

## **PARTICIPATION OF DIASPORA REPRESENTATIVES IN CONTEXT OF PROFESSIONALIZATION LESSONS FOR JOURNALISTS: CHARACTERISTICS AND TRENDS**

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The article refers to the development of the concept of professionalization lessons, with a focus on the contribution that the involvement of diaspora representatives can have in this kind of events and other activities organized for students. For the most part, the article refers to graduates of the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences, of Moldova State University, involved in some newsrooms abroad and also experts in the field. These activities have already become a tradition at the faculty and could contribute to building bridges, communication platforms, for the exchange of good practices, for expertise and skills development. In the last 10 years, the number of these activities has been constantly increasing. In this way, the experiences of the invited people are valued in the country of origin, with the aim of knowledge transfer, having a diverse format: professionalization lessons, workshops, book launches, trainings, etc.

**Keywords:** *professionalization lessons, diaspora representatives, scientific diaspora, trainings, students, communication, Faculty of Journalism, Moldova State University.*

### **PARTICIPAREA REPREZENTANȚILOR DIASPOREI ÎN CONTEXTUL LECȚIILOR DE PROFESIONALIZARE PENTRU JURNALIȘTI: CARACTERISTICI ȘI TENDINȚE**

Articolul se referă la dezvoltarea conceptului de lecție de profesionalizare, cu accent pe contribuția pe care o poate avea implicarea reprezentanților diasporei în cadrul lecțiilor de profesionalizare și altor activități organizate pentru studenți. În mare parte, în cadrul articolului sunt vizați absolvenți ai Facultății de Jurnalism și Științe ale Comunicării de la Universitatea de Stat din Moldova, implicați în cadrul unor redacții din străinătate. Aceste activități ar putea contribui la construirea unor punți de legătură, a unei platforme de comunicare, pentru schimb de bune practici, expertiză și dezvoltarea competențelor. Astfel de evenimente au devenit deja o tradiție la facultate, iar în ultimii 10 ani numărul a fost în continuă creștere. Astfel, este pusă în valoare experiența persoanelor invitate, în țara lor de origine, cu scopul transferului de cunoștințe în cadrul unui format diversificat: lecții de profesionalizare, ateliere de discuții, lansări de carte, traininguri etc.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *lecții de profesionalizare, reprezentanții diasporei, ateliere, studenți, comunicare, Facultatea de Jurnalism, Universitatea de Stat din Moldova.*

#### **Introduction**

The professionalization lessons for students have already become a tradition at the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences, at Moldova State University. The protagonists of these lessons are national and international experts, journalists, representatives from the labour market and the issues addressed complete the framework of the courses included in the study plans; such kind of events have greater flexibility, aiming in particular at some pressing issues in the field. For example, at the beginning of the war in Ukraine launched by the Russian Federation on February 24, 2022, at the faculty was organized a professionalization lesson – in March 2022, with the journalists Viorica Tătaru and Andrei Captarenco, who were in Ukraine from the first war days. The topic of the discussions was *Media in the Wartime*; the discussions also referred to the informational war, the enormous pressures on the informational environment of the Republic of Moldova, ethical problems, sources of information, etc. The students of the Faculty of Journalism had memorable discussions with those two Moldovan journalists, in the context in which the country was in full hybrid war, with avalanches of disinformation and propaganda that penetrated our informational space.

Two years later, in February 2024, the Moldovan journalists Viorica Tătaru and Andrei Captarenco returned to the faculty for a new professionalization lesson, with another generation of students of the Faculty of Journalism.

The war on the border with the Republic of Moldova has further increased the social and economic problems that the country is facing; one of which is the increased migration of the population, especially young people. This exodus, which continues for more than two decades, has led to the formation of numerous communities of Moldovan citizens in different countries of the world, their number has long exceeded one million people: specialists in various fields, employees of multinationals, researchers, young people who went to study abroad, doctors and nurses, teachers, journalists, etc. For the most part, labor migration increases the consequences of brain drain phenomenon, of wasting the potential of Moldovan migrant workers.

### Context

The present study refers to the involvement of diaspora representatives, mostly graduates of the Faculty of Journalism, in the professionalization lessons for students, in order to develop a communication platform for the exchange of good practices, expertise and skills development. Starting from 2015-2017, this practice takes place at the faculty with a certain periodicity and highlights the experience of those invited to participate in the professionalization lessons for students with the aim of knowledge transfer. These events have a diversified format: professionalization lessons, workshops, book launches, trainings, collective interviews, etc. The objectives of the paper aim to highlight such good practices (which tend towards a win-win finality), ways of developing the concept of professionalization lessons, especially by involving representatives of the scientific diaspora, active in the media abroad, highlighting risk factors, etc. In the period 2017-2023, more than 10 of such events were organized at the Faculty of Journalism, with guests and student groups, but the number of Moldovan citizens settled abroad who visited the faculty was much higher. Such events could lead to the development of a communication platform between future journalists and Moldovan citizens settled abroad, having direct and facilitated access to sources of information regarding the realities of their countries of migration, in addition to the expertise and knowledge transfer they can benefit.

### Discussions and trends

The term professionalization is directly related to two other concepts – profession and professional culture. The Romanian Language Dictionary ([dexonline.ro](http://dexonline.ro)) emphasizes „the action of professionalizing and its result”. The Encyclopaedia Britannica ([britannica.com](http://britannica.com)) refers to professionalism and the correlation with other terms - „Professionalism, the standards, practices, or motivations associated with a profession”. Another source notes that professionalization refers to: „(1) education, training, and other activities that transform a worker into a professional and (2) social processes in which an occupation becomes a profession” [1].

Researchers Rubio A. and Serrat N. from the University of Barcelona emphasize “the need for professional development or the acquisition of work experiences during training”. According to them, among the main characteristics of professionalization activities are their connection “with professional practice, focusing on basic needs, orientation towards concrete work situations, connection to the contents of the professional sector, orientation towards the development of professional skills, creation of informal processes of learning” [2]. The freedom of the mass media and also the professional education and training of journalists are very important for the organizations in the field, including European and international structures [3].

Another researcher, Vasilendiuc N., from the Faculty of Journalism in Bucharest, Romania, highlights the importance of the professional culture of journalists [4, 5]. „The profession was defined in terms of a privileged position held by a group of people, which implies public trust and responsibility and requires extensive forms of training/education, and professionalism was characterized in relation to the attributes, the indispensable standards of any professional activities, such as specialized studies, ethical code”, notes the author [4, p. 9]. The topic of journalism as a profession was also a concern of the authors of the „ABC of Journalism” [6, pp. 445-520]. As the editor of the Romanian edition Ionescu L. said, this book is about

„the professionalization of journalism, how it should be done, by what criteria and standards we should guide ourselves” [7].

During 2017-2018, the Independent Press Association from the Republic of Moldova implemented a project regarding the professionalization of journalists „through innovative methods, debates on topical issues and the stimulation of ethical journalism”. A series of professionalization guides are available online [8].

### **Results**

From the beginning of this study, the role of journalists with migration experiences established abroad has been noted. The objectives of the 2030 Agenda approved by the UN have many interrelations with migration processes. Goal 9 states that „migrants can transfer knowledge and valuable skills to their countries of origin and destination, helping to support the development of technology, research and innovation” [9]. Until now at the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences of Moldova State University were organized several events with former graduates of the faculty as protagonists – journalists with work experience and young migrants involved in newsrooms abroad.

One of the professionalization lessons for students, organized in September 2018, had three writers as protagonists. The Moldovan journalist and writer Lilia Bicec (graduated from Faculty of Journalism), settled in the city of Brescia, Italy, is the director of the magazine „Moldbrixia”. She also publishes articles in the Italian and Moldovan media. Lilia Bicec told the students about her books published in Romanian in the Republic of Moldova and in Italian in Italy, about her work as an emigrant journalist, as president of one of the associations of Moldovan migrants, about the Romanian language school for the children of migrants which she organized in Brescia, etc. [10] The Moldovan writer Claudia Partole, author of the novel „Totentanz or a night’s dream” (about the destiny of a migrant woman in Italy), translated and published in Italian, collaborates with several young Moldovan writers settled abroad. Together with the Italian writer Giancarlo Nicoli, at that time the president of the Italian Culture Center in the Republic of Moldova, Claudia Partole referred to the problem of the migration of Moldovan citizens, especially young people. A year later, the writers Lilia Bicec and Claudia Partole participated in another professionalization lesson, with another group of students, on the occasion of the launch of new books by Lilia Bicec – „Boomerang” and „Camp 33” – published in Romanian and Italian, in the Republic of Moldova and Italy.

Also, in September 2018, another group of students from the Faculty of Journalism participated in a professionalization lesson with the Moldovan writer Iurie Bojoncă, settled in the city of Venice, Italy. He is the president of the Moldovan-Italian association for collaboration and integration „A.M.I.C.I.”, who also publishes his articles in the magazine „Limba Română” in Chisinau. Iurie Bojoncă referred to his and other his colleagues participation in a series of events organized by the Italian Embassy in Chisinau on the occasion of Italian Language Week and also in Italy, organized by Moldovan Embassy in Rome on national holidays [11].

In October 2018, another graduate of the Faculty of Journalism – a journalist, writer and translator Andrei Langa from Spain was invited to an event with a different format – a book launch attended by students, representatives of the publishing house and writers. Andrei Langa launched the book of poems „Floating Portraits”. Returned to the Republic of Moldova after migration two years ago Andrei Langa was employed at the National Museum of Romanian Literature in Chisinau [12].

In the autumn 2018, the protagonist of a professionalization lesson was the young Moldovan poet and journalist Doina Strulea, member of the „Youth and Poetry” Center in Triuggio, Italy, at that time a student at the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences at the Milan University. She had been employed at a radio station in Milan since the first year of her studies [13]. Later, immediately after graduating from the faculty, Doina Strulea started working at the Italian national television channel RAI, in the program „Le Iene” (en. „Hyenas”). The students talked to Doina Strulea about her program as a student at the Faculty of Journalism in Italy and as an employee in the Italian mass media and also about her book launched the day before in Chisinau – „69% de dor” („I miss you 69%”). Before emigrating for studying in Italy, Doina Strulea had presented her first book of poems „Violin from the Attic” in Chisinau and won an important prize at a poetry contest in Italy.

In October 2022, the Moldovan writer Liuba Sârbu, the editor-in-chief of the magazine „Pici Voinici”/„Enfants braves” from Canada, was the protagonist of a professionalization lesson about the diasporic media, newspapers and magazines founded abroad by Moldovan citizens. The event was attended by the students from the Faculty of Journalism, specializing in Journalism and media processes and Communication and public relations. The event was organized in the context of the 75th anniversary of the founding of Moldova State University [14].

The benefits of the peer-to-peer method have been repeatedly mentioned, being emphasized by experts in the field. To support students on their way to acquiring knowledge and training new skills, in November 2022 and in February 2024 at the Faculty of Journalism were organized professionalization lessons about newspapers, magazines and books design. One of the students of the Faculty of Journalism, Valeria Sacuțanu, was the protagonist of some workshops for students, where they discussed the development of design skills for books, magazines, newspapers, as well as the programs used at different stages of creating some products. She had migration experiences in Italy and Great Britain, with several design activities and with more than 30 completed book projects. Based on her experience, Valeria Sacuțanu illustrated the process of using the programs Adobe Photoshop (PS), Adobe Illustrator (AI) and Adobe InDesign (ID) [15]. Valeria Sacuțanu is the co-author of the book „Imprints” of Moldova („Amprentele” Moldovei) and the author of the poetic texts along with the photographs taken by Roman Friptuleac in several tourist places of the Republic of Moldova.

Other young people with migration experiences or with studies abroad in the field of journalism answered the questions of Journalism students, as part of collective interview exercises. In the spring of 2023, a group of students from the Faculty of Journalism conducted an interview with the young Moldovan writer and journalist Paula Erizanu, who studied journalism in Great Britain. In 2019 she was nominated in „Words by Women” – a specialized competition in Great Britain. In 2021 Paula Erizanu was nominated in Romania „Young Writer of the Year” – an award given at the Young Writers’ Gala. During the discussions, Paula Erizanu referred to her studies in Great Britain, her experiences to write journalistic materials for international publications („The Guardian”, „BBC World Service”, „The Calvert Journal”, etc.) and also Romanian ones („Libertatea”, „Observator cultural”, „Dilema veche”, etc.), about her involvement in the organization of important cultural events in the Republic of Moldova.

In the series of events organized with the participation of diaspora representatives, it would be necessary to mention two different ones as format and specificity. In both cases, we are talking about the projects carried out by the representative of our diaspora in Poland, Teodor Ajder, PhD in Communication Sciences, editor and co-founder of the magazine „Mămăliga de Varsovia”, made by a group of Moldovan citizens who emigrated to Poland, in collaboration with young people from France, Italy, Republic of Moldova, etc. The creative workshop with the generic „Media-Zine, from practice to theory” took place between May 10-16, 2018 at the Faculty of Journalism, where a group of students was involved and created magazines called „Zines” [16]. The students participated „in a series of courses, trainings, the objective of which was to increase the degree of familiarization of Moldovan students with the evolution and concepts of media sciences, as well as their valorisation for the purposes of technological, economic, cultural-artistic development; participants took part in public readings, mini-lectures, meetings with artists’ book and zine creators, as well as presentations of independent typographic projects from Chisinau” [17]. After a week of activities the workshop ended with a special event - the organization of the first edition of the Zinefest Chisinau festival, where the works / magazines created by the students were exhibited.

Another event was the Cultural Journalism Workshop with Teodor Ajder, between February 20-25, 2023. The workshop was organized by the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences and the Coalition of the independent cultural sector of the Republic of Moldova. The event with the title „How to write an exhibition chronicle” aimed to familiarize the students with the phenomenon of independent culture. During the workshop the students passed several stages necessary for “creating chronicles or critical texts about art exhibitions or independent cultural events”. “The participants who were present at independent culture events had access to contemporary art archives and a database of materials about the independent cultural

scene; the purpose was the synthesis of a minimal set of tools needed to write a chronicle of a cultural event or a critical text” [18].

The writer and journalist Vasile Ernu, columnist at the magazine „Libertatea”, was invited to another event organized at the faculty in October 2023. He is a media professional born in the Republic of Moldova, but settled in Romania for several years. Vasile Ernu referred to journalism and literature and also to the problems of the mass media in Romania and the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, he referred to migration, one of the most serious problems faced by the population of the Republic of Moldova. A year before – in October 2022 – Vasile Ernu was the protagonist of the professionalization lesson „Mass-media in critical periods of history”, a lesson that took place online, because Vasile Ernu was in Romania at that time.

### **Conclusions**

In the present work, it has been approached the issue of developing the concept of professionalization lessons for students at the Faculty of Journalism, events that will help them in their training and development of the necessary skills. The aim was to emphasize a specific part of these professionalization lessons – the involvement of Moldovan citizens who have settled (temporarily or permanently) abroad – a fact that is almost impossible to avoid due to emigration, which has affected almost every family in the Republic of Moldova. The benefits are multiple, with a win-win finality. First of all, it is about informing and training future journalists (by experts active in the field abroad), exchange of good practices, expertise, new fact-checking tools, creation of collaboration platforms, including at the level of sources/future local journalists for possible common projects, etc. Secondly, the experiences of these guests are highlighted, even if they are part of the diaspora or have returned to the Republic of Moldova, if they work in Canada, the USA, France, Great Britain, Italy, Portugal, etc. [19, 20]

Over the years, the continuation of the dialogue with the former graduates of the faculty and with other experts in the journalistic field, their presence and experience highlighted in such events could create the necessary bridges between the country of origin and the representatives of the Moldovan migrant communities. Moreover, it could become – for many of those who left the country at the beginning of the 2000s, but even more recently – the joy of rediscovering common values, places/people/events/works that bring us closer.

As for the risk factors, they could aim, in particular, at the exaggeration of some results or (obscure) merits of some guests-protagonists of such events. In such situations the main causes are the lack of documentation and verification of information from all available sources. The risk would be to promote non-values or false values. Therefore, the solution refers to strong (accurate) documentation from all possible sources, permanent attention to the Code of Ethics, to the specifics of professional ethics, attention to possible traps that can lead to the dissemination of false information, to manipulation and propaganda.

When we talk about the professionalization lessons with the students of the Faculty of Journalism it is not the number of these events that is relevant, but the quality of the guests/experts and the value of their expertise, the validity of the shared experiences are important. The collaborations between the mass media from the Republic of Moldova and Moldovan migrants, between the media institutions where they work abroad and our journalists – this professional, fair and continuous dialogue could lead to the creation of a common space for integration/reintegration, beneficial to both parties.

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