in order to create the necessary mutual trust, harmonization of higher education quality assurance system of Ukraine and the European higher education area; harmonization of the National qualification framework with the qualification framework of the European higher education area in order to encourage the academic and professional mobility and life-long learning; cooperation with the European Network of National Information Centres on Academic Recognition and Mobility. Finally, as referred to in Article 25 of the abovementioned Law certificates on accreditation of study programmes issued by foreign accreditation agencies or quality assurance agencies included into the list approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine are recognized in Ukraine. It should be noticed that such list has been recently approved by Resolution No554-p from 10 July 2019 Government of Ukraine. As the head of the National agency for higher education quality assurance S. Kvit pointed out, the main criterion while establishing this list was membership in EQAR (Kvit, 2019). It should be noticed that the Regulation on the accreditation of study programmes for higher education candidates approved by Order of the Ministry of education and science of Ukraine of 11 July 2019 No977 does not include special provisions on joint study programmes. However, it stipulates the requirements on the recognition of the accreditation certificates issued by the foreign accreditation of quality assurance agencies. Under Section V, points 3-5 of this Regulation in case of the accreditation of the study programme by the recognized foreign accreditation agency the information on the accreditation shall be included in the Single state electronic base in education issues. For this purpose, the higher educational institution shall submit to the National Agency for higher education quality assurance the certified copy of the accreditation certificate and the conclusion (report, other documents with detailed accreditation results) of the respective foreign agency and their translation into Ukrainian. The copy and the translation shall be presented at the official web-page of the National agency. The accreditation of the study programmes by recognized foreign accreditation agencies is equal to the accreditation of the National agency.

In Azerbaijan and Belarus, education ministries are responsible for quality assurance in the higher education area. According to the information provided by the EQAR, in Azerbaijan (EQAR. Azerbaijan) and Belarus (EQAR. Belarus), the European Approach is not available to higher education institutions. However, the establishment of an independent quality assurance agency in conformity with the European Standards and Guidelines is among key actions prescribed by the Belarus Roadmap for Higher Education Reform. According to the Strategic Action Plan on implementation of the main targets of the development of the higher education system following principles and instruments of the European higher education area (decision of Republican council of rectors of higher education institutions No 1 of 23 April 2018) measures shall be taken to improve further the procedures of internal quality assurance in higher education institutions 2020 and to develop the legal framework for the activities of an independent quality assurance agency to launch its full-scale practical activities by 2022.

Therefore, in our opinion, the European Approach can be applied in the majority of EaP countries, namely, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. However, considering that the European Approach is not a legally binding act, responsible public authorities shall implement its standards in national legislation (first of all, in higher education laws/codes). Respective national authorities in frames of their competence shall encourage the use of European Approach by higher education institutions, with respect to the principle of university autonomy. Peculiarities of the

accreditation of joint study programmes established with foreign institutions (in particular, regarding the recognition of the accreditation decisions of foreign quality assurance agencies) should be prescribed by the authorities responsible for quality assurance in the higher education area.

### Conclusions and recommendations

1) All EaP countries put internationalization among the key directions of the national educational policy. However, more emphasis on the importance and the role of the joint study programmes is required, in particular, in the public strategic documents (e.g., national strategies, state programmes) refer to the higher education policy in the EaP countries in order to encourage higher education institutions to use this efficient instrument of the internationalization.

2) The level of specification of legislative requirements to joint study programmes differs in EaP countries. Thus, the educational laws in Georgia and Moldova include specified provisions devoted to joint study programmes (in particular, the definition of a joint study programme, requirements on a joint study programme agreement), while respective legislation in Ukraine – just basic provisions (e.g., the right of a higher education institution to establish a joint study programme and to award a joint diploma), and in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Belarus – only general provisions regarding the international cooperation of higher educational institutions (e.g., on academic mobility, enrolment of international students, recognition of foreign diplomas). Lack of concrete legal provisions on joint study programmes (e.g., on the legal definition of a joint study programme) can lead to different understanding and cause practical problems. Therefore, it is suggested to consider the positive experience of Georgia and to establish the special legal framework necessary for joint study programmes, in particular, regarding the definition of a joint study programme, joint/double/multiple degrees, and the essential conditions of a cooperation agreement on a joint study programme etc. in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Ukraine.

3) The European Approach can be applied in the majority of EaP countries, namely, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. However, considering that the European Approach is not a legally binding act, responsible public authorities shall implement its standards in national legislation (first of all, in higher education laws/codes). Peculiarities of the accreditation of joint study programmes established with foreign institutions (in particular, regarding the recognition of the accreditation decisions of foreign quality assurance agencies) should be prescribed by the authorities responsible for quality assurance in the higher education area.

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### **Jungtinės studijų programos rytų partnerystės švietimo politikoje ir teisėje**

#### *Anotacija*

Straipsnyje siekiama išanalizuoti Rytų partnerystės valstybių jungtinių studijų programų politinę ir teisinę sistemą, atsižvelgiant į Europos aukštojo mokslo erdvės standartus bei pateikiant rekomendacijas dėl jos tobulinimo. Straipsnyje daroma išvada, kad aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimas laikytinas vienu iš didžiausių prioritetų Rytų partnerystės švietimo politikoje, tačiau būtina daryti didesnę akcentą jungtinių studijų programų vaidmeniui. Rytų partnerystės šalyse teisiniai reikalavimai jungtinėms studijų programoms skiriasi. Į Gruzijos, Moldovos švietimo įstatymus yra įtrauktos specialios nuostatos, skirtos jungtinėms studijų programoms, Ukrainos švietimo teisiniame reglamentavime yra nuostatų, susijusių su galimybe sudaryti jungtines studijų programas ir suteikti jungtinius kvalifikacijos laipsnius, Armėnijos, Azerbaidžano ir Baltarusijos įstatymuose reglamentuojamos tik bendrosios nuostatos dėl tarptautinio aukštųjų mokyklų bendradarbiavimo. Siūloma, kad Rytų partnerystės valstybių nacionaliniais įstatymais ir kitais teisės aktais būtų įgyvendintas Europos požiūris į jungtinių programų kokybės užtikrinimą, pirmiausia iš dalies apibrėžiant jungtines studijų programas ir pripažįstant užsienio kokybės užtikrinimo agentūrų akreditavimo sprendimus.

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