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ТВОРЧЕСТВО И ИННОВАЦИИ В ОБЛАСТИ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ И СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ НАУК

STRENGTHENING INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND INCLUSION IN MOLDOVAN  
UNIVERSITIES

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### Introduction and Background

The rapid increase in the number of refugees in the Republic of Moldova since 2022 has introduced new challenges for universities that must ensure equitable access, social cohesion and academic inclusion. Previous national studies highlight gaps in awareness, limited social interaction between local and displaced youth, and the absence of structured mechanisms supporting integration [1]. This study aims to assess students' attitudes toward refugees, analyse institutional policies on inclusion, and pilot intercultural educational activities that promote dialogue in Comrat and Cahul State Universities.

### Methodology

A mixed-method approach was applied, combining an online survey of 210 students, focus-group discussions with refugee and local youth, and document analysis of university policies related to inclusion and student support [2]. Additionally, two thematic dialogue cafés were organised to test interactive educational formats and observe changes in students' perceptions.

### Results

Survey findings indicate that although most students hold positive or neutral attitudes, only a minority report meaningful interaction with refugee peers. Key barriers include language differences, insufficient information about support services, and low visibility of institutional inclusion practices. Participation in thematic cafés improved understanding of legal and ethical aspects of migration and increased students' readiness for intercultural communication. Policy analysis revealed the need for clearer procedures to support refugee students and systematic incorporation of intercultural components into academic life.

### Conclusions and Implications

The study demonstrates that research-based interventions and structured dialogue activities can significantly enhance intercultural competence and strengthen social cohesion in higher education. The outcomes provide evidence-based recommendations for improving university policies and serve as a scalable model for other institutions working with displaced youth. Future applications may extend the model to community centres and national educational strategies.

**Keywords:** *dialogue, higher education, inclusion, intercultural competence, refugees, social cohesion*

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