



image source: Shutterstock



1 EURAXESS country in focus: Republic of Moldova

Did you know that in September 2009 Moldova was the first country in the world to launch high-definition voice services for mobile phones? It was also the first in Europe to launch 14.4 Mbps mobile broadband nationally, now covering over 40% of the population. Moldova is ranked third in the world in terms of internet speed, according to the Net Index which covers 152 countries. It is a country with a firm vision for the digital future.

Moldovan R&I strategy

Research and innovation (R&I) are engines of economic growth, helping to generate solutions for overcoming some of the toughest challenges facing society. They influence economic competitiveness and a country's ability to withstand the changes that humanity is going through.

R&I activities are critical in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in three key dimensions – economy, society and the environment – and the Republic of Moldova has committed fully to the 2030 Agenda to achieve these goals.

It was the first country in the Eastern Partnership to be formally 'associated' to the EU's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013), as well as Horizon 2020 (H2020, 2014-2020) which considerably expanded access to European research grants.

The Republic of Moldova is a landlocked state in eastern Europe, bordered to the west by Romania and to the north, east and south by Ukraine. It is one of the most densely populated European countries, with a population of just over 4 million, including the breakaway Transnistrian region. The country is divided into 32 districts and three municipalities.

Moldova is a parliamentary republic with a president as head of state and a prime minister as head of government. It is member of the United Nations (UN), European Council, and Partnership for Peace, OMC/WCO, OSCE, GUAM, CIS, OCEMN/OECBS and of other international organisations.

R&I in Moldova



The Parliament is the supreme representative body of the people of the Republic of Moldova and the only legislative authority of the state. The Parliament is elected for a term of four years, which may be extended in the event of war or catastrophe.

Ministry of Education, Culture and Research

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Research consults with parties interested in promoting the national research programme, sectoral strategies and associated action plans for their implementation. Proposed revisions to these programmes and actions also go through the Ministry. It approves the institutional budgets, examines related performance and scientific reports, and promotes bilateral and multilateral R&I programmes launched through cooperation agreements with international organisations and foundations. In addition, it monitors R&I policy and projects and presents an annual implementation report to the government. It attracts funds from external sources for the development of research and innovation, and elaborates minimum standards for conferring scientific titles and related activities.

In 2016, Moldova's research and innovation system was subjected to an evaluation by a group of international experts, within the H2020 Policy Support Facility, who proposed seven key political messages based on 24 detailed recommendations. These referred largely to proposals to strengthen the R&I system by addressing a set of structural weaknesses and amplifying existing strengths. Following the recommendations, the government decentralised R&I decision-making to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR) and established the National Agency for Research and Development (NARD), which implements policies and budgets according to sectoral strategies within the national action plan and R&I programming.

The national programme transposes the principles of 'smart specialisation', which identifies priorities for creating competitive advantage by developing on R&I strengths and linking them to business needs, emerging opportunities and market developments.

At the same time, the national programme corresponds to Moldova's Code of Science and Innovation (259/2004) and activities planned within the 'Roadmap for the integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European Research Area' (2019-2021). That roadmap sought to strengthen the country's R&I capacities, promote further integration within ERA, and the take-up of opportunities within the framework programmes (i.e. FP7, H2020).

Altogether, the R&I system in Moldova is represented by 61 state and private organisations, including 39 institutes and research centres, 15 higher education institutions, and seven other learning or research entities. These employ 2,707 scientific researchers, more than half of which are women (1,430).

To meet the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and recruiters Code of Conduct, MECR has implemented several measures including a Human Resources Development Strategy (2019-2023) and corresponding action plan.

R&D expenditure in Moldova in 2020 totalled 469.6m lei (€22.52m), the equivalent of 0.23% of the GDP, compared to 0.24 in 2019. Just over three-quarters of that was spent on applied research, 10.6% on fundamental research, and 14.2% on technological development.

Funding and recruitment opportunities

Research in Moldova is primarily financed on the basis of 'quality competition'. Funding comes from the state budget, foreign funds, companies and the NARD. The MECR is the principal R&D funding body in Moldova, consolidating different grants and types of funding and giving research more visibility within society.

As most research is performed in public universities, the majority of research jobs are also in these centres of learning. Doctoral studies are regarded as part of the student body and receive a monthly scholarship.

[Academy of Sciences of Moldova](#)



The Academy of Sciences of Moldova is the umbrella organisation for all researchers, scholars and intellectuals in the country. The Academy works according to the provisions of the Constitution, the Code on Science and Innovation, the Partnership Agreement with the government and other legislative and operational remits. There are 45 full members of the Academy, 28 corresponding members and 47 honorary members.

Within the framework of the Academy different institutions carry out fundamental and applied scientific research, innovation and technology transfer resulting in new scientific knowledge and applications, actions to capitalise on national patrimony and promote scientific and cultural values on a national and world level, and the high-level training of scientific personnel.

Research excellence in Moldova

According to the 2019 Ranking Web of Research Centres (RWRC) – a global comparison of visibility (total number of external links received by the web domain of the institution), online presence, transparency/openness and excellence – the Academy of Sciences of Moldova (ASM) climbed 218 positions on the previous year's ranking of 477.

Promotion and dissemination of scientific results

Despite the Covid-19 crisis, the scientific community has managed to carry on using various digital platforms. Scientific research has been widely broadcast on radio, TV and social networks, as well as through press releases and electronic and print media. The pandemic has helped to raise the profile science and innovation in Moldova. Events designed to 'popularise' science are streamed online by the Information Society Development Institute (ISDI), Privesc.eu, Rlive, etc. Thanks to the country's high internet penetration, this means scientific achievements are accessible to the general public, civil society as well as to businesses.

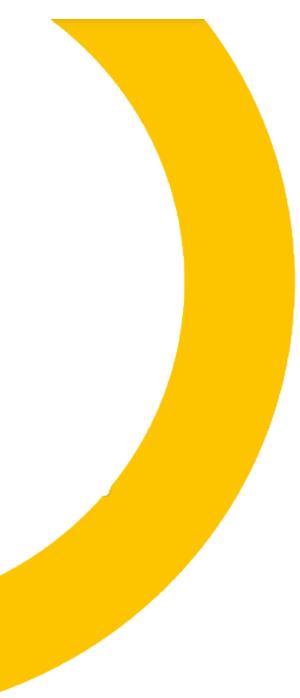
Moldovan research is well recognised nationally and internationally in terms of awards, prizes and other distinctions garnered in exhibitions, competitions and festivals. Among the most important awards are the National Award, given annually in various fields, including science. The Moldovan Academy of Sciences awards prizes for outstanding results in the field of life sciences, exact sciences and engineering, as well as in the economics, humanities, arts and social sciences. The ASM also awards an annual prize for young researchers, as well as prizes for the promotion of science. An annual Municipal Youth Award is also organised.

Moldovan research is well represented in scientific publications. In 2020, more than 7,000 published works were registered. These included articles in scientific journals, high-impact international journals, monographs, collections of articles, conference proceedings, etc.

Moldova is keen to further develop its international reputation and make better use of its scientific and human potential, as well as its modern infrastructure within the R&I ecosystem. According to the Code on Science and Innovation, collaboration with other countries based on bilateral and multilateral projects is the responsibility of the NARD but also rests partially with the MECR. The drive towards more internationalised science is also part of Moldova's Association Agreement with the EU's framework programmes.

EURAXESS Moldova

Moldova's Academy of Sciences plays an important role in the process of implementing its ERA roadmap and action plan in line with the national strategy. Since 2011, the Academy has acted as the liaison institution for the EURAXESS network. As the host institution it provides services and maintains the national portal (euraxess-eu.md) as a tool to promote researcher mobility all over Europe.



Through its efforts, the number of local contact points within universities, research institutions and SMEs has increased to 27. As elsewhere, the network offers personalised assistance on administrative, legal, accommodation, courses, integration and other issues. It promotes its activities and events via the web-page and social media posts.

One noteworthy achievement of the EURAXESS mobility programme at national level was to encourage Moldovan research institutions to adopt the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R). This tool helps employers and funders from the research field to put the principles of the Charter and Code into practice, thus defining their rights and obligations, and increasing the transparency, visibility and international prestige of beneficiary institutions.

Local contact points in Moldova regularly meet to discuss the best ways to provide services and help entities fully implement the Charter and Code of Conduct for recruiting researchers. Currently, seven research organisations in Moldova have earned the right to display the 'Excellence in Research' logo that goes with full implementation.

The scientific community collaborates with the European Commission's Joint Research Centre in developing the country's smart specialisation strategy. It also cooperates with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in developing innovation policies, the Francophone University Agency in promoting excellence in research and attracting young researchers, and the European Training Foundation (ETF) for training in smart specialisation, etc.

Useful links:

[National Agency for Research and Development](#)

[National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research](#)

Authors:

m.c. Svetlana Cojocaru, Vice-president ASM

Dr T. Braniste, Head Section academic management & external relations, ASM

L. Virtan, EURAXESS Moldova

www.euraxess-eu.md