

THE MODERNIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION: EMPLOYMENT AND WORKING CONDITIONS IN ACADEMIA

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Choosing a career in academia and then rising through the ranks requires considerable effort, dedication and time. Thus, this paper discusses selected aspects of employment and working conditions in academia, looking, in particular, at job security of academics, the conditions of employment in academia in the European countries in comparison with Republic of Moldova regulations. Therefore, the research question is: Whether the academic profession offers sufficient benefits that would compensate such a personal commitment (investment)? The concept of terms and conditions of employment refers to the contractual employment arrangements between employer and employee. When discussing contractual arrangements, a distinction must be made between permanent contracts and fixed-term (or temporary) contracts. The first type of contract is generally associated with a high degree of job security, while the second type - with less stable and less secure employment conditions. Starting from the above distinction, this article first looks at the extent to which the academic profession benefits from secure contractual arrangements. The second part enlarges the first perspective by looking at the employment status of academics, namely whether they benefit from civil servant status or whether they have an employee status. The third part looks at whether employment conditions in academia are changing over time, and, if so, in which direction. The study was conducted on a sample of 36 countries. The data is mainly based on information gathered by the Eurydice Network in March and April 2016. The Eurydice data collection was based on an in-depth questionnaire prepared jointly by Erasmus+ Education and Youth Policy Analysis – a unit of the Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), and the National Units of the Network. The research methods used in this paper are: data collection, data processing, comparison, and descriptive analysis. The results of this study are very important when they call for better working conditions including transparent and fair recruitment procedures of academics, especially in the Republic of Moldova. While in almost all European countries the higher education sector offers both fixed-term and indefinite job opportunities, in some countries all academics are employed on fixed-term contracts (Republic of Moldova, Latvia and Slovakia). Secondly, contractual stability is largely determined by the career stage, with junior academics commonly facing more precarious employment conditions compared to their senior counterparts. More, the type of employment contract of academics as well as the ratio of permanent and temporary contracts are a focus of external quality assurance in some higher education systems.

Keywords: academic staff, employment aspects, higher education, job security, working conditions.