

COMPETITIVENESS BENCHMARKING
OF THE BALKAN COUNTRIES

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The opportunities offered by the signing of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement can be capitalized only in the case of increasing the competitiveness of the national economy. The purpose of the investigation consists in reorienting Moldova's attention to the Balkan countries, which have become active actors in the EU enlargement process, their economies being more competitive than Moldova (except Bosnia-Herzegovina). For this end, by applying the benchmarking method, there has been made an attempt to identify the best practices of Balkan countries (Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina). The Global Competitiveness Report 2016-2017, the sub-index "Basic Conditions" has served as the base-information source given that the Republic of Moldova is ranked in the factor-driven economy category. The research results indicate that the Republic of Moldova might find useful the experience of Balkan countries in such fields as the quality of institutions and infrastructure, in macroeconomic stability, and the development of health and primary education.

Keywords: *benchmarking, competitiveness, the Global Competitiveness Report, competitiveness performance, best practices, enlargement of the EU.*

Oportunitățile oferite prin semnarea Acordului de Asociere UE-RM vor putea fi valorificate doar în cazul creșterii competitivității economiei naționale. Scopul investigației efectuate este de a reorienta atenția Republicii Moldova spre țările balcanice, care au devenit actori activi în procesul de extindere a UE, economiile lor fiind mai competitive decât cea a Republicii Moldova (cu excepția Bosniei-Herțegovinei). În acest scop, prin aplicarea metodei benchmarking-ului a fost realizată analiza bunelor practici în țările balcanice (Muntenegru, Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina). Baza informațională a cercetării o constituie Raportul Global de Competitivitate 2016-2017, sub-indicele „Condiții de bază”, dat fiind faptul că Republica Moldova este clasată în categoria „economie bazată pe factori de producție”. Rezultatele cercetării denotă că pentru Republica Moldova poate fi utilă experiența țărilor balcanice în domeniul calității instituțiilor și a infrastructurii, în asigurarea stabilității macroeconomice și dezvoltarea sectorului sănătății și educației primare.

Cuvinte-cheie: *benchmarking, competitivitate, Raport Global al Competitivității, performanță competitivă, bunele practici, extinderea UE.*

Возможности, открываемые подписанием Соглашения об Ассоциации ЕС-РМ, могут быть реализованы только в случае повышения конкурентоспособности национальной экономики. Цель исследования заключается в переориентации внимания Молдовы на балканские страны, которые стали активными участниками процесса расширения ЕС, а их экономики стали более конкурентоспособными по сравнению с экономикой Молдовы (за исключением Боснии-Герцеговины). На основе метода бенчмаркинга, была предпринята попытка определить лучшие практики Балканских стран (Черногория, Македония, Албания, Сербия, Босния-Герцеговина). Базовым источником информации послужил Доклад о Глобальной Конкурентоспособности 2016-2017 гг., раздел «Основные условия», исходя из того, что Республика Молдова включена в категорию стран с «экономикой, основанной на факторах производства». Результаты исследования показывают, что для Республики Молдова может быть полезен опыт Балканских стран в области качества институтов и инфраструктуры, макроэкономической стабильности, развития здравоохранения и начального образования.

Ключевые слова: *бенчмаркинг, конкурентоспособность, Доклад о Глобальной Конкурентоспособности, конкурентоспособное преимущество, лучшие практики, расширение ЕС.*

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Introduction

In order to know the strengths and weaknesses of the national economy, it is necessary to compare the indicators from different fields with those in the most quoted countries, the comparison tool used being called benchmarking. Choosing for comparison the performances of countries who have achieved outstanding results in a certain field and comparing them with their own, decision-makers have the opportunity to find the most suitable successful practices available to them and, hence, raise their own performance. The importance of this research tool has been growing as the European Union has been promoting the concept of benchmarking since 1996 “not as a new policy initiative but as a tool to promote better implementation of measures in key areas for competitiveness by focusing on factors and conditions that determine superior performance and exchange of information on best practices” [3, p.1].

Method and content

In fact, benchmarking was initially applied as a corporate management tool, enabling it to reduce its costs and raise its technical and economic performance, its action ‘fields’ being product benchmarking, process benchmarking, competitive benchmarking, performance benchmarking and strategic benchmarking [5]. However, over time, its use has gone beyond a single case of a company, extending to an economic branch and national economy, which enabled governments to identify where the most efficient development conditions are available that can allow for high economic, technological, and social results.

The fundamental questions to be asked when applying benchmarking can be synthesized as follows [3, p.16]:

- What are the key areas that need to be benchmarked?
- What are the appropriate criteria on which to evaluate that area?
- What are the best practices world-wide?
- How those results have been achieved?

The idea behind benchmarking is not about copying successful practices from one country to another, but about using the successful practices in discovering new ways of improvement and onsets for their implementation in specific national situations.

The case study that we are going to analyse concerns the application of benchmarking in the field of state competitiveness, reflected in the Global Competitiveness Report 2016-2017, the comparison basis being the economy of the Balkan states and the Republic of Moldova. The reason for choosing the Balkan states stems from a series of arguments related to the EU enlargement process, comprising three groups of countries:

1. Countries that are given the *prospect* of EU membership.
2. Countries that have become official *candidates* for accession.
3. Countries that are starting formal *accession negotiations*.

The current enlargement agenda targets the Western Balkan states and Turkey, but at a different pace.

- Turkey's accession negotiation process started in 2005, but the progress achieved is slow and the latest policies are contradictory.
- Montenegro and Serbia launched the accession negotiations in 2012 and 2014 accordingly.
- The EU accession process of FRY Macedonia remains in deadlock, although it was granted the candidate status in 2005.
- Albania was granted the candidate status in 2014 and is making substantial efforts to get the right to start accession negotiations.
- Qualified in 2003 as a potential candidate for EU membership, Bosnia-Herzegovina obtained the acceptance of membership in September 2016.

As we can see, **the Republic of Moldova has remained outside the enlargement process not only in the short or medium term, but also in the long term, and it is not included in the list of potential candidates. The only chance to start the first stage is to create the necessary conditions by increasing the competitiveness of its economy.**

Except Turkey, all these Balkan states are small in size and have low export capacities, making them, to a certain extent, comparable with the Republic of Moldova. Starting from this reflection, in our future analysis we will solely refer to them.

An overview of the Balkan countries included in the EU enlargement process is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Key indicators that characterize the Balkan states in the process of EU accession, 2014

Indicators	Montenegro	Macedonia	Albania	Serbia	Bosnia-Herzegov.	EU-28
Population						
Total population, thousand people	621, 5	2065,8	2895,9	7149,2	3827,3	506881
Gross natural growth rate of the population (per 1 000 inhabitants)	2,4	1,9	5,2	-4,9	-1,5	0,3
Life expectancy at birth, men, years	73,9	73,2	76,4	72,6	73,7	77,8
GDP						
GDP, current prices (Euro billion)	3,4	8,5	10,0	33,1	13,9	13920
GDP per capita (euro)	5436	4127	3440	4635	3641	27300
GDP per capita PPP (euro)	10600	10000	-	9500	7800	27300
GDP per capita PPP vs. EU average level (EU 28 = 100)	39	36	29	35	28	-
Real GDP growth rate,%	3,0	3,8	2,1	-1,8	1,1	1,3
Public finance, in relation to GDP						
Budget surplus / deficit,%	-3,1	-4,2	-5,1	-6,7	-2,0	-2,9
Government debt, %	56,7	38,2	71,8	68,9	-	86,8
Economic activity, employment, unemployment						
Economic activity rate,%	67,6	70,8	68,6	66,2	59,2	76,9
Employment rate, %	55,6	51,3	56,6	53,5	43,2	69,2
Unemployment rate,%	18,0	28,0	17,5	18,9	27,6	10,2
Unemployment rate among young people,%	35,8	53,1	39,0	47,1	62,7	22,2
Employment by economic sectors						
Agriculture, forestry, fishing,%	5,7	18,0	42,7	21,1	17,1	4,7
Industry,%	11,1	23,5	11,0	20,0	22,1	17,3
Construction,%	6,5	7,0	6,4	4,4	7,9	6,8
Services,%	76,7	51,4	39,4	54,5	52,7	70,5
The monetary market						
CPI inflation rate,%	-0,7	-0,3	0,7	2,9	-0,2	0,6
Annual average rate on credits,%	9,22	3,75	7,66	10,50	6,64	-
Average annual deposit rate,%	1,86	0,50	1,92	5,50	0,10	-
Investments						
Net foreign direct investment,% of GDP	9,7	3,3	8,0	3,7	3,0	-0,14
International trade						
Imports,% of GDP	62,0	65,1	49,0	54,3	49,8	40,2
The share of EU imports 28 in the total value of imports,%	45,8	63,5	61,1	57,1	58,9	
Exports,% of GDP	41,8	47,9	29,9	44,3	30,0	43,0
The share of exports to the EU 28 in the total value of exports,%	35,8	76,6	77,4	65,7	72,1	

Source: Commission Européenne. *La stratégie d'élargissement de l'UE. Bruxelles, 2015, COM (2015) 611 final, pp. 48-52.*

As it can be noticed in the table 1, the most populated country is Serbia. The number of inhabitants in the Republic of Moldova is closest to that of Albania and Macedonia. The population is growing at a fast pace in Albania (a country with a significant proportion of the Muslim population) and is decreasing in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. There are no significant disparities in life expectancy between the Balkan states and the EU 28, the shortest life expectancy being characteristic for Serbia.

The highest GDP volume was recorded in Serbia: 10 times higher than in Montenegro, 4 and 3 times higher than in Macedonia and Albania and 2.5 times higher than in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but the per capita situation is different: the highest is recorded in Montenegro, followed by Serbia, and the lowest in Albania. According to this indicator, the gaps between the Balkan states and the EU 28 are huge, ranging from 29% in Albania to 39% in Montenegro. Most Balkan states, with except Serbia, registered positive real GDP growth rates in 2014, higher than the average rates in the EU28.

In the Balkan countries, the leading economic sector is the service sector, except Albania, where the agriculture share stands at 42.7% compared to 4.7% in the EU28. Montenegro and Albania are characterized by a small share (11% of GDP), Macedonia being more industrialized (23.5%).

Compared to the Republic of Moldova, the activity and employment rates are higher but substantially lower than in the EU-28. The worst situation was in Bosnia-Herzegovina: 59.2% for the activity rate and 43.2% for the employment rate. The unemployment rate is double or triple compared to that in the EU, and the most dramatic situation is with regard to the youth: in Bosnia-Herzegovina about 2/3, and in Macedonia and Serbia about 1/2 of young people aged 15-24 did not have a job, which represents a major threat to further development.

As regards public finances, the budget deficit, except in Bosnia-Herzegovina, is higher than in the EU, exceeding it almost double in Macedonia and Albania. Substantial disparities can be seen in the share of government debt in GDP: it is higher in Albania and Serbia (although lower than average in the EU28) and substantially lower in Montenegro and Macedonia.

In three countries out of five (Montenegro, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina), the economy was in deflation, with the highest level of inflation (about 3%) being characteristic for Serbia. Interest rates on credits are lower than in the Republic of Moldova, ranging between 3% in Macedonia and 10.5% in Serbia, the deposit rates being very low or sometimes symbolic. Most net foreign direct investments in 2014 were made in Montenegro and Albania, almost triple compared to the other Balkan states.

Most Balkan states are open economies with close trade links with the EU28. Excluding Montenegro, exports to the EU make up between 2/3 and 3/4 of all exports, and the share of imports from the EU is about 60%.

As to competitiveness, the Balkan states stand far behind from the EU28 average. According to the 2014-2020 Europe 2020 Competitiveness Report, the gap can be represented as follows (Table 2).

Table 2

Europe 2020 Competitiveness Index Scores

Montenegro	4.07
Macedonia	3.62
Serbia	3.46
Average EU 28	4.56

Source: *The Europe 2020 Competitiveness Report 2014 Edition, p.13.*

The general overview of the competitiveness gap between the Balkan states and the EU average can be represented in Figure 1.

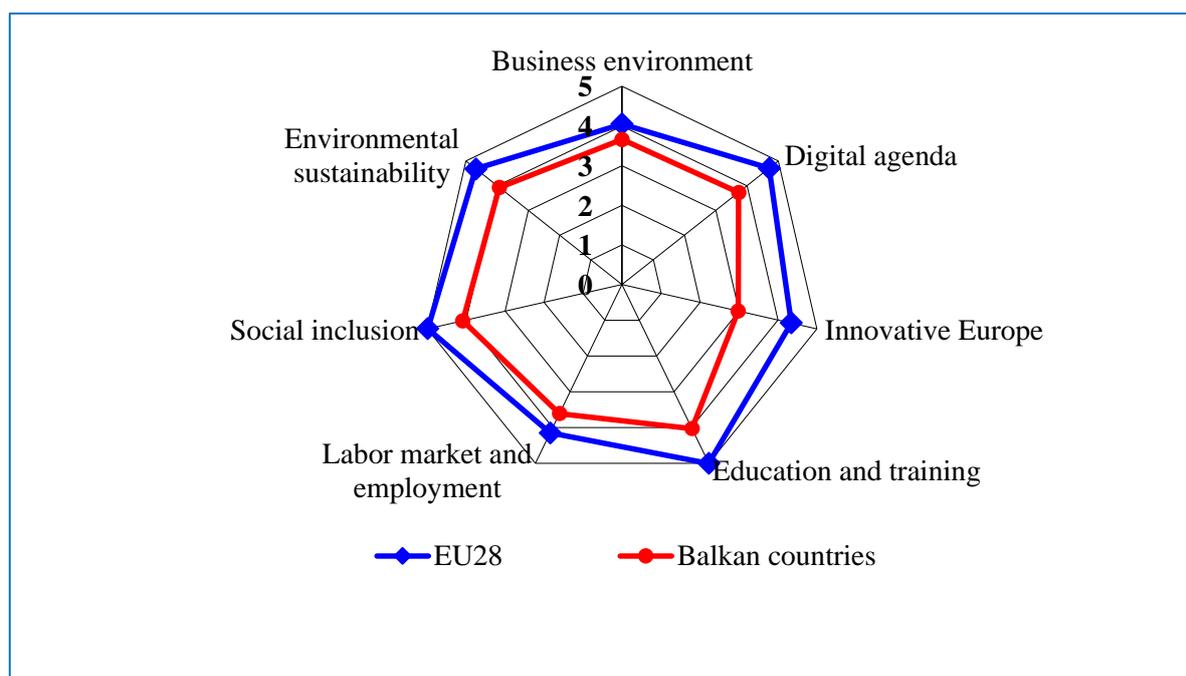


Figure 1. Competitive performance of the EU-28 compared to the Balkan states

Source: *The Europe Competitiveness Report, p.14.*

The difficulties related to the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU in 2007 led to the desertion from the "advance accession" tactics, i.e. of the candidate countries in full non-compliance conditions with the community EU acquis. As a result, the examination of the new candidate countries for compliance will be tougher, which will determine them to implement radical reforms within relatively short deadlines. This makes their experience of internal reforms very interesting for the states at a similar or lower level of development, as well as for the Republic of Moldova.

An analysis of the general and pillar level of national competitiveness is presented below, which will allow us identifying the partners of the benchmarking exercise, their performance and the standard country for the implementation of "best practices" in the field of competitiveness.

Table 3

General competitiveness level

Countries	Albania	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia	Republic of Moldova
Rank in the GCR (1-138)	80	107	68	82	90	100
Score (1-7)	4,1	3,8	4,2	4,1	4,0	3,9

Source: Based on data from *Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) 2016-2017*, p.94-95, 122-123, 244-245, 266-267, 314-315, 262-263.

According to the table 3, in terms of competitiveness, Macedonia has by far overpassed the Republic of Moldova (68th place vs 100th). However, it is not succeeding in all the pillars, the performance per pillar highlighting different groups of countries that can later be studied in order to borrow good experiences. Instead, Moldova has a better position in the ranking than Bosnia-Herzegovina (100th position vs 107th). However, the gap between the analysed countries is not huge, especially in the scoring, ranging from +0.3 points to -0.1 points compared to the score of the Republic of Moldova, which allows us to make comparisons within the selected group of countries.

Starting from the fact that in the *Global Competitiveness Report 2016-2017* the Republic of Moldova is placed in the factor-driven economies category, the following analysis includes only the first pillar of competitiveness - "Basic conditions".

Table 4

Pillars of the sub-index "Basic Conditions" (place in the ranking and score)

Pillars	Albania	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia	Republic of Moldova
Basic conditions, including:	74/4,5	94/4,2	66/4,6	86/4,3	87/4,3	101/4,1
Institutions	76/3,8	126/3,1	67/4,0	80/3,8	115/3,3	128/3,1
Infrastructure	91/3,5	105/3,2	80/3,8	76/3,9	74/3,9	86/3,6
Macroeconomic environment	93/4,3	76/4,5	44/5,2	119/3,7	103/4,1	100/4,1
Health and Primary Education	33/6,3	50/6,0	92/5,4	60/5,9	53/6,0	95/5,4

Source: Based on data from *GCR 2016-2017*, p.94-95, 122-123, 244-245, 266-267, 314-315, 262-263.

According to the data in the table 4, referring to the basic conditions, the Republic of Moldova has the lowest score, primarily due to the inadequate condition of its state institutions (128th place out of 138 countries). In this aspect, good examples to follow are Macedonia and Albania. As to the infrastructure, Montenegro and Serbia are more advanced. The quality of the macroeconomic environment is showing a very huge gap between the Republic of Moldova (100th place) and Macedonia (44th position) and relatively high compared to Bosnia-Herzegovina (76th place). Albania (33rd place), Bosnia-Herzegovina (50th place) and Serbia (53rd place) are more advanced in the health and primary education sectors, the Republic of Moldova standing on 95th place in this pillar.

In order to identify the best practices in the pillars, we will analyse the intra-pillar indicators for the better performing Balkan countries (Table 5).

Table 5

Performance in Institutional Development

Countries of reference	Macedonia RFY	Albania	Republic of Moldova
TOTAL	67/4.0	76/3.8	128/3.1
1.01.Property rights	88/4.1	119/3.5	129/3.1
1.02.Intellectual property protection	80/3.9	118/3.3	114/3.4
1.03.Diversion of public funds	61/3.7	84/3.2	130/2.2
1.04.Public trust in politicians	70/3.0	81/2.8	119/1.9
1.05.Irregular payments and bribes	38/4.9	66/4.0	116/3.0
1.06.Judicial independence	106/3.1	125/2.6	133/2.0
1.07.Favoritism in decisions of government officials	63/3.2	72/3.0	130/2.0
1.08.Wastefulness of government spending	31/3.8	64/3.3	97/2.6
1.09.Burden of government regulation	49/3.7	11/4.6	112/2.8
1.10.Efficiency of legal framework in settling disputes	80/3.4	120/2.8	135/2.2
1.11.Efficiency of the legal framework in changing regulations	92/3.1	109/2.8	134/2.1
1.12.Transparency of government policymaking	57/4.3	45/4.5	106/3,7
1.13.Costs of terrorism	93/4.8	56/5.4	50/5.5
1.14.Costs of crime and violence	77/4.4	66/4.8	61/4.8
1.15.Organized crime	96/4.3	94/4.3	91/4.3
1.16.Reliability of police services	47/5.0	45/5.0	117/3.2
1.17.Ethical behaviour of firms	54/4.0	43/4.3	122/3.1
1.18.Strength of auditing and reporting standards	79/4.4	95/4.2	128/3.5
1.19. Efficacy of corporate boards	66/4.9	82/4.7	108/4.4
1.20.Protection of minority shareholders' interests	76/4.0	57/4.2	133/3.0
1.21.Strength of investor protection (1-10)	14/7.2	8/7.3	36/6.3

Source: Based on data from GCR 2016-2017, p.94-95, 122-123, 244-245, 266-267, 314-315, 262-263.

The Republic of Moldova excels Macedonia and Albania only on the positions related to the terrorism costs, organized crime and violence, former military conflicts in the area, related to territorial disintegration and the migration crisis in the southern European regions, negatively influencing the situation in this area. However, as best practices can be taken as follows:

- Measures taken by Macedonia to improve the quality of governance (related to the reduction of diversion of funds and exorbitant government spending, corruption and favouritism in decision-making).
- Measures taken by Albania to increase governance efficiency (based on significant cuts in regulations and decision-making transparency) and private agents (thanks to the firms' ethical behaviour and the protection of minority shareholders and investors).

Table 6

Performance in infrastructure development

Countries of reference	Serbia	Montenegro	Republic of Moldova
TOTAL	74/3.9	76/3.9	86/3.6
2.01.Quality of overall infrastructure	107/3.2	96/3.4	110/3.1
2.02.Quality of roads	115/2.9	102/3.2	132/2.5
2.03.Quality of railroad infrastructure	86/2.1	60/2.9	70/2.7
2.04.Quality of port infrastructure	118/2.7	69/4.0	127/2.2
2.05.Quality of air transport infrastructure	93/3.9	81/4.1	94/3.9
2.06.Available airline seat, mill./week	87/87.4	123/20.9	114/29.3
2.07.Quality of electricity supply	71/4.8	93/4.0	87/4.3
2.08.Mobile-cellular telephone subscriptions / 100 pop.	61/120.5	11/162.2	86/108
2.09.Fixed-telephone lines / 100 pop.	27/36.5	41/24.8	30/35

Source: Based on data from GCR 2016-2017, p.94-95, 122-123, 244-245, 266-267, 314-315, 262-263/.

In terms of infrastructure advancement (Table 6), the Republic of Moldova exceeds Montenegro in 2 positions: the quality of electricity supplied and fixed-telephone lines per 100 inhabitants. However, it remains far behind in the provision of mobile phone subscriptions (86th place vs. 11th place) and the quality of port infrastructure (127th place versus 69th place). Serbia excels especially in the field of air transport services and the quality of the electricity supplied. A common problem for the Republic of Moldova and the Balkan countries remains the quality of the roads.

Table 7

Quality of the macroeconomic environment

Countries of reference	Macedonia	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Republic of Moldova
TOTAL	44/5.2	76/4.5	100/4.1
3.01.Budget deficit, % GDP	81/-3.7	29/-1.4	47/-2.3
3.02.Gross national savings, % GDP	23/30.0	123/10.4	112/12.9
3.03. Annual inflation rate, % change	67/-0.2	90/-1.0	127/9.6
3.04.Government debt, % GDP	48/38.6	64/45.5	57/42
3.05.Country credit rating, 0-100	78	107	118

Source: Based on data from GCR 2016-2017, p.94-95, 122-123, 244-245, 266-267, 314-315, 262-263.

As for the quality of the macroeconomic environment (table 7), Macedonia is facing a relatively high budget deficit, although the share of government debt in GDP is lower than in the Republic of Moldova. However, thanks to the high share of national economies in GDP and the quality of the business environment, Macedonia's credit rating is 78 points compared to 107 for Bosnia-Herzegovina and 118 for Moldova. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the situation was reverse: although the share of government debt in GDP was higher than that in the Republic of Moldova, although according to the weight of the state budget deficit, this country ranked quite well, the 29th place in the world, indicating that the country has recently promoted budget austerity measures. A significant macroeconomic particularity is that while the Balkan countries are going through a slight deflation, the Moldovan economy is facing inflation, which is generating the promotion of a restrictive credit-monetary policy, leading to a reduction in crediting the national economy.

Table 8

Performance in health and primary education

Countries of reference	Albania	Bosnia-Herzegov.	Serbia	Republic of Moldova
TOTAL	33/6.3	50/6.0	53/6.0	95/5.4
4.01.Malaria incidence, cases/ 100,000 pop.	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
4.02.Economic impact of malaria	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
4.03.Tuberculosis incidence, cases / 100 thousand pop.	44/19	63/42	53/24	104/153
4.04.Economic impact of tuberculosis	40/6.2	7/6.8	31/6.4	88/5.1
4.05. HIV prevalence, % adult pop.	1/<0.1	1/<0.1	1/<0.1	92/0.6
4.06. Economic Impact of HIV / AIDS	28/6.3	2/6.9	15/6.5	53/5.9
4.07.Infant mortality, deaths in 1,000 live births	69/12.5	37/5.1	43/5.9	77/13.6
4.08.Life expectancy, years	38/77.8	49/76.4	57/75.5	91/71.5
4.09.Quality of primary education	22/5.1	80/3.8	77/3.9	74/4.0
4.10.Primary education net enrolment rate	63/95.5	35/97.5	55/96.2	113/87.1

Source: Based on data from GCR 2016-2017, p.94-95, 122-123, 244-245, 266-267, 314-315, 262-263/.

To the chapter "Performance in health and primary education" (Table 8), the Republic of Moldova is significantly lagging behind the Balkan countries. There is a huge gap in tuberculosis incidence (104 in Moldova, 44 in Albania and 53 in Serbia) and HIV (92 in Moldova and 1 in the examined countries). Infant mortality indicators are the smallest in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, and life expectancy is the longest in Albania (38th place vs. 91 in Moldova). As far as primary education is concerned, its quality is clearly high in Albania (22nd place versus 74th) and the grades of primary school pupils are higher in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia (places 35 and 55 vs 113 in the Republic of Moldova).

Conclusions

1. Benchmarking represents a comparative assessment of performance, excellence or gaps in some areas of activity that point out the need to promote organizational and structural changes that will rectify failures. Establishing a benchmark that we should have as a sample and setting a "target" becomes an essential point in the development and implementation of economic policies.

2. The Republic of Moldova might find useful the experience of Albania and Macedonia in the field of quality of institutions, Montenegro and Serbia in the infrastructure quality, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia in ensuring macroeconomic stability, and Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia in the field of health and primary education.

3. The most vulnerable places of the Republic of Moldova compared to the studied group of the Balkan countries are the diversion of public funds, corruption and favouritism, the no transparency of government policy making and implementation process, strength of investor protection, incidence of tuberculosis and HIV among the population, little life expectancy and the insufficient pupils' enrolment in primary schools.

4. The objective for the Republic of Moldova, outlined in the *Roadmap to improve the competitiveness of the R. of Moldova*, is the process of transition of the national economy to the investment-driven economy [4, p.2]. This stage is based on the willingness and capacity of the country and its companies to invest heavily not only in reducing production costs but also in improving product quality, modernizing production processes, creating production and social infrastructure that will contribute to an increase in production efficiency. As far as benchmarking is concerned, of much interest are the best practices of Albania in tertiary education and training (42nd place versus 91st in the R. of Moldova), Macedonia in the efficiency of the goods market (34th place versus 107th), Montenegro and Macedonia in the field of the financial market development (places 54 and 57 instead of 129 in Moldova).

5. Starting from the fact that the Balkan countries can become, for the Republic of Moldova, reference countries in the process of approaching the EU, their experience in the selected areas should be taken into account in the elaboration of the national and sectorial policy measures.

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