

Accelerating Innovation (AI) Through a Leadership Education Project Between Democratic and Authoritarian Policies: The Case of MHELM – Moldova Higher Education Leadership and Management Development

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Abstract

This presentation analyses good practices for accelerating innovation in higher education in post-Soviet countries by upskilling leaders and managers in Moldova. The country with ca. 3 million inhabitants lies at the crossroads between Russia and the European Union and is since 2022 a candidate for becoming an EU member. Moldovan Universities were granted financial and academic autonomy in 2013. The EU-funded project MHELM – Moldova Higher Education Leadership and Management Development was carried out between 2019 and 2023 to accelerate the development of leadership competencies and skills urgently needed by higher education leaders and managers to cope with the newly gained autonomy.

Leadership is a political process (Mitra 2020, p. 34). Moldovan university leaders needed to consolidate their vision for higher education in alignment with EU principles, values, and competencies while distancing themselves from any possible reminiscences of the Soviet legacy. MHELM offered them the framework and tools for accelerated leadership development. Almost 300 leaders profited from the training offered. The programme received the award “Quality Crystal” for high quality in education.

The presentation discusses important methods applied for accelerating innovation in higher education leadership with MHELM. They might be a source of inspiration for other endeavours, similar in their objectives or context.

Keywords: leadership, Erasmus project, higher education, Moldova