

## **Review of the three evaluation cycles of the scientific journals published in the Republic of Moldova**

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The year 2023 marks the end of the third cycle of evaluation of scientific journals in the Republic of Moldova for the purpose of their recognition and classification as scientific editions. In this context it is necessary to analyse the relevance of the actions undertaken by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC) (and its predecessor - the National Council for Accreditation and Attestation (CNAA)), together with the Academy of Sciences of Moldova (ASM) and the Council of Rectors, during the last 15 years, focused on increasing the quality of periodical scientific publications published in the country.

The journal evaluation procedure started in 2009, based on the provisions of the Regulation on the evaluation and classification of scientific journals, approved by the Decision of the Supreme Council for Science and Technological Development (SCSTD) no. 212 of 06.11.2008. The establishment of standards for the activity and quality of scientific journals was stimulated by the Code on Science and Innovation of the Republic of Moldova no. 259 of 30.07.2004, which stipulated, in the requirements for accreditation of organisations in the fields of research and innovation, the publication of a periodical scientific journal "of which at least 20% of the authors are from abroad" (art.99, para.2 (g)). The establishment of this standard has boosted the activity of existing scientific journals, as well as the emergence of new scientific journals.

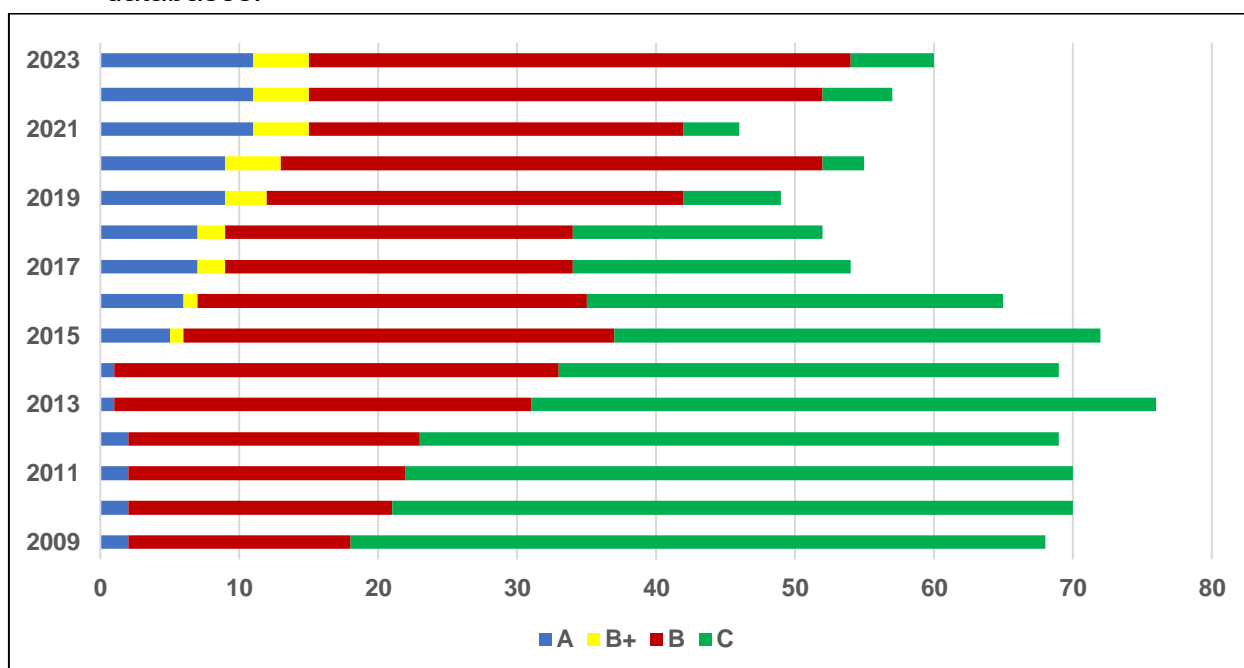
The initial version of the reference regulation laid down the principles for the creation of a joint CSȘDT - CNAA committee to evaluate journals, as well as the principles for classifying scientific journals into three levels, based on capacity and demonstrated performance:

- Type A. Journals listed in the Thompson - ISI Database and having accumulated more than 100 points (according to an evaluation form);
- Type B. Journals indexed in other international databases and which have accumulated more than 80 points;
- Type C. Journals with a scientific publication recognition score that have accumulated more than 50 points but are not indexed in the Thompson Database - ISI and other international databases.

In 2009, 68 journals were evaluated and ranked. Due to relatively low editorial quality and insufficient international visibility, the majority of journals, 73.5%, were assigned to the lower category - Type C (Fig.1). In Type B, journals with relative international visibility, 23.5% of journals were assigned and in Type A, journals indexed by major international databases, only 2 journals were assigned.

The evaluation regulations were amended by the CSȘDT Decision no.47 of 25.06.2015, which established a new type of scientific journals - Type B+ and revised the principles of classification of scientific publications as follows:

- Type A. Journals indexed in Thompson - ISI and Scopus databases;
- Type B+. Journals indexed in more than 2 databases, where journals are subject to the review process, fully edited in languages of international circulation and which have accumulated more than 120 points. For journals in the socio-human field - up to 60% of all published material is edited in languages of international circulation;
- Type B. Journals indexed in at least 2 databases, where the journals are subject to the evaluation process and have accumulated more than 120 points;
- Type C. Journals with a scientific publication recognition score that have accumulated between 80 and 120 points, but are not indexed in international databases.



**Fig.1. Evolution of scientific journals in the Republic of Moldova by type of classification**

The third substantial revision of the regulation took place in 2018 by the decision of the ANACEC Board of Directors no. 6 of 18 December 2018 (after the structural reforms carried out within the research-innovation system under Law 190 of 21.09.2017). In accordance with the changes made, the composition of the journal evaluation committee was extended, with the inclusion of representatives of the Board of Rectors, the list of types of scientific journals was revised, as well as the classification standards, as follows:

- Type A+. Scientific journals with international impact - journals listed (with impact-factor) in the WoS database;
- Type A. Scientific journals with international visibility - journals included in the WoS database (except those with a rating) and Scopus;
- Type B+. Scientific journals with potential for international recognition - journals meeting the following requirements:
  - indexing in 3 databases (other than WoS and Scopus) or international catalogues;

- registration in DOAJ or another Open Access journal database (for journals published with public funds);
- maintenance of an information website, with electronic versions of published material, with data on editorial policy, editorial board, review procedure, etc..;
- publishing the journal in its entirety in international languages (except for journals in the socio-humanities field);
  - sufficient reflection in the abstract (in Romanian and in a language of international circulation) of the elements, ideas and results of the article, in a volume of 100 to 150 words;
- the possession of the DOI identifier by the journal and articles;
- strict adherence to the stated periodicity;
- the maintenance of publications in the WoS and/or SCOPUS databases by the editor-in-chief and at least two other members of the editorial board;
  - accumulation of more than 750 points according to the journal evaluation sheet;
- Type B. Nationally recognised scientific journals - journals that meet the following requirements:
  - indexing in at least 2 databases from the list of databases approved by the ANACEC;
  - accumulation of more than 500 points according to the journal evaluation sheet;
- Type C. Journals with potential for national recognition - journals that have accumulated more than 300 points and are indexed in at least 1 international database.

Despite the fact that each revision of the regulatory framework was aimed at increasing the requirements for the evaluation and classification of scientific periodicals published in the country, the number and the share of scientific journals in higher categories has been increasing. Thus, the share of Type A scientific journals has increased to 18.3%, while the share of Type C journals has decreased to 10.0% (data for 01.04.2023).

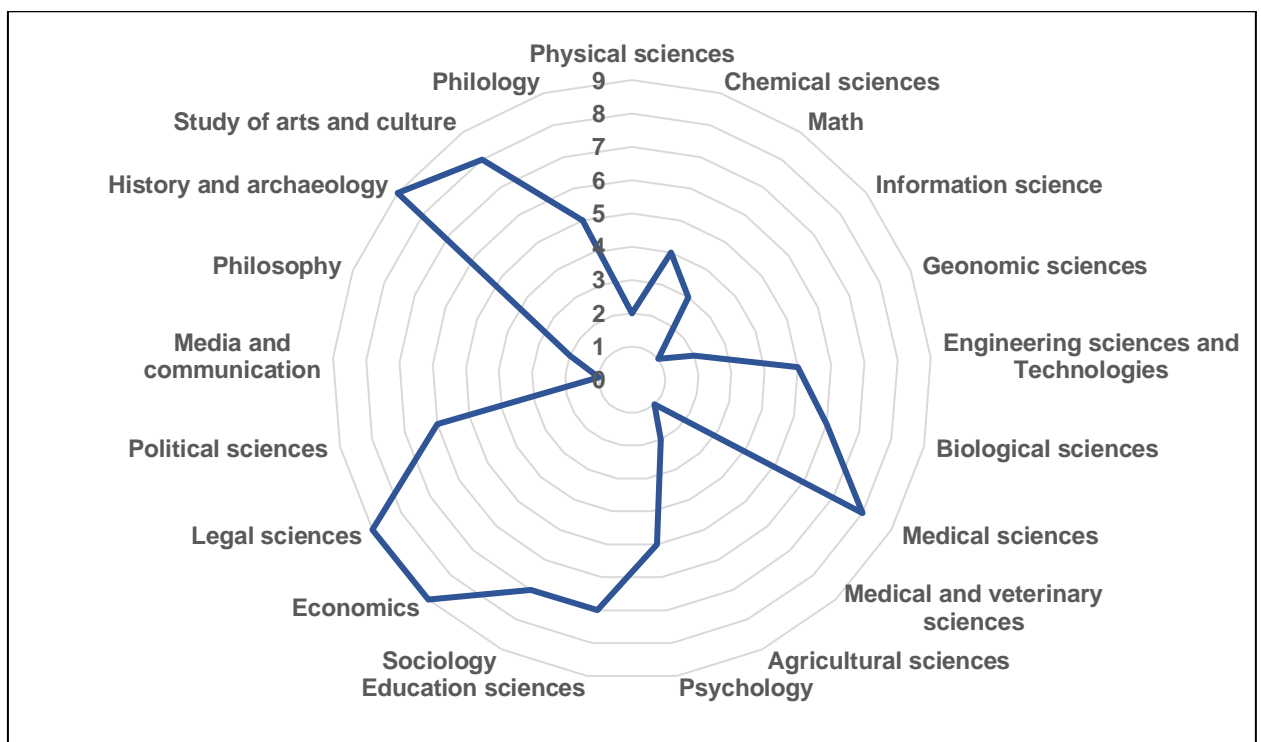
If we analyse the WoS and/or SCOPUS indexed journals by fields of science, it is a bit unexpected that 5 out of the 11 journals from the Republic of Moldova in these databases represent the field of humanities (for which, apparently, access to these databases is more difficult, compared to other scientific fields):

- 1) [Buletinul Academiei de Științe a Republicii Moldova. Matematica](#) (SCOPUS);
- 2) [Chemistry Journal of Moldova](#) (WoS și SCOPUS);
- 3) [Computer Science Journal of Moldova](#) (WoS și SCOPUS);
- 4) [Plural. History. Culture. Society](#) (SCOPUS);
- 5) [Problemele energiei regionale](#) (WoS);
- 6) [Quasigroups and Related Systems](#) (SCOPUS);
- 7) [Revista Arheologica](#) (SCOPUS);

- 8) [Revista Arta](#) (SCOPUS);
- 9) [Revista de Etnologie și Culturologie](#) (SCOPUS);
- 10) [Stratum Plus](#) (WoS și SCOPUS);
- 11) [Surface engineering and applied electrochemistry](#) (WoS și SCOPUS).

The decrease in the number of scientific journals after 2015, reflected in Fig.1, is likely to be caused by the approval of the Research and Development Strategy of the Republic of Moldova until 2020 (GD no. 920 of 07.11.2014), which provided for the cancellation of the accreditation of organizations in the field of research and innovation and, respectively, the standard that required the institution to publish a scientific journal.

Currently, 2/3 of scientific journals profiles are in the field of socio-humanities, 15% - in physical, mathematical, chemical and technical sciences and 15% - in medical and biological sciences (Fig.2).



**Fig.2. Distribution of scientific journal profiles according to scientific fields**

The greatest opportunities for publishing articles in scientific journals are enjoyed by representatives of economics, legal sciences and history&archaeology. These three fields have 9 recognised scientific journals each. Eight recognised scientific journals are published in the medical sciences and the study of arts&culture. At the other end of the scale are veterinary sciences and media&communication, with only 1 recognised journal each.

The above data demonstrate how quantitative and qualitative social effects can be shaped through evaluation and accreditation policies (of organisations and scientific journals). We are aware that the structural optimisation of the research-innovation system, which started in the previous year, could also influence the work of scientific journals and could also result in an optimisation of the number of journals, especially in

fields with more journals. The main thing is that these disruptions should contribute to increasing the quality of scientific journals published in the country and not vice versa.

In order to align with the intention to increase the relevance and impact of scientific activity, the standards, which will be applied in relation to the new cycle of evaluation of scientific journals, are to be rethought with a view to increasing the number of journals indexed by international databases (which, of course, requires compliance with international standards in the process of publishing scientific journals), in order to increase the visibility of research carried out in the Republic of Moldova.