10 YEARS
EASTERN PARTNERSHIP
Civil Society Forum

DEMOCRATIC LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: FOSTERING EUROPEAN VALUES WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN EaP COUNTRIES

2019

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List of Acronyms

ATHENA project – Fostering Sustainable and Autonomous Higher Education Systems in the Eastern Neighbouring Area (IV Tempus programme)
AFT – American Federation of Teachers
BFUG – Bologna Follow Up Group
CSF – Civil Society Forum
EAEU – Eurasian Economic Union
EaP – Eastern Partnership
EaP CSF – Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum
EHEA – The European Higher Education Area
EU – The European Union
EUA - The European University Association
GDP - Gross domestic product
ISCED - The International Standard Classification of Education
HE – Higher Education
HEI – Higher Education Institution
NP – National Platform of the EaP Civil Society Forum
OECD - The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
TI – Transparency International

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) is unique multi-layered regional civil society platform aimed at promoting European integration, facilitating reforms and democratic transformations in the six Eastern Partnership countries - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Serving as the civil society and people-to-people dimension of the Eastern Partnership, the EaP CSF strives to strengthen civil society in the region, boost pluralism in public discourse and policy making by promoting participatory democracy and fundamental freedoms. The EaP CSF is a non-partisan bona fide non-governmental organisation.

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The full version of this publication (with the country reports) is also available on the website of the EaP Civil Society Forum: https://eap-csf.eu/filling-out-the-blank-spots-and-pointing-to-poor-implementation-democratic-learning-environment/

Executive Summary

This policy paper was prepared within the framework of the EaP Civil Society Forum specifically for Tbilisi Eastern Partnership Conference: Promoting Common Values through Education and Culture (June 25-26, 2019). It provides a snapshot of the situation with promoting the fundamental European values in the higher education systems of the six EaP countries.

This publication is the result of collaborative work of experts from the six EaP CSF National Platforms with the financial, organisational, and information support of the Secretariat and the Steering Committee of the EaP Civil Society Forum (the List of Contributors is provided in the end of the paper).

This policy paper focuses on the capability of the higher education systems of the six EaP countries to serve the purpose of promoting the European values as an integral part of the EHEA. Due to the heterogeneous situation of the higher education environment in each of the EaP countries and limited time for analysis, the expert assessment method was chosen for this work. To carry out this analysis, a special team of country experts was established based on the recommendations of the EaP National Platforms and experience of previous work on the EHEA issues in the EaP countries' context. A special extensive questionnaire was prepared by the expert coordinators to provide a comparable framework for the country experts to provide and analyze qualitative information. The qualitative data is mainly based on the information about legislation, regulations, national policies, and the experts' assessment of specific aspects of the higher education reality. The experts also relied on the national and international statistics, and secondary analysis of sociological surveys. The main indicators presented in this paper are based on the EHEA, EUA and Transparency International (TI) criteria grouped and analysed within four main dimensions:

- *Academic Freedom;*
- *Institutional Autonomy;*
- *Corruption-Free Environment in Higher Education;*
- *Inclusiveness in Higher Education.*

Reports on each of the six EaP countries are presented in the Appendices (see full version).

The EaP countries are on the periphery of the pan-European efforts to monitor and evaluate achievements in higher education by degree and quality of the process of values implementation. The EaP region is excluded from the institutional autonomy study periodically conducted by the EUA. It often remains a blank spot in the EHEA reports on the issues related to the social and value dimensions of higher education. Incomplete and incomparable statistics does not contribute to drawing an objective picture of higher education reforms in the EaP countries. This is part of a more general issue: lack of transparency. This is not only the consequence of the non-public political process in some countries but is the result of lack of the relevant tools and mechanisms.

Preparing this policy paper, the expert team faced significant challenges related to insufficient transparency of information and lack of essential data regarding the state of affairs in some of the dimensions under analysis. In spite of this, the country experts collected the maximum information available for analysis based on which a general regional comparative analysis of the situation in all 6 EaP countries was carried out. Local characteristics and country trends are described in more detail in separate country reports which may be of interest to the reader specialising in the issues of a particular country. In view of the above, this study and recommendations are of even higher added value to fill in the gap with independent analysis of presence and practice of the European values in the higher education systems in the EaP region.

The expert team resulted its work in the following conclusions:

In spite of their differences, the higher education systems of the six EaP countries are similar due to insufficient development of a democratic educational environment required to promote and protect the European values. There are higher education systems which have advanced in implementing these values but there are also countries which need to do a lot in this area.

Academic Freedom

The most reliable instrument of academic freedom protection against politically motivated dismissals is a long-term or permanent faculty appointment. Although the situation in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine is different, permanent appointments protecting academic staff are very rare in any EaP country. The share of academic staff employed under a one-year appointment has been growing. The quality of practicing values of academic freedom produces the greatest difference among the EaP countries in terms of setting the conditions to develop critical thinking and civic engagement. In the Belarusian and Azerbaijani higher education, the level of implementation of these values remains very low in terms of the law as well as in terms of academic practice. Student civic engagement competences are present only at those universities which have real autonomy and which governing bodies have the decision-making powers in the significant aspects of the academic life.

Institutional Autonomy

A majority of the countries in the region have an average European level of institutional autonomy at the legislative level. However, the university management reforms have been implemented to a different extent from country to country. Armenia and Georgia have implemented them to a large extent; Moldova and Ukraine have achieved certain success in some aspects while Belarus and Azerbaijan are still quite far from the average European standard. The reforms affected institutional autonomy in different ways. The universities became more financially independent and sustainable, however, in terms of academic development, the EaP countries are unable to boast of achievements. Belarus is the only stable outsider concerning all types of autonomy: in spite of the commitment to reform its higher education system undertaken by the government of Belarus at the conditional admission to the EHEA in 2015, changes in institutional autonomy are virtually absent. All higher education systems envisage student participation in higher education self-governing bodies. The students' quota ranges from 10% to 30% in the academic councils.

However, the student civic engagement competences are developed only at those universities, which have functional autonomy and their self-governing bodies have the decision-making power. It is obvious that the level of institutional autonomy of Azerbaijani and Belarusian universities does not favour promotion of civic engagement values. Increasing the level of universities' institutional autonomy remains an urgent task.

Corruption-Free Environment in Higher Education

The issue of corruption in higher education remains far from being solved. At the same time, contrary to the popular belief, the level of corruption does not correlate with the level of the governmental funding of higher education. It is possible to minimise some forms of corruption by administrative means but the issue of public tolerance towards corruption in education remains an obstacle in most of the EaP countries. This is especially noticeable in terms of academic misconduct, which is present in all of our countries. Besides, administrative measures to fight corruption in higher education, as a rule, are associated with reducing significance and limitation of the fundamental academic values. In particular, this results in a low level of academic autonomy in all of the EaP countries.

Inclusiveness in Higher Education

The most urgent tasks for fostering the European values include the task to ensure equal access to high-quality and inclusive education, and equal opportunities for all students regardless of their gender, sexual identity, abilities and education needs, economic status, ethnicity, language, religion and citizenship status. This task, as well as inclusive potential of higher education, has not become an education policy priority for either the society or the academia yet. All higher education systems in the EaP countries are unable to achieve significant progress in providing the real gender balance in higher education. The issue of accessibility and inclusiveness of higher education for other social groups of applicants remains unresolved. Having implemented certain preferential instruments to provide greater accessibility to higher education for vulnerable and under-represented groups, absence of transparency in higher education does not allow us to evaluate the efficiency of the efforts to overcome discrimination. This is only part of a more general issue: absence, with rare exceptions, of long-term quantitative policy objectives for access/participation of students from under-represented groups.

The following recommendations are made:

To the EaP Governments and ministries responsible for the development of higher education in the EaP countries:

- to ensure implementation of the Recommendation of the Council of Europe (Rec/CM(2012)7) concerning the responsibility of the public authorities for academic freedom and institutional autonomy, and Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel adopted by the UNESCO on 11 November 1997;
- to boost the academic freedom by legally restricting the use of short-term contracts with university teachers;
- to enhance institutional autonomy of the universities by providing legislative expansion of academic autonomy and by limiting the representation of governments and ministries

in the governing bodies of the universities meanwhile allowing for expanding them by the representatives of civil society, think-tanks, trade unions and business sector;
- to foster the implementation of the reforms of the higher education area by establishing advisory bodies composed of representatives of civil society, media, research institutions, think tanks and business and consequently strengthen the collaboration and cooperation among those actors;
- to tackle the critical situation with financial autonomy – to remove unnecessary restrictions, to supporting the universities in developing their fundraising capacities and by providing incentives for other sources of income while promoting transparent and participative budgetary procedures;
- to provide targeted financing within the university sector to develop administrative skills, financial management system and internal human resources management including the clear career paths for university staff
- to improve the transparency of higher education on the implementation of the EHEA values - academic freedom, institutional autonomy, equal access to high-quality and inclusive education by developing the system of collection of relevant statistical indicators for harmonisation with the EHEA classification and allow for its monitoring by different actors. To provide for a comprehensive reflection of the implementation of these values in the national higher education systems.
- to increase student participation in the decision-making process relevant to institutional autonomy;
- to develop and adopt national indicative plans on inclusive education and corruption-free environment that would be developed in collaborative effort while including students, civil society and other relevant actors;
- to define academic honesty and develop control mechanisms for all levels of education by investing in anti-plagiarism and anti-corruption programmes;
- to tackle the brain-drain by investing resources and efforts to maintain contact with professionals and students abroad and engaging them in academic activities in their home countries so that they can benefit from the knowledge and skills that they were able to acquire abroad.

To the European Union:
- to encourage the EaP governments to adopt the necessary legislation supporting the academic freedom and independence and to support implementation if such legislation is already in place;
- to support universities in the region by developing their fundraising, administrative and financial management capacities;
- to encourage the development of national indicative plans on inclusive education and corruption-free environment that would be developed in collaborative effort while including students, civil society and other relevant actors;
- to support anti-plagiarism programs developed within the EaP countries;
- to continue supporting student but also teachers' mobility and encourage exchanges not only with the EU member states but also within the EaP region in order to foster the links within the region;
- to facilitate better inclusion of the EaP universities into the international research networks and international research mobility; to improve the funding environment and

practice so that the EaP universities play substantive role in the international research projects targeting the region;
- to support the efforts of the EaP CSF and its National Platforms to involve stakeholders in the development of a coordinated regional strategy for the implementation of European values in and through the education systems, ensuring transparency and regular monitoring of this process with the participation of non-state higher education stakeholders, primarily students.

To the European Higher Education Area and the European University Association:
- to pay special attention to the EaP region and to promote a comprehensive inclusion of these countries into the research and monitoring of the implementation of the EHEA values, in particular in the next study of "University Autonomy" that would allow for comparison, assessment and improve transparency;
- to grant EaP CSF an observer status within the BFUG.

To the civil society organisations, networks, coalitions at country level, EaP initiative and European partners:
- in line with the EaP CSF policy paper "Advancing Eastern Partnership: 23 Civil Society Ideas for the Policy beyond 2020"1 guided by the task to contribute the emergence of the EaP as a region and building links among the EaP countries, EaP CSF should lead in developing a coordinated strategy for promoting the European values in and through the higher education systems of the EaP countries;
- the civil society and EaP CSF in particular should advocate for an efficient multistakeholder dialogue with the EaP national governments leading to the development of the national indicative plans on inclusive education and corruption-free environment;
- to promote the integration of the EaP countries in monitoring the EHEA's academic values and principles implementation process via the relevant European networks and structures as well as to support the EaP CSF's nomination to the BFUG as an observer.

[1] https://eap-csf.eu/10-years-of-eap-policy-advancing-eastern-partnership/

Introduction

In the report "Reaching out to EU Citizens: A New Opportunity" Luc Van den Brande, Special Adviser to the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, said: "In a rapidly changing world, political inspiration and human-centred practices are needed to shape and strengthen the values that are associated with 'Europe'... To respond to the challenges of globalization and increasing complexity, the role of education is therefore fundamental. Indeed, learning to live together with our differences and diversity is becoming the central dimension of active citizenship"[2].

The Council Recommendation on Common Values, Inclusive Education, and the European Dimension of Teaching indicates the importance of promoting the common European values such as democracy, freedom, tolerance, non-discrimination, equality, and solidarity in and through education. The Eastern Partnership is based on the common commitment to the fundamental values including democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and gender equality. Relying on the fact that higher education in the EaP countries can foster these values, we should also make possible that the education system promotes the European values within to become a channel of communicating them to the society.

There are several areas where values issue is of utter importance: a) developing a democratic educational environment, which allows cultivating real freedom of thought and critical thinking; b) developing institutional autonomy as an environment to form civic engagement and social responsibility competences; c) ensuring the conditions of intolerance to all forms of discrimination, corruption and misconduct for promoting inclusiveness values.

The expert team consisting of Gubad Ibadoghlu (Azerbaijan), Thea Galdava (Georgia), Victor Gotisan (Moldova), Sergiy Kurbatov (Ukraine), and Misha Tadevosyan (Armenia) was coordinated by Vladimir Dounaev and Ulad Vialichka (Belarus).

[2] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/reaching-out-to-citizens-report_en.pdf , p.11

Fostering Values in Higher Education

The higher education systems of six EaP countries have in common not only their Soviet past but also that they are part of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The EaP countries joined the Bologna process with a gap of ten years between Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan that joined in 2005 and Belarus, that joined in 2015. The time gap is not the only reason to explain the heterogeneity of the six countries' educational environments.
There are different political, socio-economic and cultural characteristics (geopolitical orientation (EU or EAEU), level of political institutions' development, degree of respect to democracy and human rights, type of economic model, socio-cultural and religious patterns etc.) that influence higher education system and dominating values in each of the EaP countries.
It makes sense to analyze the issue of values in higher education in EaP countries via four main dimensions: Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy, Corruption-Free Environment and Inclusiveness in Higher Education.

1. Academic Freedom

Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec (2012)7 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States[3] on the responsibility of public authorities for academic freedom and institutional autonomy proclaimed that academic freedom and institutional autonomy are essential values of higher education, and they serve the common good of democratic societies. Academic freedom should guarantee the right of both institutions and individuals to be protected against undue outside interference by the public authorities or others. It is a prerequisite for both the academic staff and students and should be applied throughout Europe. The university staff and/or students should be free to teach, learn, and research without the fear of disciplinary action, dismissal or any other form of retribution.
The 2018 EHEA report[4] mentions that the degree of academic freedom is hard to study. The very concept of academic freedom is enshrined in the laws of four EaP countries – Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Azerbaijan and Belarus do not have such provision in its legislation but it does not mean total absence of academic freedom in the life of the universities. However, lacking legislation means serious limitations of the students and academic staff's rights and lack of protection of thereof.

Moreover, the national legislations of Azerbaijan and Belarus contain provisions limiting academic freedom. In particular, the Code of Education of the Republic of Belarus includes terms justifying ideological censorship and repressions against dissenting opinions (clauses 2.1, 3, 5.2 of Article 18) and compulsory two-year job placement (Articles 83-88). The Civil Code and the

[3] https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/50697ed62.pdf
[4] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/european-higher-education-area-2018-bologna-process-implementation-report_en

Law on Non-Governmental Organisations restrict the freedom of association for students and academic staff by: a) the procedure for registering a non-governmental organisation is of permissive and not of declarative nature; the procedure is complicated, and provides grounds for arbitrary refusal to register any organisation; b) unregistered non-governmental associations' activities are prohibited and their continued activities lead to administrative penalty. Until recently, such activity could result in up to two-year imprisonment (article 193.1 of the Criminal Code); c) the law substantially limits non-governmental associations' abilities to seek funding from domestic and foreign sources; d) non-governmental associations' rights for peaceful assembly as well as freedom of expression are limited to a significant extent.

> The Belarusian State University's (BSU) updated internal regulations for students now include new provisions in Chapter 3 Student's Responsibilities. Clause 5.20 binds students 'not to have comments about the BSU and on behalf of the BSU published in information sources (media, internet, social media) which can harm the BSU's image and business reputation". The same applies to PhD students (clause 6.9). In case of disseminating the information which "harms the BSU's image and business reputation", disciplinary sanction is envisaged. A similar "ban to criticise" is also adopted by other Belarusian universities (https://news.tut.by/society/633762.html).

Similarly, the legislation in Azerbaijan does no guarantee academic freedom because the authorities always linked academic freedom to political activity. In both countries, political parties and socio-political movements cannot establish branches within education institutions. In reality, the offices of the ruling party (New Azerbaijan Party) in Azerbaijan and Bielaja Rus, a pro-government organisation seeking to become a political party in Belarus, operate at higher education institutions.

Arbitrary dismissal of academic staff and students on political grounds is common practice in Azerbaijan and Belarus.

> In May 2017 the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) raised their concerns over the crackdown against teachers in Azerbaijan due to their political affiliation. Educators in Azerbaijan along with many activists are at the centre of this crackdown. Several teachers are reportedly suspended for attending an opposition rally.
> Loretta Johnson, the secretary and treasurer of the AFT, wrote a letter to Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev on behalf of the 1.6 million members of the AFT. In the letter, she wrote to express her shock at learning about the Azerbaijani educators who were threatened with dismissal – and then fired – for their political party affiliation. (http://www.turannews.info/ext/news/2017/5/free/Social/en/62187.htm).

The most reliable instrument of academic freedom protection against politically motivated dismissals is a long-term or permanent faculty appointment. Although the situation in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine is different, permanent appointments protecting academic staff are very rare in any EaP country. The share of academic staff working on one-year appointment has been growing. Our experts point to the lack of available statistics. It is difficult to develop critical thinking competences in a higher education system where students cannot criticize their own universities and where the academic staff is afraid to be vocal in order not to be fired.

2. Institutional Autonomy

Despite the fact that institutional autonomy is considered an important prerequisite for the successful completion by European institutions of higher education of their mission to create an advanced knowledge-based society, self-governing university communities are still the environments where students learn civic engagement competences and skills. In recent years, the European higher education institutions have achieved significant progress in strengthening their autonomy further. At the same time, the understanding of institutional autonomy has been substantively revised. Adapting to the current challenges, the European higher education institutions have become increasingly open to labour market demands and their governing bodies started involving a growing number of social partners into their decision-making. Universities have to be more flexible, open and efficient economically. This new approach poses a challenge to traditional models of academic democracy because it limits the authority of academic collective bodies. However, in some countries along with positive changes, higher education institutions' management systems have demonstrated a tendency to weaken student participation in the decision-making process and, in turn, this affects the universities' abilities to develop civic engagement competences and skills among the students. This happens in all EaP countries. Students are treated not so much as partners, but clients with limited rights.

The current understanding of institutional autonomy is stipulated in the 2007 European University Association (EUA) Lisbon Declaration.[5] Since 2007, the EUA has monitored and analyzed institutional autonomy in the countries where they have member universities. The EaP countries did not participate in any of these monitorings, but within the framework of the ATHENA project the higher education systems of Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine have been assessed in accordance with the scorecard of the EUA methodology in 2013-2014.[6] In Belarus, the Belarusian EaP CSF National Platform (by initiative of the Independent Bologna Committee) has been conducted similar analysis regularly since 2013.[7] The methodology was based on singling out the main four dimensions of institutional autonomy of universities and expert assessment of each indicator defining the dimension. The institutional autonomy indicators are grouped in the following dimensions in the 2017 version of the EUA's methodology:

[5] https://eua.eu/resources/publications/619:lisbon-declaration.html
[6] https://athena-tempus.eu/
[7] http://bolognaby.org/index.php/en/131-research-and-analytics-en/768-white-book-2018-belarusian-higher-education-european-perspectives

Organisational autonomy

- Selection procedure of the executive head (rector)
- Selection criteria
- Dismissal of the executive head
- Term of office of the executive head
- Inclusion of external members in university governing body
- Selection of external members in university governing body
- Capacity to decide on academic structures
- Capacity to create legal entities

Financial autonomy

- Allocation of public funding
- Ability to keep surplus
- Ability to borrow money
- Ability to own buildings
- Ability to charge tuition fees from national students
- Ability to charge tuition fees from foreign students

Staffing autonomy

- Capacity to decide on recruitment procedures of senior academic and senior administrative staff
- Capacity to decide on salaries of senior academic and senior administrative staff
- Capacity to decide on dismissals of senior academic and senior administrative staff
- Capacity to decide on promotions of senior academic and senior administrative staff

Academic autonomy

- Capacity to decide on overall student numbers
- Capacity to select students
- Capacity to introduce and terminate programmes
- Capacity to choose the language of instruction
- Capacity to select quality assurance mechanisms and providers
- Capacity to design content of degree programmes

It is difficult to reproduce the EUA's procedures of measuring the indicators in full. A simplified monitoring procedure was applied for this research. Instead of a numerical system of scoring and weighting, we restrict ourselves to an expert assessment of each indicator on an interval scale.

- Expert assessment of the autonomy level in each dimension is visualized on the interval scale, which corresponds to the EUA methodology and allows distributing the higher education systems by four clusters for comparison:
- a high group of countries scoring between 100% and 81%
- a medium high group scoring between 80% and 61%
- a medium low group scoring between 60% and 41%
- a low group scoring between 40% and 0%.

Scores of 100% for all indicators mean that the university can decide on all aspects encompassed by this autonomy area without governmental interference.
Scores of 0% mean a high degree of involvement of the government in all aspects encompassed by this autonomy area.

Although the EUA methodology does not envisage the integrated indicator of Institutional Autonomy, we have attempted to develop it based on the average rating of four dimensions for better clarity (see Fig.5).

Fig. 1. Organisational autonomy

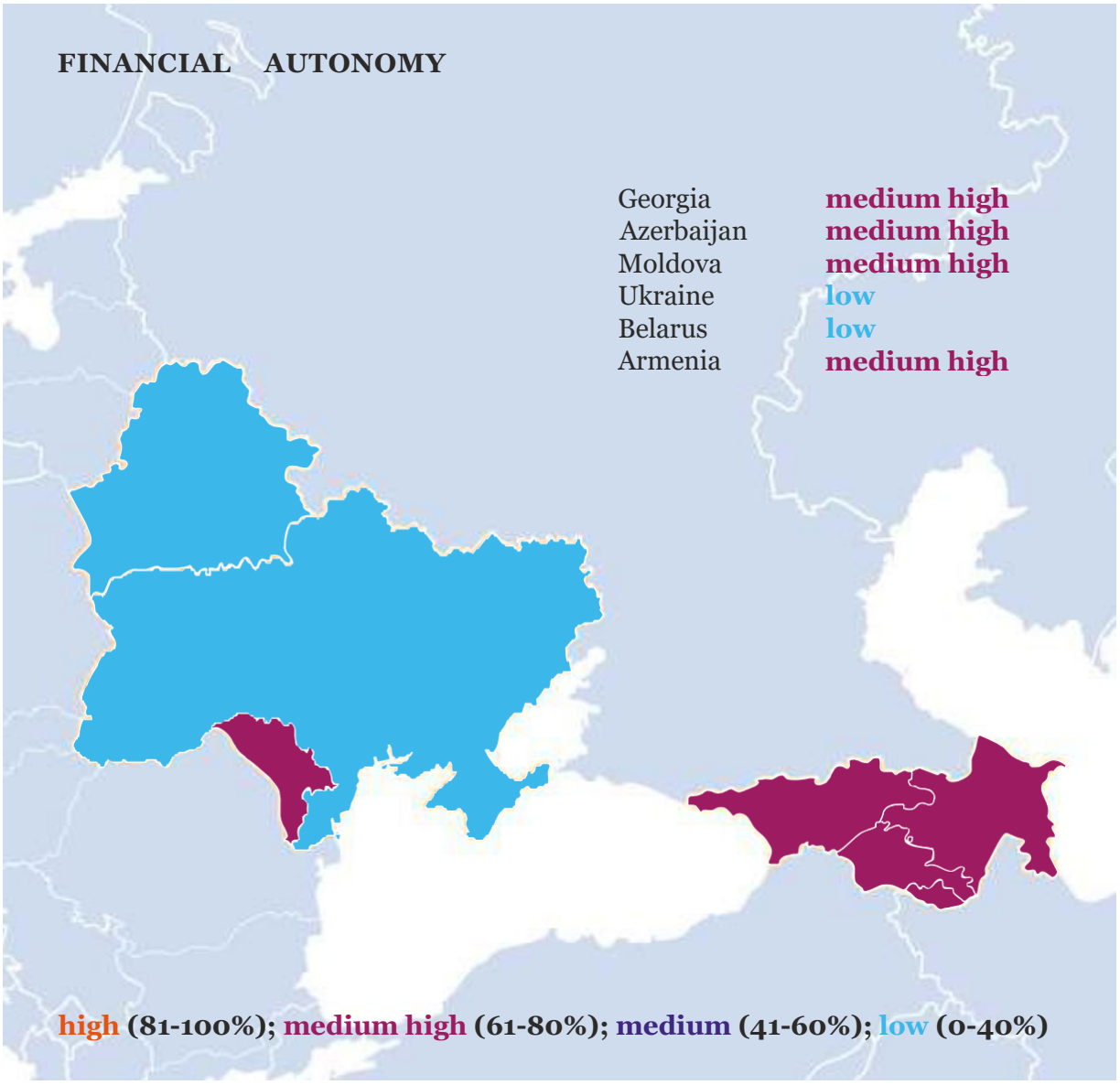

Fig. 2. Financial autonomy

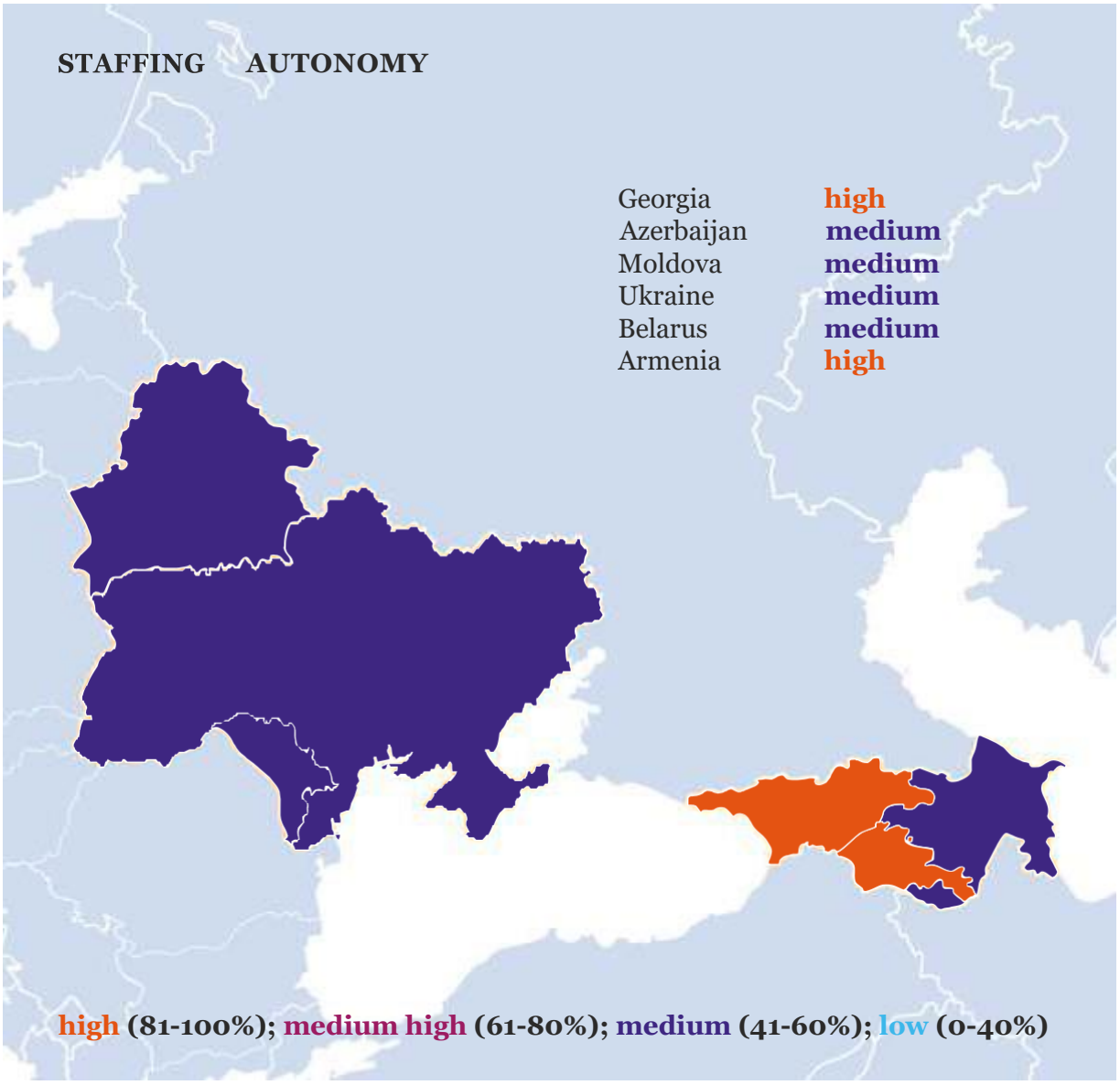

Fig. 3. Staffing Autonomy

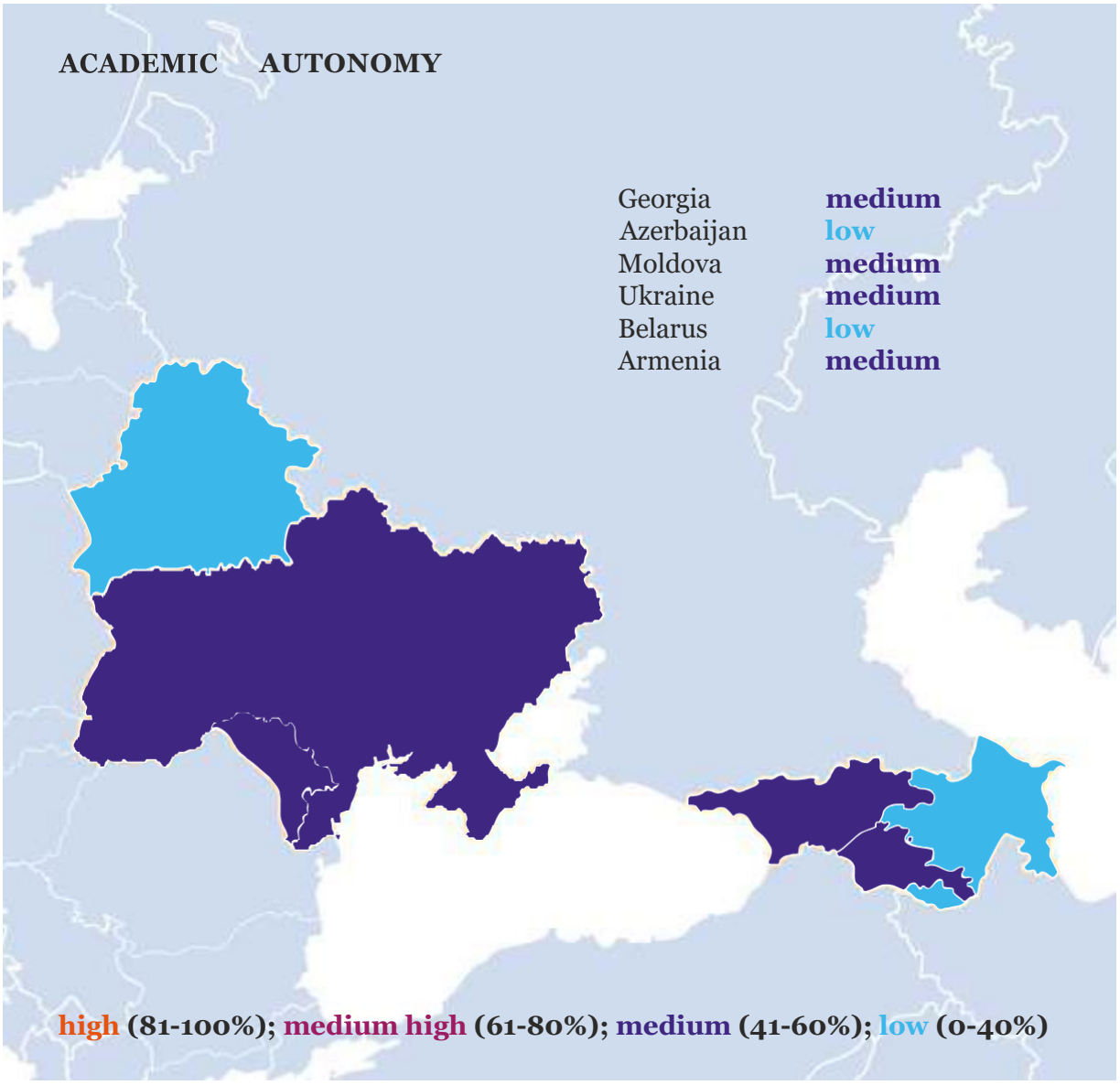

Fig. 4. Academic Autonomy

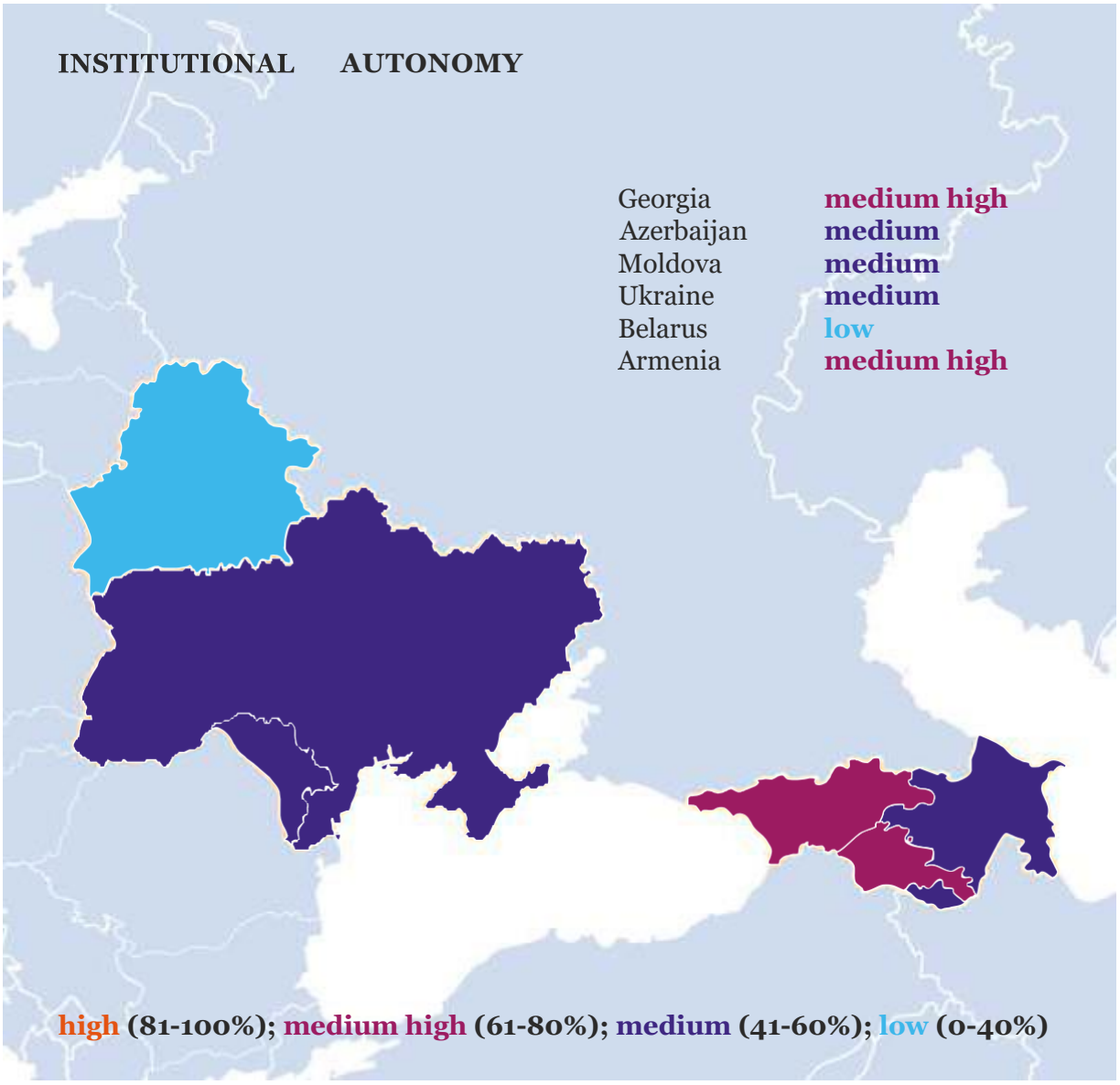

Fig. 5. Institutional autonomy

A majority of the EaP countries have an average European level of institutional autonomy at the legislative level, despite unfinished reforms. Armenia and Georgia implemented them to larger extent, Moldova and Ukraine have achieved a certain success, while Belarus and Azerbaijan are still quite far from average European standard. The reforms affected institutional autonomy in various ways. The universities became more financially independent and sustainable, but in terms of the academic development the EaP countries are unable to boast of achievements. Belarus is the only stable outsider in all dimensions of autonomy: in spite of the commitment to reform its higher education system undertaken by the government of Belarus on conditional admission to EHEA in 2015, changes in institutional autonomy, as well as in the fundamental academic values implementation, are virtually absent.

All higher education systems envisage student participation in higher education self-governing bodies. The students' quota ranges from 10% to 30% in the academic councils. However, the student civic engagement competences are developed only at those universities, which have a functional autonomy and their self-governing bodies have the decision-making power. It is obvious that level of institutional autonomy of Azerbaijani and Belarusian universities does not favour promoting civic engagement values. Increasing the level of universities' institutional autonomy remains an urgent task. Without this, the students' participation in the academic community life will remain limited and decrease assimilating the European values.

3. Corruption-Free Environment in Higher Education

The situation with corruption in the six EaP countries shows that none of them is well off. The Corruption Perception Index 2018 puts EaP countries in the places between 41 and 152.[8]
The education system is among the areas affected by corruption. Based on Transparency International's (TI) data[9] when this organisation still measured the level of corruption in education, the EaP countries had the following standing:

Table 1. Corruption Perception Index 2018

Place	Country	CPI Score
44.	Georgia	58
73.	Belarus	44
109.	Armenia	35
120.	Moldova	33
126.	Ukraine	32
155.	Azerbaijan	25

8 https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/weak_checks_and_balances_threaten_anti_corruption_efforts_across_eastern_eu

9 https://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/global_corruption_report_education

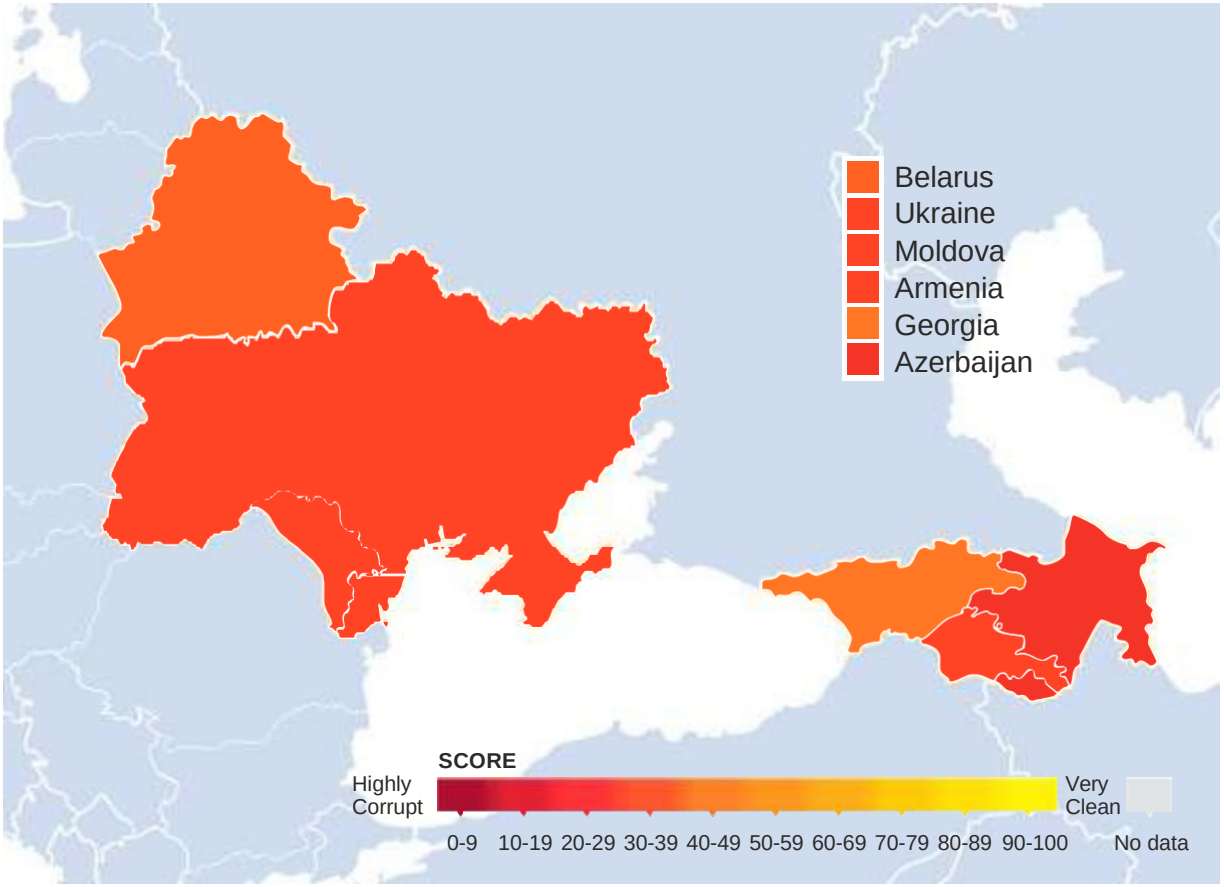

Fig. 6. Corruption Perception Index 2018

The level of corruption in higher education reflects the general situation with corruption in education in a country. However, corruption in this field not only means "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain" but "the lack of academic integrity" as well.[10]

In the EaP countries, nobody measured financial damage from corruption in higher education but its non-financial consequences appear in devaluation of social investments into the citizens' future. Corruption in higher education has many faces and can appear in the following forms:

- Bribery
- Collusion
- Conflict of interest
- Favouritism
- Fraud
- Lobbying
- Revolving doors

The education system is among the areas affected by corruption. Based on Transparency

[10] https://www.alexandria.unisg.ch/254858/2/Denisova-Schmidt2018_Chapter_CorruptionTheLackOfAcademicInt.pdf

International's (TI) data when this organisation still measured the level of corruption in education, the EaP countries had the following standing:

Table 2. To what extent do you perceive the education system in this country to be affected by corruption? (1: not at all corrupt, 5: extremely corrupt) Average score.

#	Country	Score
1	Armenia	4.2
2	Azerbaijan	3.3
3	Belarus	3.2
4	Georgia	2.2
5	Moldova	3.7
6	Ukraine	4.0

Source: Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer 2010

It is rather difficult to present clear and justified information about the level of corruption in higher education in EaP countries. Open statistics on corruption cases in higher education is often absent or very limited. The criminal statistics reports include corruption cases related to accepting/giving bribes and abuse of power while the cases of academic misconduct, nepotism, cronyism, and discrimination are not registered.

Experts, government officials and citizens believe that the level of corruption is higher than stated in the official statistics reports. The opinion polls in the EaP countries show that mentioned higher education stakeholders are convinced that higher education is plagued by corruption. Georgia can be some exception: the level of petty corruption has dropped significantly since the reforms started in 2004, including reforms in the university admission system and student-tied state funding to universities. At the same time, it is not possible to find either public criminal statistics or higher education stakeholders' surveys results in open access. There are no court decisions confirming existence of high-profile cases in this field (country report Georgia is in the Annexes).

In other EaP countries, the situation looks steadily problematic (for particular sources on each of the countries, please, see appropriate chapter of the country reports in the Annexes). In 2009, over 67% of the Ukrainian students and 79% of their parents regarded corruption as prevalent at the Ukrainian HEIs. Comparing the polls results from 2001 and 2017, we see the unchanging 33% of the Ukrainian students who have had personal experience with corruption.

In Armenia, only 13.5% of students do not know any corruption cases in their respective universities. 72% of students had experience with corruption during term exams (66.5%) and during final exams (57.5%). 16% of MA students and 11.5% of PhD students encountered corruption. Out of this pool, 62% of students bribed their examiners.

In Moldova, 95% of students' parents believe that there is corruption in the education system. Students view corruption as the most serious issue in education: 22.6% of the respondents mention this along other issues such as lack of qualified teaching staff (11.3%), students' indifference (7.6%), and financial issues in the given field (~4%). Besides, students' parents point to three main issue in the education system: too complicated programme/curriculum – 41%; corruption – 37%; and lack of well-trained staff – 32%.11 corruption – 37%; and lack of well-trained staff – 32%.12

[11] http://moldnova.eu/ro/educatia-din-republica-moldova-este-pe-branci-elevii-nu-pot-citi-diplomele-se-cumpara-iar-profesorii-sunt-corupti-3442.html/

[12] http://moldnova.eu/ro/educatia-din-republica-moldova-este-pe-branci-elevii-nu-pot-citi-diplomele-se-cumpara-

In Belarus, the level of corruption in higher education does not look as grave as in Moldova, Ukraine and Armenia and, according to the poll results, 11% to 14% of students were aware of corruption cases in their respective universities and 7 to 8% of students became victims of corruption. However, the tolerance level towards bribes at examinations puts the Belarusian students on equal footing with the students of the other EaP countries. Ten years' analysis data concerning students' attitude towards bribes at examinations shows that the share of students prepared to give bribes at examinations amounts to 56.1% in full-time programmes and to 64.5% in part-time programmes. Only 21% of students fundamentally oppose this practice.13 The corruption-tolerant culture is also a distinctive feature of higher education in other countries of the region.

In Ukraine, over 90% of students admit various forms of plagiarism:

49% – rewriting the information sources in own words without reference

37% – downloading essays and other works from various internet sources

31% – using (partly or in general) texts by other authors without reference

28% – using texts of other authors while changing the order of words without reference

26% – using texts with false reference

18% – translating texts in foreign languages into Ukrainian and using them without reference

12% – joining group work without participation in producing text.

According to the OECD review of Integrity in Education:

"34% of students and 24% of educators listed the buying finalized papers from companies, who specialized in this market among the methods used by students who do not complete their written assignments independently (IED, 2015)".14

In Belarus the following situation takes place: 44% of students pass examinations and pass-fail examinations without cheating. A majority of students use various types of cheat sheets. 1/3 of students pledges that they did not plagiarise when preparing written assignments.15

74% of students downloaded free research papers from the internet from time to time

63% of students paraphrased texts of others without reference

61% of students copied texts of others without reference

30% of students purchased research papers, term papers, graduation theses,
and other written works

17% of students repeatedly did so.

In Armenia, 2/3 of 125 students of five Armenian Universities participated in the 2013 survey admitted regular copying of about 1/3 of their written papers from internet sources or elsewhere without reference. 23% of the respondents claimed that they had never plagiarised.[16]

Unfortunately, there is no data available on academic misconduct in Georgia, Moldova, and Azerbaijan.

At the same time, the available data of sociological research shows that, in many cases, students are prepared to justify their academic misconduct by the education system faults and, as a result, lack of motivation to follow academic behavioural standards.

iar-profesorii-sunt-corupti-3442.html/

[13] http://elib.bsu.by/bitstream/123456789/123835/1/112-121.pdf

[14] https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/oecd-reviews-of-integrity-in-education-ukraine_9789264270664-en

[15] http://bolognaby.org/index.php/issledovanija-analitika/452-rezultaty-oprosa-studentov-i-vypusknikov-kachestvo-obrazovaniya-i-uchastie-v-upravlenii-vuzami-2

[16] http://www.osf.am/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Integrity-report_final_en_12.11.2015.pdf

In Armenia, a half of the respondents claimed academic misconduct for condition-related reasons but among motivation-related reasons lack of skills to organise educational process are mostly stated. As a result, 2/3 of the students are prepared to justify their academic misconduct by the education system faults.[17]
The similar situation is observed in Ukraine[18] and Belarus[19].

> A majority of the Belarusian higher education institutions' students tend to justify their violation of academic ethics standards by external circumstances, 54% of the students refer to lack of assignments practical value, 48% to lack of applicability of and disinterest in such assignments. A widespread motive includes faults of the teaching and learning process organisation: overburden with assignments (30%) and lack of training in academic writing and absence of academic culture (29%). A popular type of neutralising academic dishonesty is the overall atmosphere of plagiarism tolerance by the students and academic staff (22%), the academic staff laissez-faire attitude towards plagiarism in students' assignments (17%), low professional level of academic staff (16%). Consequently, the students shift responsibility for academic standards violations to those who should control them – a widespread type of rationalising the students' behaviour in numerous higher education systems.

According to Transparency International, the most important reason for corruption in higher education is insufficient state funding allocated to higher education. This leads to education commercialisation, intensified pressure on faculty, and bureaucratisation of the management system. All of these should affect both the quality of education and motivation of the educational process participants.[20]
However, we do not observe dependence of the level of corruption in higher education on the level of funding. The contrast between a very modest share of the GDP allocated to higher education in Armenia and relatively high share of GDP allocated to this purpose in Ukraine does not entail any noticeable differences in the corruption level in the higher education of these countries. (Ukraine - 1.8%, Armenia -0.31%)[21]
The countries with a greater difference in the government expenditure per student demonstrate a similar alarming level of bribery, academic misconduct and corruption-tolerant culture. Vice versa, equally low figures are seen in the countries with varying levels of corruption in education.
Thus, it is not justified to link the success in fighting corruption to the increase in the governmental funding of higher education.

[17] http://www.osf.am/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Integrity-report_final_en_12.11.2015.pdf
[18] https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/oecd-reviews-of-integrity-in-education-ukraine_9789264270664-en#page4
[19] http://bolognaby.org/index.php/issledovanija-analitika/452-rezultaty-oprosa-studentov-i-vypusknikov-kachestvo-obrazovaniya-i-uchastie-v-upravlenii-vuzami-2
[20] https://www.transparency.org/gcr_education/content/higher
[21] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/european-higher-education-area-2018-bologna-process-implementation-report_en

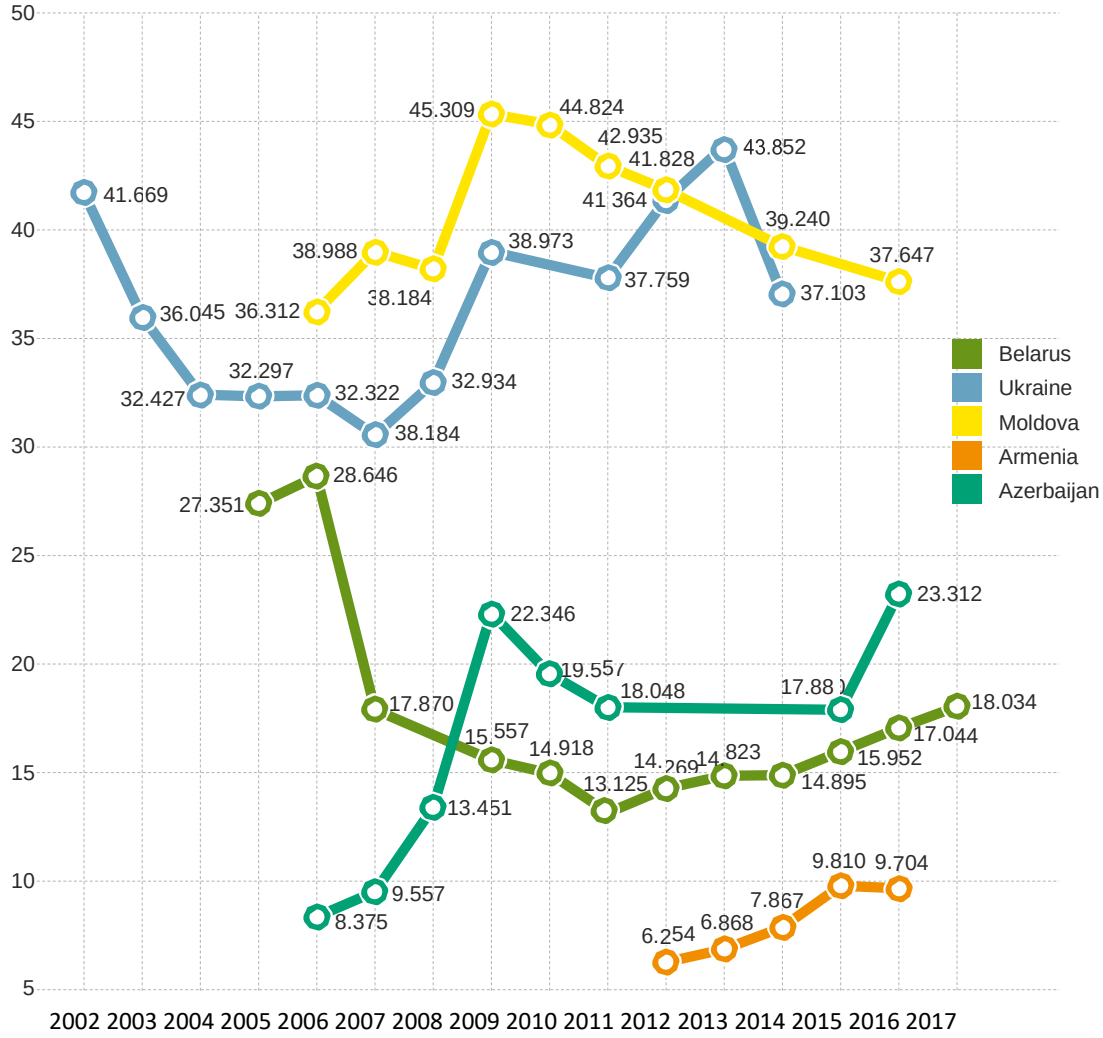

Fig.7. Government expenditure per student: Tertiary:%of GDP per Capita

Dominating administrative and legal methods of fighting corruption, do not guarantee success. When choosing between intrinsic motivation and extrinsic incentives in the EaP countries' education policy, preference is always given to the latter. This can be explained by the nature of governance systems, which usually underestimate the value of social trust, personality and personal motivation. In some cases, it seems to have the positive effect. In the countries where university admission examinations were replaced with standardized testing with a Baccalaureate (full secondary education) this reduces immediate corruption risks for applicants who apply to the university under general terms. On the other hand, in some cases, it shifted these risks towards the creative testing at admission to a number of programmes, to admission on preferential basis and to the secondary schools' final examinations. Besides, improvement of the situation was achieved at the cost of sensitive restriction of institutional autonomy: waving the universities' rights to set the admission criteria and procedures.

Measures of civil liability, criminal and administrative prosecution against corrupt individuals in the conditions of the corruption-tolerant culture dominance do not demonstrate expected efficiency. Only a few cases are brought to court. University administrations prefer to steer clear

of those faculty who compromised themselves quietly and without publicity. Representatives of the judicial admit that criminal statistics of corruption cases reflects not so much education as periodical outbreaks of law enforcement activities. General weakness of institutions, mistrust of the judicial system, and legal nihilism of the population do not contribute to the process of eliminating corruption in the higher education system.

The attempt to fight academic misconduct through the legal ban on advertising services for assignment/diploma/theses writing does not have any effect. Service providers easily bypass this, responding to the increased use of plagiarism detection programmes by offering rewriting services.

The EaP countries' education systems increasingly use administrative mechanisms to fight academic misconduct. They envisage tightening control over term papers, diploma theses and master theses preparation, measures of disciplinary liability for plagiarism and introducing into the internal university's regulations the requirements for students to independently perform their work. Faculty codes of conduct have been developed and implemented. They emphasize measures to fight bribery and prevent conflict of interests. Although, presence of effective legal mechanisms contributes to strengthening academic integrity, control measures and disciplinary sanctions do not play the main role. It makes sense to invest more in raising quality and relevance of the university programmes, when students recognize their usefulness.

Anti-corruption awareness campaigns also delivered mixed results. During the last decade, Belarusian universities have delivered an optional course Corruption and Its Public Danger. According to the survey conducted, 21.2% of the respondents radically changed their attitude towards those faculties who took bribes. 57.6% described it as “interesting and useful”, and only 2.4% answered that this course was “uninteresting and useless” (Survey results_2011).

On the other hand, in Ukraine, two recent experiments have shown that anti-corruption campaigns can actually have the opposite effect: instead of reducing corruption, such campaigns can promote it. Students are able to learn new cheating techniques, and their assumptions about the widespread nature of corruption can be confirmed.[22] This experience should be learnt and taken into account for planning and implementing more systemic and long-term oriented campaigns for corruption-free higher education.

In such self-regulating communities as universities, intrinsic motivation often plays a more important role than any instruments of administrative incentives and control. Cultivating the fundamental academic vales contributes to university corporations acquiring a higher degree of social responsibility and separating institutional goals and objectives. This also means that civil society should be given a greater role to play in strengthening academic integrity and developing zero tolerance towards corruption in higher education via independent monitoring, shadow reporting and other means of watchdogging. This goal is not achievable without ensuring comprehensive transparency of universities and education authorities. First, it is necessary to establish permanent public monitoring of higher education developments and effective dialogue channels with both academic communities and higher education stakeholders, and government institutions to improve education environment. By now, among EaP countries only Ukraine has similar monitoring, while even there monitoring activities are quite sporadic, not regular. Monitoring data is fragmental, not comparable, its validity is not high.

[22] https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-77407-7_5

Inclusiveness in Higher Education

The most urgent tasks for fostering the European values include the task to ensure equal access to high-quality and inclusive education, and equal opportunities for all, regardless of students' gender, sexual identity, abilities and education needs, economic status, ethnicity, language, religion and citizenship status. (The Council Recommendation on Common Values, Inclusive Education, and the European Dimension of Teaching)[23]

Declining accessibility of higher education is typical for all of the EaP countries except Georgia. Certainly, among the main reason for this are a decline in the student population due to the demographic factors, as well as economic and institutional reasons. In a situation of general deterioration of access to higher education, the fate of socially disadvantaged and underrepresented groups is dramatically alarming.

Table 3. Enrolment rates in tertiary education for the 18-34 years old (% of the total population aged 18-34), 2008/09. 2011/12 and 2014/15

	2008/09	2011/12	2014/15
Armenia	11.2	11.1	9.4
Georgia	7.2	7.7	13.5
Belarus		15.3	14.9
Moldova	12.0	10.0	9.5
Azerbaijan	5.5	5.3	5.1
Ukraine	18.5	16.1	12.7

In Azerbaijan, low public expenditure on education creates barriers with access to education. As public spending on education declines, families have to cover certain expenses related to education – a burden that is greatest for low income and poor families. According to a World Bank report, the richest 20% of the population consistently accounts for nearly 40% of private spending on education while the poorest 20% accounts for only approximately 10% of the total private spending on education.

At the legislative level, the state secures creation of equal opportunities for all citizens and does not tolerate any discrimination regardless of the individual gender, race, language, religion, political views, nationality, social status, background and state of health. It is relevant to all of the EaP countries. However, the reality does not look so optimistic.

Gender balance

One of the key tasks of the education policy in the EHEA member states is the gender balance in access to education. As appears from the EHEA 2018 Implementation Report[24], many education

[23] https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/council-recommendation-on-common-values-inclusive-education-and-the-european-dimension-of-teaching_en

[24] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/european-higher-education-area-2018-bologna-process-implementation-report_en

systems were designed to increase the share of male student population and to mitigate gender imbalance in some programmes. The percentage of women among those enrolled at higher education institutions in the majority of the countries decreased in the ten years between 2004/05 and 2014/2015 alongside relatively stable average EHEA indicators. But men are still less involved in higher education.

In the EaP countries, gender balance at different levels of education varies in each country and remains unsustainable due to lack of education policy's continuity and short term approach.

Table 4. Percentage of women in tertiary education by level of education

	AZ	GE	UA	BY(16/17)	MD	AM
ISCED6	47,2	50,6	51,7	55,4	55,9	48,9
ISCED7	59,9	55,9	56,8	41,4	64,5	66,8
ISCED8	54,6	51,6	59,2	52,0	54,7	53,0

Gender imbalances are especially noticeable in relation to various fields of education.

Table 5. Share of female student population by field of education (ISCED 6), %

Profile	BY	UA	AM	AZ	MD	GE	EHEA
Pedagogy (Education)	55.4	68.8	60.0	78.4	85.0		79.5
Healthcare	70.0	70.4	60.0	45.7			77.5
Humanities	77.7	82.1	52.0	51.6			65.6*
Art and Design	71.8	74.8	68.0	61.9	80.0		
Science	54.3	58.1		61.8		41.1	54.4
Communication.Law. Economics.Management	69.6	61.6		31.6	85.0		55.9**
Engineering and Technologies	24.6	22.5	11.0	24.74	20.0	28.1	25.3

Note: * Arts and Humanities according to EHEA classification; ** Business, Administration and Law according to EHEA classification

Similar to other European countries, some groups of professions have been established as male or female. The percentage of women in Pedagogy (Education), Art, Humanities, Healthcare, Engineering and Technologies programmes and other profiles at the EaP higher education institutions correlates with the median values in the EHEA.

The attempts to improve women's access to engineering study programmes which correspond to the pan-European trend were unsuccessful. In Georgia, in 2011/12 to 2016/17, the share of women in Engineering and Technologies education programmes decreased from 35.8% to 28.1%.[25] In Belarus, the share of women studying this profile decreased from 27.7% to 24.6% in 2011/12 to 2016/17.[26]

Virtually no progress can be observed in addressing gender imbalance in other fields of education. Gender imbalance concerns not only students. Despite a significantly high feminisation level of higher education systems, obvious phenomena of vertical segregation can be observed in the field. Gender asymmetry in the academic and administrative personnel structure of higher education institutions shows a decrease in the percentage of women along the position hierarchy.

[25] https://www.geostat.ge/media/21016/W%26M-in-ENG_2017.pdf

[26] Установы вышэйшай адукацыі Рэспублікі Беларусь по стану на пачатак 2017/2018 навучальнага года. Мінск: Установа «Галоўны інфармацыйна-аналітычны цэнтр Міністэрства адукацыі Рэспублікі Беларусь», 2017, p.6

The general share of women in university staff in Moldova is 54.7%, in Georgia 53%, in Belarus 55%, in Armenia 53%, in Azerbaijan 51.8%. The percentage of women among lecturers and assistant professors is higher than men while the percentage of women among professors is much lower. The share of women among the senior administrative staff decreases along the position hierarchy as well. The proportion of women among university rectors ranges from 23% in Moldova to 9% in Belarus.

Mature students

Equal access to higher education for students of different backgrounds is far from being a reality. One of indicators of education inclusiveness is the percentage of "non-traditional" learners who did not have the possibility to enter higher education right after leaving school. The proportion of mature students in the six EaP countries is not always reflected in comparable statistics. The higher education accessibility for 30 years old and older is growing very slowly. E.g., in Ukraine, the representation of such people among students has grown from 5.6% in 2012 to 6.3% in 2017. Nevertheless, this is significantly lower than the European (EHEA) median (15.7% in 2015).
In Moldova, the situation is not any better. The percentage of mature students grew from 6.5% in 2012 to 7.7% in 2015.
In Belarus, the age structure of the student population remains quite stable since 2010, except for the cohort older than 26 years. The representation of the cohort increased from 13.2% in 2010/11 to 17.9% in 2016/17 although the number of people in this student category decreased. However, due to the differences in statistics indicators structure (interval of 26 years and more), the Belarusian statistics is hard to compare to the EHEA statistics.
The situation with access to higher education for mature students is much worse in the South Caucasus. According to the EHEA, the increase in the number of such students was 0.5% from 1% in 2012 to 1.5% in 2015. During the same period, the percentage of mature students in Azerbaijan grew from 1.1 % to 1.4%.

Measures to support access of under-represented groups to higher education The The European policy to improve inclusiveness of higher education[27] includes the following measure supporting disadvantaged groups of population at admission to higher education institutions:

1. Monitoring the composition of the student body
2. Longer-term quantitative policy objectives for access/participation of students from under-represented groups
3. Under-represented student groups' access support, including preferential treatment of certain group of students
4. Financial support targeted at under-represented groups of students

The EaP countries do not have a well-developed system to monitor the social dimension of higher education. In the best-case scenario, they trace gender, age, disability, the orphan status, and the level of gained education. The process of present expert work shows that national experts are often unable to obtain information related to these indicators: the issue of socio-economic inequality, religious and national characteristics, and migration status of the prospective university students remains beyond the attention of education statistics.

[27] https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education_en

In such conditions, it is not easy to implement a policy aimed at improving access to higher education of various social groups as a method to develop inclusive societies in EaP countries. The implementation process of such a policy requires measurable indicators of accessibility for these groups of people and long-term planning of how to bring the percentage of students from under-represented groups in higher education closer to their percentage among secondary school graduates. This task was only found in the 2016-2025 Armenian State Programme of Education Development[28]: "to ensure an equal participation opportunity of all vulnerable groups, including persons with special educational needs, at all levels of education by 2025".

Although the indicative plans of EaP countries are not available, certain measures to improve the social structure of the student population are in place in all higher education systems with a varied degree of efficiency.

> The statistical analysis of the Georgian Unified National Examination data shows that, in the test-based admission system, rural applicants, males, language minorities, and public school graduates are significantly less likely to gain admission to higher education institutions than urban applicants, females, Georgian speakers, and private school graduates. With other variables equal, the admission rate of the urban school graduates to higher education institutions is 22% higher than of the rural school graduates.

One of the most common methods to improve access of under-represented groups to higher education is their preferential treatment or positive discrimination. In some education systems, the quota allocation method is used. It reserves a certain share of places in the first year of study to the representatives of such groups (national minorities, orphans, disabled, displaced persons etc.). Moldova has a 15% quota for students from disadvantaged families, orphans, and people with disabilities. Ukraine has quotas for admission to institutions funded from public sources and in accordance with the state order for some categories of applicants from socially disadvantaged groups, including orphans, applicants from the regions, displaced persons, and others.

Another popular method is preferential treatment with more lenient requirements to the prospective university students from under-represented groups. This method is used in Belarus but to a limited extent. At present, orphans, children left without custody of their parents as well as retired service personnel, the officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other law enforcement agencies are entitled to preferential treatment in case of enrolment to less demanded education programmes, if they fall into the allocated quota of 30%. At the same time, the government rejects the possibility of quota allocation for people with disabilities.

> The rejection of targeted preferential measures is fraught with significant difficulties with access to higher education for the respective groups of applicants. In Belarus, the rural schools' graduates had preferential treatment until 2014. On 20 March 2014, the new regulation was approved under the pressure from universities' rectors. These regulation set equal admission requirements for all groups of applicants. As a result, the percentage of applications from rural schools' graduates to higher education institutions dwindled by 40% in 2017/18 as compared to 2010/11 (from 12.1% to 7.3%). At the same time, they amount to 20% of the secondary school graduates (those who received general secondary education).

[28] https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/armenia_development_strategy_for_2014-2025.pdf

Georgia has another preferential mechanism for people from disadvantaged groups. It has a governmental programme for education with the modest level of governmental funding of higher education and allocated funding to support vulnerable and under-represented groups of population. Between 2013 and 2017, the governmental funding to support students from vulnerable groups grew three times but was only equal to 4.5 million lari. The governmental funding allocated to the grant programme for high achievers increased as well and reached 4.1 million lari. Obviously, this is too low to provide for access to higher education and a high level of inclusion of all vulnerable students although the government promises to significantly increase the respective funding.

Lack of systematic monitoring and indicative plans does not allow in-depth assessment of the national policies' efficiency and their measures to support inclusiveness of higher education.
If in Ukraine the percentage of students with special needs increased from 0.95% in 2013/204 to 1% in 2015/16, in Belarus, we see the totally opposite situation. The percentage of people from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups among students decreased. If 1,684 persons with disabilities or 0.44% of student population studied at ISCED level 6 programmes in 2010/11, in 2017/18 it was only 915 people or 0.34% (persons with disabilities amounted to 0.94% of the secondary school students in 2016/17). The situation with orphans and children left without parents' custody did not improve either. If 2,113 students of this group amounting to 0.55% of the student population studied at ISCED level 6 in 2010/11, in 2017/18 it was 1,136 people or 0.5% of the student population.[29]
The broadening participation agenda is not limited to measures to support disadvantaged groups of persons at admission to higher education. Lack of indicative plans and long-term quantitative policy objectives for access/participation of students from under-represented groups to/in higher education is not only evidence of weakness of development policies of higher education inclusiveness in the EaP countries but it is also an important value marker. It seems that the task to ensure equal access to high-quality and inclusive education and equal opportunities for everybody has not become an education policy priority as well as the inclusive potential of higher education is not yet fully wanted either by the society or by the academia.

Conclusions

The EaP countries are on the periphery of the pan-European efforts to monitor and evaluate achievements in higher education by degree and quality of the process of values implementation. The EaP region is excluded from the institutional autonomy study periodically conducted by the EUA. It often remains a blank spot in the EHEA reports on the issues related to the social and value dimensions of higher education. Incomplete and incomparable statistics does not contribute to drawing an objective picture of higher education reforms in the EaP countries. This is part of

[29] Установы вышэйшай адукацыі Рэспублікі Беларусь по стану на пачатак 2013/2014 навучальнага года. Мінск: Установа «Галоўны інфармацыйна-аналітычны цэнтр Міністэрства адукацыі Рэспублікі Беларусь», 2013, p.183

a more general issue: lack of transparency. This is not only the consequence of the non-public political process in some countries but is the result of lack of the relevant tools and mechanisms. Preparing this policy paper, the expert team faced significant challenges related to insufficient transparency of information and lack of essential data regarding the state of affairs in some of the dimensions under analysis. In spite of this, the country experts collected the maximum information available for analysis based on which a general regional comparative analysis of the situation in all 6 EaP countries was carried out. Local characteristics and country trends are described in more detail in separate country reports, which may be of interest to the reader specialising in the issues of a particular country. In view of the above, this study and recommendations are of even higher added value to fill in the gap with independent analysis of presence and practice of the European values in the higher education systems in the EaP region.

The expert team resulted its work in the following conclusions:

In spite of their differences, the higher education systems of the six EaP countries are similar due to insufficient development of a democratic educational environment required to promote and protect the European values. There are higher education systems, which have advanced in implementing these values, but there are also countries, which need to do a lot in this area.

Academic Freedom

The most reliable instrument of academic freedom protection against politically motivated dismissals is a long-term or permanent faculty appointment. Although the situation in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine is different, permanent appointments protecting academic staff are very rare in any EaP country. The share of academic staff employed under a one-year appointment has been growing. The quality of practicing values of academic freedom produces the greatest difference among the EaP countries in terms of setting the conditions to develop critical thinking and civic engagement. In the Belarusian and Azerbaijani higher education, the level of implementation of these values remains very low in terms of the law as well as in terms of academic practice. Student civic engagement competences are present only at those universities which have real autonomy and which governing bodies have the decision-making powers in the significant aspects of the academic life.

Institutional Autonomy

A majority of the countries in the region have an average European level of institutional autonomy at the legislative level. However, the university management reforms have been implemented to a different extent from country to country. Armenia and Georgia have implemented them to a large extent; Moldova and Ukraine have achieved certain success in some aspects while Belarus and Azerbaijan are still quite far from the average European standard. The reforms affected institutional autonomy in different ways. The universities became more financially independent and sustainable, however, in terms of academic development, the EaP countries are unable to boast of achievements. Belarus is the only stable outsider concerning all types of autonomy: in spite of the commitment to reform its higher education system undertaken by the government of Belarus at the conditional admission to the EHEA in 2015, changes in institutional autonomy are virtually absent. All higher education systems envisage student participation in higher education self-governing bodies. The students' quota ranges from 10% to 30% in the academic councils.

However, the student civic engagement competences are developed only at those universities, which have functional autonomy and their self-governing bodies have the decision-making power. It is obvious that the level of institutional autonomy of Azerbaijani and Belarusian universities does not favour promotion of civic engagement values. Increasing the level of universities' institutional autonomy remains an urgent task.

Corruption-Free Environment in Higher Education

The issue of corruption in higher education remains far from being solved. At the same time, contrary to the popular belief, the level of corruption does not correlate with the level of the governmental funding of higher education. It is possible to minimise some forms of corruption by administrative means but the issue of public tolerance towards corruption in education remains an obstacle in most of the EaP countries. This is especially noticeable in terms of academic misconduct, which is present in all of our countries. Besides, administrative measures to fight corruption in higher education, as a rule, are associated with reducing significance and limitation of the fundamental academic values. In particular, this results in a low level of academic autonomy in all of the EaP countries.

Inclusiveness in Higher Education

The most urgent tasks for fostering the European values include the task to ensure equal access to high-quality and inclusive education, and equal opportunities for all students regardless of their gender, sexual identity, abilities and education needs, economic status, ethnicity, language, religion and citizenship status. This task, as well as inclusive potential of higher education, has not become an education policy priority for either the society or the academia yet. All higher education systems in the EaP countries are unable to achieve significant progress in providing the real gender balance in higher education. The issue of accessibility and inclusiveness of higher education for other social groups of applicants remains unresolved. Having implemented certain preferential instruments to provide greater accessibility to higher education for vulnerable and under-represented groups, absence of transparency in higher education does not allow us to evaluate the efficiency of the efforts to overcome discrimination. This is only part of a more general issue: absence, with rare exceptions, of long-term quantitative policy objectives for access/participation of students from under-represented groups.

The following recommendations are made:

To the EaP Governments and ministries responsible for the development of higher education in the EaP countries:

- to ensure implementation of the Recommendation of the Council of Europe (Rec/CM(2012)7) concerning the responsibility of the public authorities for academic freedom and institutional autonomy, and Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel adopted by the UNESCO on 11 November 1997;
- to boost the academic freedom by legally restricting the use of short-term contracts with university teachers;
- to enhance institutional autonomy of the universities by providing legislative expansion of academic autonomy and by limiting the representation of governments and ministries

in the governing bodies of the universities meanwhile allowing for expanding them by the representatives of civil society, think-tanks, trade unions and business sector;
- to foster the implementation of the reforms of the higher education area by establishing advisory bodies composed of representatives of civil society, media, research institutions, think tanks and business and consequently strengthen the collaboration and cooperation among those actors;
- to tackle the critical situation with financial autonomy – to remove unnecessary restrictions, to supporting the universities in developing their fundraising capacities and by providing incentives for other sources of income while promoting transparent and participative budgetary procedures;
- to provide targeted financing within the university sector to develop administrative skills, financial management system and internal human resources management including the clear career paths for university staff
- to improve the transparency of higher education on the implementation of the EHEA values - academic freedom, institutional autonomy, equal access to high-quality and inclusive education by developing the system of collection of relevant statistical indicators for harmonisation with the EHEA classification and allow for its monitoring by different actors. To provide for a comprehensive reflection of the implementation of these values in the national higher education systems.
- to increase student participation in the decision-making process relevant to institutional autonomy;
- to develop and adopt national indicative plans on inclusive education and corruption-free environment that would be developed in collaborative effort while including students, civil society and other relevant actors;
- to define academic honesty and develop control mechanisms for all levels of education by investing in anti-plagiarism and anti-corruption programmes;
- to tackle the brain-drain by investing resources and efforts to maintain contact with professionals and students abroad and engaging them in academic activities in their home countries so that they can benefit from the knowledge and skills that they were able to acquire abroad.

To the European Union:
- to encourage the EaP governments to adopt the necessary legislation supporting the academic freedom and independence and to support implementation if such legislation is already in place;
- to support universities in the region by developing their fundraising, administrative and financial management capacities;
- to encourage the development of national indicative plans on inclusive education and corruption-free environment that would be developed in collaborative effort while including students, civil society and other relevant actors;
- to support anti-plagiarism programs developed within the EaP countries;
- to continue supporting student but also teachers' mobility and encourage exchanges not only with the EU member states but also within the EaP region in order to foster the links within the region;
- to facilitate better inclusion of the EaP universities into the international research networks and international research mobility; to improve the funding environment and

practice so that the EaP universities play substantive role in the international research projects targeting the region;
- to support the efforts of the EaP CSF and its National Platforms to involve stakeholders in the development of a coordinated regional strategy for the implementation of European values in and through the education systems, ensuring transparency and regular monitoring of this process with the participation of non-state higher education stakeholders, primarily students.

To the European Higher Education Area and the European University Association:
- to pay special attention to the EaP region and to promote a comprehensive inclusion of these countries into the research and monitoring of the implementation of the EHEA values, in particular in the next study of "University Autonomy" that would allow for comparison, assessment and improve transparency;
- to grant EaP CSF an observer status within the BFUG.

To the civil society organisations, networks, coalitions at country level, EaP initiative and European partners:
- in line with the EaP CSF policy paper "Advancing Eastern Partnership: 23 Civil Society Ideas for the Policy beyond 2020"[30] guided by the task to contribute the emergence of the EaP as a region and building links among the EaP countries, EaP CSF should lead in developing a coordinated strategy for promoting the European values in and through the higher education systems of the EaP countries;
- the civil society and EaP CSF in particular should advocate for an efficient multistakeholder dialogue with the EaP national governments leading to the development of the national indicative plans on inclusive education and corruption-free environment;
- to promote the integration of the EaP countries in monitoring the EHEA's academic values and principles implementation process via the relevant European networks and structures as well as to support the EaP CSF's nomination to the BFUG as an observer.

[30] https://eap-csf.eu/10-years-of-eap-policy-advancing-eastern-partnership/

10 YEARS
EASTERN PARTNERSHIP
Civil Society Forum

List of Contributors

Dr.Vladimir Dounaev has been working in the field of Belarusian higher education since 1974. In 1992 he has become co-founder and the vice-rector of the European Humanities University. After the closure of EHU by Belarusian authorities in 2004 he was one of the organizers of the re-establishment of EHU in Lithuania as a full-fledged university in exile and from 2006 to 2008 the first vice-rector of the university. From 2011 is co-founder and the chair of the Belarusian Independent Bologna Committee and the chair of the Ad Hoc Commission of Belarusian National EaP CSF Platform.

Victor Gotisan starting with 2016 is the country expert for the Eastern Partnership Index (EaP Index), researching education, media and cultural issues of the Republic of Moldova. From 2016 he is the author of the Moldova's `Nations in Transit` report by Freedom House. He provides consultancy on media issues for Baltic Centre for Media Excellence (Riga, Latvia), Open Society European Policy Institute (Brussels, Belgium), Deutsche Welle Academy (Bonn, Germany), Soros Foundation Moldova (Chisinau, Moldova) and Independent Journalism Center from Moldova (Chisinau, Moldova). Mr. Gotisan graduated with a BA in philosophy (2006) and earned his MA studies in anthropology (2007) at the Moldova State University (Republic of Moldova); and history (2013) at the University of Warsaw (Poland).

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Ulad Vialichka, Director General of the International Consortium EUROBELARUS has over 25 years' experience in the sector of non-governmental organizations, adult, youth and civic education. Expert in regional policy cooperation of civil society within the Eastern Partnership initiative, in 2009-2011 and 2015-2017 elected to the Steering Committee of the EaP Civil Society Forum. Ulad Vialichka is also member of Independent Bologna Committee, practicing consultant, trainer, expert in the field of organizational development and management, project and program monitoring and evaluation in the non-profit sector.