THE MIDDLE CLASS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: DETERMINANT FACTORS OF FORMATION

Ludmila MALCOCI[1], PhD, Professor Researcher,
Sociology and Social Psychology Centre,
Political and Juridical Research Institute of the ASM, Moldova
Victor MOCANU[2], PhD in sociology, Associate Professor,
Sociology and Social Psychology Centre,
Political and Juridical Research Institute of the ASM, Moldova

The research of the middle class formation process in the Republic of Moldova is of major importance, as it allows to identify its main elements and the possibilities of formation under the current conditions. The article presents the results of the sociological study on the premises of the middle class formation in the Republic of Moldova, carried out during June-September 2016. The results from this study show that the society is distributed in 6 social strata that vary by socio-professional status, level of education and level of wellbeing. The status inconsistency and low level of status crystallisation are characteristics for all strata within the conditions of dysfunctionality of logical chain: education-social occupational status-welfare. As per the research, the process of classes' formation is just at the initial stage in the Republic of Moldova. The analysis of the social strata in terms of middle class criteria: high socio professional status, high education level, high level of welfare, shows some prospects of formation of the middle class in the upper strata within the following conditions: development of wage policies; reforming tax policies by promoting the progressive taxation of income; ensuring equitable distribution of wages according to work; elimination of corruption in power structures; improving legislation; ensuring access of the population to decision – making process; creating favourable conditions for development of small and medium business; development of a transparent environment for the market economy; guaranty of fair conditions to population to ensure access to education and health services.

Keywords: *social stratification, social class, socio-occupational status, social self-identification, middle class.*

Cercetarea procesului de formare a clasei medii în Republica Moldova prezint o importanţ major , dat fiind faptul c permite identificarea elementelor principale ale acestuia i posibilit ţilor de formare în condiţiile actuale. În articol sunt prezentate rezultatele studiului sociologic u privire la premisele form rii clasei medii în Republica Moldova, efectuat în perioada iunie-septembrie 2016. Rezultatele obţinute denot faptul c societatea este repartizat în 6 straturi sociale care difer dup statutul socio-profesional, nivelul de educaţie şi nivelul de bun stare. Toate straturile sociale se caracterizeaz prin inconsistenţa/incongruenţa statutului şi nivelul redus de cristalizare a statutului acestora, fapt determinat de disfuncţionalitatea lanţului logic: educaţie – statut socio-profesional – bun stare. Formarea claselor este la etapa iniţial în Republica Moldova. Analiza straturilor sociale din perspectiva parametrilor clasei medii (nivel de educaţie înalt, statut socio-profesional înalt i nivel de bun stare înalt) denot anumite premise ale cre rii acestei clase în straturile de sus în urm toarele condiţii: dezvoltarea politicilor salariale şi reformarea politicilor de impozitare prin promovarea impozit rii progresive a veniturilor; asigurarea distribuirii echitabile a salariilor în funcţie de munca depus ; eliminarea corupţiei din structurile puterii; perfecţionarea legislaţiei; asigurarea accesului populaţiei în procesul de luare a deciziilor; crearea condiţiilor favorabile pentru dezvoltarea businessului mic şi mijlociu; formarea unui mediu transparent pentru dezvoltarea economiei de piaţ ; garantarea condiţiilor echitabile pentru asigurarea accesului tuturor cet ţenilor la educaţie şi servicii de s n tate.

Cuvinte-cheie: *stratificare social , clas   social , statut socio-ocupaţional, autoidentificare social , clas medie.*

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[1] ©Ludmila MALCOCI, ludmilamalcoci@gmail.com
[2] ©Victor MOCANU, atitudinemd@gmail.com

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    Introduction. The importance and actuality of the social stratification research is incontestable within the conditions of socio-economic and political changes occurred in Moldova with the country's EU association. The studies conducted over the past 20 years show significant changes in the social structure of the Moldova's population. The transition to market economy influenced the formation of new social groups, which differ by size of income, property, education, political and economic power, social status. The emergence of new social groups requires thorough and complex studies to identify their determinants, size, essential characteristics, value system, as well as their economic, social and political situation. The research on Moldova's middle class formation premises is also important due to the fact that a strong middle class is an important indicator of both: the country's socio-economic welfare and the reforms sustainability. In accordance with existing sociological theories, as the middle class is larger, the wellbeing of the given country is higher and vice versa. The research results and conclusions served for the development of recommendations regarding the socio-economic and political changes needed to be implemented to promote the further development of the middle class at the country level. The research is important also from the practical and methodological points of view. The research data will serve as a base line for determination of size of different social strata in Moldova and the developed research methodology will be used for further researches in the field.

    The theoretical-methodological approach used for measuring the middle class. The research was based on analysis of social theories related to social stratification and social classes, including the Marxist theory [7]; the Weberian theory [15], the theory of functionalists (K. Davis, W. Moore, T. Parsons, B. Barber), the Pitirim Sorokin theory on social mobility [16], as well as the division of social classes' theory developed by Anthony Giddens [7]. Based on those theories we concluded that the social stratification is the distribution of people in groups based on their occupation and income, wealth and social status, or social and political power. P. Sorokin identified at least three forms of stratification: 1) economical stratification (differences of property, income and lifestyle, distribution between rich and poor), 2) political stratification (different levels of prestige, rank, position, distribution of the governing and those who are governed, etc.), 3) professional stratification (different levels of education, functions, professional prestige, distribution managers and subordinates). The social inequality is the main determinant of social stratification and is influenced by various social, political, economic and professional factors [16].

    The social class means the shared lifestyle based on social factors like occupation, education, income and wealth. According to A. Giddens, there are three classes in a contemporary society: upper class (the rich,

entrepreneurs, industrialists and top layer of managers, who owns or directly controls the means of production), the middle class (which includes most "collars white" and specialists) and working class ("blue-collar" or people engaged in manual labour). Giddens notes that in some industrialized countries such as France and Japan, an important role is assigned to the fourth class – peasants, people engaged in traditional agricultural production. In third world peasants still constitute the largest class [7].

Based on Giddens theory we can conclude that the middle class is a group of population that occupies a middle position between the lower class (class of poor people) and the upper class (class of rich people); it is a socioeconomic heterogeneous group of people with high level of vocational education from different sectors, highly qualified professionals, managers of divisions / subdivisions , etc.; the middle class has high level of income that meets their own economic, social and cultural needs and are owners of immovable and movable properties.

 Literature review and previous researches in the class structure show that there are various methodological approaches for measuring the middle class in different countries. We will try to compare the methodological approaches for measuring the middle class in USA and Russia. As per the literature review, in USA were identified three methodological approaches for measuring the middle class: 1) based on annual household income, 2) based on the analysis of income earned by three middle quintiles, and 3) based on level of education. The limitation of the first approach is the lack of unique criteria and scale for determining the level of annual income appropriate for the middle class. Thus, Brian D'Agostino (2012) identifies as middle class households whose annual income is between $ 20,000 and $ 200,000. Elwell (2014) identifies as middle class households with annual income on a scale from $ 19,000 to $ 91,000 and Gary Burtless considers the middle class the group of population with an income from $ 24,000 to $ 96,000 (2000) [12, p.3]. Meantime, the official poverty line for a family of four was $ 21,200 in 2010 in USA. Some of the families included in the middle class by the above mentioned researchers were considered as poor by the US Government. As regarding the second approach, it is based on the analysis of income earned by three middle quintiles (determined based on household budget survey), the bottom quintile being considered as lower middle class and the upper quintile – as upper middle class. Nobel laureate economist Robert Solow used this approach (Estache and Leipziger 2009) and defined the middle class as 60% of those who are employed and have salaries [12, p.3]. The limitation of this approach is that it allows us to calculate the amount of income earned by the middle class instead of the size of the middle class. The three quintiles always will be equal to 60%. The third approach implies taking into account only the level of education. Robert Putnam (2015), in his book "Our Kids" defined classes based on latest school attended by members of the household. Although Putnam's book refers to the rich and poor and ignores the middle class and middle-class children, it includes a definition of the middle class. According to Putnam, upper-class households are those where at least one parent has a higher level of education and lower class households are those where no parent has completed another school than secondary one. So, the middle class households are those households where parents have a level of education higher than secondary school, but do not have finished high level of education [12, p.5]. The limitation of this methodological approach is that many families with high level of education, but low level of income will be considered as middle class, and other families with lower level of education, but high level of income will not be included in the middle class.

The literature review of the researches on middle class in Russia, shows also several methodological approaches for measuring the middle class, including: 1) based on perception of respondents regarding their affordability to buy things based on needs, 2) based on integrated indicators (level of income, wealth, education, self-identification), and 3) based on market economy approach (level of consumption and lifestyle) [20]. In the first case, the main criteria for determining the middle class is the level of affordability of respondents to buy things according to their needs. Thus, the middle class includes the group of population that has income for basic needs and can procure even more expensive items. According to this criteria, in 2001, 27% of the population could be considered as middle class in Russia. In 2010, the share of the population that has income enough for food and clothes increased to more than half [20, p.3]. The limitation of this approach is that it is based only on subjective criteria and do not take into consideration the objective criteria, like level of income, level of education, level of consumption, lifestyle etc. The second methodological approach for measuring the middle class in Russia is based on using the integrated indicators. The Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences used the following parameters to measure the middle class in 2006: level of income, wealth, education, self-identification. The research found that the middle class constitute 20-22% of the economically active population [20, p.5]. The third

methodological approach is based on market economy approach (comprehensive analysis of lifestyle and level of consumption of respondents). An example in this context is the research conducted by the magazine Expert and company Comcom [20, pp.9-11]. The following criteria were used for determination of the middle class: customs and traditions of the country; lifestyle; spiritual values; education; freedom; personal and consumer; ownership on means of production; size and structure of expenditures; revenues and salary. The research concluded that more than 90% of the population constitute the lower class, 1% – the upper class and up to 3-5% – the middle class. The limitation of this methodological approach is the big number of indicators that can influence the size of the groups.

Based on the analysis of the above mentioned methodological approaches, as well as on other literature sources [1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 8; 9; 10], we concluded that a comprehensive approach is necessary when measuring the middle class, which includes several parameters, including: socio-professional status, level of education and level of wellbeing.

The main objective of the research was to study the level of social stratification in Moldova and to identify the premises for forming the middle class in the society under economic and political transformation.

The main tools used for data collection where the interview and the expert analysis. The research sample consisted of 1179 non-randomly selected people aged 18-65 years (proportional odds) throughout the Republic of Moldova. The research was conducted during the period of time June-September 2016.

Main findings of the research

Social status of respondents. As per the research, the Moldovan society is distributed in 6 social strata in function of socio-professional status, level of education and wellbeing. The first strata includes 18% of respondents. More than 90% of those respondents are unqualified or qualified workers, the highest level of education of 98% of respondents is vocational education, 100% do not have a car. The second strata includes 13% of respondents. 76% of respondents of this group are unqualified or qualified workers, the highest level of education of 98% of respondents is vocational education, 25% of respondent do not have a car and 75% have a car older than 10 years. The third strata includes 15% of respondents. More than half of them are specialists with medium level of qualification. 100% have medium level of education. 2/3 of respondents do not have a car and 1/3 have a care older than 10 years. The fourth strata includes 61% of workers in services and specialists with medium level of qualification, as well as 13% of specialists with high level of qualification; each fourth respondent has high level of education; 100% of respondents have cars younger than 10 years. The fifth strata includes 82% of specialists with high level of qualification and top managers; 86% of respondents have high level of education; 71% of respondents do not have a car or have a car older than 10 years. The sixth strata includes 57% of specialists with high level of education and top managers; 100% of respondents have high level of education; 86% of respondents do not have a car or have a car older than 10 years.

The analysis of strata in function of occupation, education and wellbeing shows the status inconsistency and low level of status crystallisation in all six strata. Respondents in strata 1 and 2 have low socio-occupational status, medium education level and low welfare level. Respondents from strata 3 have medium socio-occupational status, medium level of education and low level of welfare. Respondents from strata 4 have medium socio-occupational status, medium education level and medium to high level of welfare. Respondents in strata 5 and 6 are have high level of socio-occupational status, high level of education and low welfare level (table 1).

Table 1

The characteristics of social strata in function of socio-occupational status, education and welfare

Strata	Socio-occupational status			Level of education			Level of welfare		
	low	medium	high	low	medium	high	low	medium	high
Strata 1	x				x		x		
Strata 2	x				x		x		
Strata 3		x			x		x		
Strata 4		x			x				x
Strata 5			x			x	x		
Strata 6			x			x	x		

Source: Calculated by authors.

Based on the status inconsistency and low level of status crystallisation we can conclude that the process of classes formation is just at the initial stage in the Republic of Moldova. Analysis of social strata in terms of the middle class criteria: high socio-professional status, high education level, high level of welfare shows some prospects of formation of the middle class in the strata 4, 5 and 6. Respondents in strata 5 and 6 are characterized by high socio-occupational level, high education level and low welfare level. Respondents in strata 4 are characterized by medium socio-occupational level, medium education level and from medium to high welfare level.

Factors influencing social status. According to the research, the social status of respondents depends on certain personal characteristics (education level, socio-occupational status, income, socio-occupational status in the beginning of professional career); parents social status (socio-occupational status and level of education), and social status of respondent partner (socio-occupational status and level of education).

With reference to personal characteristics, the research shows a significant statistical association between the following factors: a) the level of education of the respondent and his socio-occupational status (Cramer's V = 0.139), b) the socio-occupational status of respondent and monthly income per family member (Cramer's V = 0.218), c) the level of education of respondent and income per family member (Cramer's V = 0.192), d) the socio-occupational status of respondent in the present and his socio=occupational status at the first job (Cramer's V = 0.669). However the intensity of the relationship between educations and socio-occupational status, socio-occupational status and income is poor. This fact shows that the social transformations that took place in the Moldovan society broke the logical link between the most important factors influencing the social status, like level of education and socio-occupational status, level of education and income, socio-occupational status and income. This also means that the level of education in Moldova does not always lead to high socio-occupational status and result in a high quality of life. Within the conditions of a society with poor quality of education, high level of corruption, shadow economy, professional promotion based on relations and affiliation with different parties, the motivational mechanism of social stratification becomes dysfunctional. However, as per the research, the intensity of correlation between socio-occupational status of respondents at the first job and the current socio-occupational status is medium to high, which shows, on the one hand, the importance of socio-occupational status at the first job for career promotion, on the other hand, argues a reduced level of professional mobility due to underdeveloped economy, limited jobs and high unemployment.

According to the research, there is a statistically significant correlation between the following factors: a) socio-occupational status of respondents and socio-occupational status of their parents (Cramer's V = 0.187), and b) the level of education of respondents and the level of education of their parents (Cramer's V = 0.266). However, the intensity is also weak.

The research has confirmed a statistically significant correlation between a) socio-occupational status of respondents and socio-occupational status of their partners (Cramer's V = 0.231), and b) the level of education of respondents and the level of education of their partners (Cramer's V = 0.509). However, the intensity of the correlation between socio-occupational status of respondents and socio-occupational status of their partners is low. As for the correlation – the level of education of respondents and the level of education of their partners – the level of intensity is medium to high. This confirms once again that the social stratification researches shall be household based instead of person based.

The labour activity of the respondents. As per the research, 80% of respondents are employed and one fifth – are not employed; the share of unemployed is higher in rural areas, in the group aged 18-24, as well as in the group of respondents with low level of education.

To overcome the problems of poverty, over 1/3 of respondents work over – program (more than 41 hours per week) in their job places or have several jobs in the same time, and every tenth person is working partially or full-time abroad. The share of those working abroad or over-program is higher in strata 4; the share of those working part-time – is higher in strata 1; the part-time job is characteristic for women, elderly people, students, self-employed.

Every second employed respondent is working in public institutions, 43% – in private institutions, and every tenth – in the informal sector or in the household. Per social strata, 2/3 of respondents in strata 5 and 6 are employed in the public sector and more than half of respondents from strata 4 – in the private sector. The share of respondents who are employed on a permanent basis and receive social insurance, paid sick leave, annual leave is higher in the public sector than in the private one. As a result, the share of respondents receiving social security benefits is higher in strata 5 and 6 and is lower in strata 1-4.

The share of respondents that have subordinated employees is also higher in strata 5-6.

The level of adaptability to new conditions (no fear of job loss, no fear of unemployment, no fear to change the occupation) is higher in strata 4-5 and is lower in strata 1-3. About 1/3 of respondents have a previous experience with unemployment or are currently unemployed. The share of those who experienced unemployment is higher among people with low level of education, in rural area, as well as in strata 1-3.

Income of respondents. Over 60% of respondents have a monthly income per family member less than 2,000 lei, which also is below the subsistence minimum for 2015 (1,734 lei) or slightly above the subsistence minimum. Every third respondent indicated a monthly income per family member between 2001 and 5000 lei and 7% – more than 5000 lei. The share of respondents with monthly income per family member higher than 2,500 lei is higher in strata 4, 5, 6 and is lower in strata 1, 2, 3. More than half of respondents said that their incomes are much lower than their needs, every fourth respondent said that their income is slightly lower than their needs, and every fifth – that incomes are equal to or even higher than their needs. The share of people with incomes much lower than their needs is higher in rural areas, in small towns, among respondents with low level of education, as well as among respondents in strata 1-3. About 90% of respondents from strata 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 declared as their main source of income salary, pension, and allowances. In case of strata 4.75% of respondents mentioned salary, pension, stipend as the main source of income, and 25% – individual entrepreneurship, rent of properties, remittances.

More than 80% of respondents have properties. The share of those who do not own properties is higher in strata 1. More than 2/3 of respondents who own properties mentioned that if they would sell all the properties and pay all debts would still remain with some savings.

According to the research, the purchasing capacity of the respondents is quite low. Thus, more than 2/3 of respondents could not afford to support financially a child to study abroad, more than half of respondents cannot afford trips abroad, 90% of respondents would not be able to buy apartment, 83% – would not be able to buy the car, 46% – would not be able to buy technical equipment for the household. The share of those who could afford to buy the mentioned above things is higher in strata 4, 5, 6 and is lower in strata 1, 2, 3.

Self-identification of respondents with social class. The majority of respondents are not aware of the characteristics of a social class and identified themselves with the class, which in their view would correspond more to their social position in the community, neighbourhood, and family. Thus, about 82% identified themselves with the positions that correspond to the lower middle class (43%), core middle class (27%) or upper middle class (12%) and only 18% identified themselves with the lower class. The share of respondents who identified themselves with the upper middle class is higher among respondents aged 18-24 years; the share of respondents who identified themselves with the lower class is higher among persons aged 65 years and older.

Analysis of the results of self-identification per social strata shows that the percentage of respondents who identified themselves with the lower class or lower middle class is higher in strata 1; the percentage of respondents who identified themselves with core middle class core is higher in strata 2 and 3; the percentage of respondents who identified themselves with – the upper middle class – is higher in strata 4, 5, 6.

The majority of respondents believe that in Moldova exist large/very large conflicts between the class of politicians and other citizens, between people from the top of the society and the bottom of the society, between rich and poor persons.

According to most respondents, the factors that contribute to the promotion of people on the social scale and their positioning in upper classes-elite circles – are as following: 1) relationships, 2) money, welfare, 3) social origin – rich families, 4) studies and 5) political connections or party. Analysis of respondents opinions in strata 6 (this strata includes a large number of leaders/top managers), highlighted three basic factors that contribute to the promotion of people in upper strata: 1) relationships, 2) money, welfare and 3) political connections or party.

Health status. Although more than 2/3 of respondents declared their health status as good and very good, over 50% of respondents said they would feel not really good or really bad if they would be in the situation to lift several floors or something heavy. The share of people who would feel not really good or really bad is higher among respondents aged over 45 years, among those with low level of education, as well as in lower strata (1, 2, 3).

More than 40% of respondents (in particular those with high level of education, from the urban areas, from the upper strata) felt hurried, pressured always or frequently at his job place in the past month; every fourth respondent (especially in rural areas, with low level of education) felt always or frequently discouraged. Every fourth person has indicated that had some limitations, constraints at his job place, could not finish the planned activities because of psycho-emotional state.

About 80% of respondents indicated that they do not smoke, and every fifth – that they smoke. The percentage of those who smoke is higher in rural areas, in the aged group of 18-24, with low level of education. About 2/3 of smokers consume more than 11 cigarettes a day.

More than 50% of respondents have a normal body mass index and each third respondent is overweight or obese. The share of overweight or obese respondents is higher among men, people older than 45 years, those that live in urban areas, the respondents from strata 1, 2, 3.

More than half of respondents reported that they encountered health problems in the last 12 months. The most frequently reported health problems include: back pain, high blood pressure, migraine, allergies. The most frequently reported health problem in the lower strata are back pain and high blood pressure. The most frequently reported health problem in the upper strata are allergies, migraine and blood circulation.

More than 50% of respondents addressed the doctor in recent months. Every second of them addressed the doctor more than twice. The share of respondents who addressed the doctor more than twice is higher among those with low education, older than 45 years.

There are many respondents that eat unhealthy food frequently; they use frequently white bread, toasted products, sweets, cakes and more rarely – vegetables and fruit. The share of men consuming alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, brandy, and cognac) quite frequently – every day or at least once a week is quite high.

Working conditions. More than half of respondents reported unhealthy working conditions: working overtime, noise, dust, gas evaporation, time pressure, unhealthy competition. More than 40% of respondents said they had a hard physical work or unhealthy competition at that their job place.

Living conditions. Over 50% of respondents have their own house / apartment, 1/3 – live in the house / apartment of parents and only 8% – live in rent. The share of respondents with own house / apartment increases with age and level of education. The share of respondents who own house / apartment is higher in strata 4, 5, 6 and is lower in strata 1, 2, 3.

More than 40% of respondents reported that their house is located in a prestigious place; 1/3 said that their house is repaired according to European standards, it is connected to central heating; 60% mentioned that their house is connected to centralized water, and has bathroom / toilet in the house; more than 70% indicated that they have the modern equipment in the kitchen and that the house is connected to cable TV and internet. The living conditions of people depend on place of residence and income. Thus, respondents in rural areas, small towns with low incomes, from lower strata (1, 2, 3) indicated worse living conditions than those living in towns, that have higher incomes and are positioned in the top strata.

Free time. The majority of respondents spend their free time working around the house or passively: listening to music, on the Internet, meet with friends, walking. Less than 20% of respondents play sports, go to the cinema, go to church, and make handmade or artistic activities at least once a week. The share of people who listen to music, play sports, read books, stay on the internet, go to the cinema is higher in the age group 18-24 years, among people with higher levels of education, among those who live in big cities.

According to the survey, 46% of respondents are watching TV broadcasts 7 days a week, 26% – 4-6 days a week, 17% – 1-3 days a week and 11% – at all. TV watching time analysis reveals essential differences between TV consumption on weekdays and on weekends. Thus, on weekdays, about 60% of respondents consume 1-2 hours for watching TV, 29% – 3-4 hours, 9% – 5 hours and more. On weekends, increase the share of respondents who watch TV 3-4 hours (from 29% to 35%) and 5hours and more (from 9% to 36%). More than 2/3 of respondents are interested in news; every second respondent is interested in films and more than 1/3 in political programs. The share of people interested in news and political programs increases with age and education. The share of respondents interested in news and political programs is higher in the upper strata and lower in the bottom strata.

Every fifth respondent is involved actively or passively in the activities of public associations, religious organizations, parents associations or some clubs. More than 80% of respondents are not

involved in public activities.

Political interest and involvement in politics. More than 2/3 of respondents said that they are interested in politics. The share of people interested in politics is higher among men, age groups 35-44 years, 55-64 years, people with high levels of education, those from large cities, respondents in strata 2 and 6.

Although the percentage of those interested in politics is quite high, only every fifth respondent mentioned that participated in any political action in the last five years. The share of people involved in political activities /events is higher among men; respondents aged 18-24 years, among those with high level of education, from cities, from the strata 5 and 6.

About 40% of respondents are ready to participate in legal political actions (strikes, demonstrations), if someone would organize. From 6 to 11% of respondents said they are ready to participate even in illegal political actions such as illegal strikes, blocking streets, occupying buildings, etc. The share of people ready to participate in political actions is higher among men; people aged 18-24 years, those with high educational level, employees of private institutions, those from the informal sector or self-employed.

2/3 of respondents indicated that they will go to vote for sure, if the elections will be organized the next Sunday, 21% said that may be they will go to vote, and 16% will not go to vote. The share of people who would go to vote is higher in the age groups over 45 years, among those with higher level of education, among respondents from large cities. The percentage of those who likely would not go to vote is highest in the age group of 18-24 years, among those with low level of education, from rural areas. The percentage of people who would go to vote is higher in opposite strata – strata 1 and the strata 5, 6 and is lower in strata 4. The strata 4 includes the greater share of respondents with high incomes, many who work partially or full time abroad, as well as in several places, for more than 40 hours per week. Those respondents have less confidence that the elections would change anything and rely more on own forces.

Conclusions

As per the research, the formation of the middle class in Moldova faces the following barriers: a) low labour cost leading to increased poverty, including among skilled workers; b) reduced opportunities and social mobility for persons from lower strata to advance in upper strata; c) failure of the motivational mechanism to increase human, social and cultural capital; d) devaluation of studies as a key factor for advancing on occupational scale, as well as for income increase; e) increased level of shadow economy, leading to illegal salaries, limited access to social insurance / social benefits and reduced opportunities for legal employment; j) undeveloped small and medium enterprises; z) crisis of legal system, which leads to violations of law, selective justice and imperfect legislation; i) high level of corruption in all structures of power and imitation of fight against corruption, leading to non – transparent approval of political and economic decisions.

The formation of the middle class in Moldova would be possible based on strata 4, 5, 6, which are characterized by high level of education, and high socio-occupational status, within the following conditions: development of wage policies; reforming tax policies by promoting the progressive taxation of income; ensuring equitable distribution of wages according to work; elimination of corruption in power structures; improving legislation; ensuring access of the population to decision – making process; creating favourable conditions for development of small and medium business; development of a transparent environment for the market economy; guarantees fair conditions to population to ensure access to education and health services.

Population values, level of economic consciousness are also of particular importance in the process of formation of middle class. Orientations toward pragmatic values of the market economy, increasing growth trends in human, social and cultural capital can contribute to enhancing the involvement of population in development of different economic activities.

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