



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP  
Civil Society Forum

# **Project: EaP countries cooperation for promoting quality assurance in higher education**

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## Project Partners:

- Lead Applicant: European Institute for Political Studies of Moldova – think tank established in 2003 by the Council of Europe;
- CEDOS Think Tank (former Center for Society Research) from Ukraine
- Belarusian Independent Bologna Committee – civic initiative oriented towards breaking Belarusian higher education isolation from EHEA.



# The project:

- ***focuses*** on the assessment of the national quality assurance structures and their impact on higher education institutions.
- ***will reflect*** on the main challenges and country differences regarding the functionality of the quality management structures.
- ***aims*** to contribute to a better understanding of the role of cross-country cooperation on ensuring quality assurance in higher education in the Eastern Partnership countries (Moldova, Ukraine, and Belarus).
- ***will assess*** the importance of quality assurance mechanisms developed within the Eastern Partnership countries' higher education institutions and will expand and disseminate the results for all the targeted stakeholders.



# The background:

- One of the main priority of the Bologna Process in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is strengthening quality assurance in higher education. Qualitative higher education is central to the expanding of the EHEA.
- The first conceptual approaches were reflected during several meetings of Ministers of Education in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003) and Bergen (2005).
- "The Standards and Action Guidelines for quality assurance in the EHEA" were approved as a reference framework for the all European universities necessary for developing comparable methodologies and criteria of assessment.
- In 2015 in Yerevan was approved the revised "Standards and Action Guidelines for quality assurance in the EHEA".



# The relevance of the project

- Promoting cooperation in **quality assurance** in higher education **IS** an important factor in increasing the attractiveness and competitiveness of EaP countries' higher education in the EHEA, in ensuring high quality standards and in facilitating qualifications' comparison across Europe.
- Project partners are signatories of the Bologna Accord and members of European Higher Education Area – Moldova (2005), Ukraine (2005) and Belarus (2015) → different progress has been made in improving the quality and relevance of higher education, in establishing trustworthy national quality assurance systems and in setting up quality assurance bodies in the framework of each higher education institution.



# National background - Moldova

- Once with the approval of the **Education Code** adopted by Law no. 152 (July 2014) and **Strategy on Education 2020** (2014) the intended reforms in correspondence with the Bologna process take a significant orientation toward ensuring quality of higher education in Moldova
- A priority related to quality assurance in higher education was establishing the **National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education** - Government Decision no. 191 of 22 April 2015 has been approved the Rules of organization and functioning of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher and Professional Education
- The Agency performs the state policies in the field of **quality assessment in the higher education**. The Agency has as a priority the development of assessment tools in order to authorize the accreditation of the educational programs. The assessment covers several aspects: institutional capacity, academic outcomes, quality of programs, results of scientific research, institutional management.
- Institutions of higher education in Moldova established their own quality management structures, developed and implemented quality management guidelines, internal quality control mechanisms and their own internal quality assurance systems.



# National background - Ukraine

- The establishment and functioning of the **National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education** was designed in accordance with the New Law of Ukraine on Higher Education adopted in 2014
- The system of higher education quality assurance is comprised of: a system by which higher education institutions ensure quality of education activity; a system of external quality assurance for education activity of higher education institutions and higher education; a system of assuring performance quality of the National Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and independent agencies for assessment and quality assurance of higher education.
- **Main Responsibilities of the National Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education:** define requirements for the higher education quality assurance system; design regulation on accreditation of programmes of study; carry out accreditation of programmes of study offered to higher education learners; define criteria for evaluation of education activity quality, including quality of research accomplishments, for higher education institutions of Ukraine which may serve the purpose of institutional ranking



# National background - Belarus

- In 2015 Belarus joined the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and started the Belarus Roadmap for Higher Education Reform implementation.
- In accordance with the Roadmap for Higher Education Reform, Belarus must incorporate key EHEA principles into national educational system over the period of 2015-2018. In particular, it envisages among other priorities **establishing of independent quality assurance system,**
- the main obstacle to the Roadmap implementation and inclusion of the key stakeholders in higher education reform process is the absence of a clear regulatory and legal framework that would serve as a basis for the fulfillment of Belarus' obligations with respect to the Roadmap implementation as well as a non-transparent process of creating such a framework.





# The objectives of the project:

- To create a cross-country civil society platform of discussion involving Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine on the monitoring of the education policy reform, with a focus on the quality assurance mechanism assessment.
- To raise awareness within the National Platforms on quality assurance mechanism assessment through a cross-border cooperation and exchange of experience (Moldova, Belarus and Ukraine).
- To increase the level of assessment on the major challenges regarding the functionality of quality assurance structures developed in accordance with the Bologna process.
- To establishing a set of cross-country recommendations to improve quality and relevance of higher education.



# Target groups:

- **The direct beneficiaries** of the project are quality assurance structures, including the institutional quality management departments, National evaluation and accreditation structures from Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, community of experts in the field of education
- **The indirect beneficiaries** are the students and university academic staff/teachers from the Eastern Partnership countries and in general, the higher education institutions, due to the fact that the present study intends to come up with recommendations for raising the quality of higher education.

# Project activities:

## Activity 1: To conduct an experts' opinion assessment

- The experts' opinion assessment will be developed in each partner country: the analysis of the legal framework, institutional framework regarding quality assurance, institutional quality management in order to assess the main issues faced by the quality assurance representatives from different management structures.
- The qualitative research will be conducted in order to identify best practices and develop recommendations of improving the quality assurance management activity. In this context, in-depth interviews will be conducted with different stakeholders in the field of education in order to identify the already existent regional practices and concrete actions taken to improve the quality education policies in higher education.



# Project activities:

- **Activity 2: To develop a Policy Paper**

A policy paper based on the cross-country comparison which would integrate qualitative data. The policy study will present the main differences, but also the main similarities in the field, taking into consideration the national, but also, the regional context.

- The policy paper will cover both current challenges and main issues in ensuring the quality of education and recommendations for future measures. A set of recommendations will be developed that will emphasize the importance of an increased level of cooperation between Eastern partnership countries on consolidating a common space for education, research, innovation and learning opportunities.



# Project Activities:

- **Activity 3: To organize round tables**
- Organize a round table with local stakeholders in the field of higher education at the level of each country (for the presentation and dissemination of study results).
- The developed recommendations will be highly promoted, encouraging concrete actions on behalf of the stakeholders for an efficient monitoring of the education policy reforms and for improvement of the functionality of quality assurance national structures.



# Expected impact of the project:

- will increase the level of cooperation between the project partners and national experts involved in the project from all EaP countries ;
- will consolidate the platform between the EaP partners countries in the field of education policy reform, with a focus on quality assurance in higher education;
- will assess the current quality assurance mechanisms in the higher education and will raise awareness on the mechanisms on evaluating the quality in higher education in the context of Bologna process education reform;
- Also, the research will contribute to the identification of the specific issues in the field, enhancing the knowledge and professional skills of involved stakeholders.

**Thank you!**