

NEWSLETTER

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PROJECT OBJECTIVE

To foster and promote further the internationalization of Armenian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) through the development of national and institutional policy framework and tools.

OUTCOMES

- Creation and implementation of a policy framework on internationalization
- A National Platform for internationalization in Higher Education
- ICO staff of HEIs trained
- ICO resources and service-oriented centers at the Armenian HEIs are in place.



THE ARMENIA ADVANTAGE: Armenia Named the Economist's "Country of the Year 2018"

The year 2018 was a historic year for the Republic of Armenia. A series of events fundamentally transformed the political landscape in the country. The nationwide movement that came to be known as the Velvet Revolution was multigenerational, cut across social and economic lines, engulfed rural and urban centers, and saw unparalleled levels of youth engagement.



We just had, recently, a fantastic example of a peaceful transition that was led by youth, Armenia. There was a peaceful governmental transition led by a youth movement and these are fantastic examples to show that there are reasons to hope that the youth generation would be able to do better than my own generation.

António Guterres
United Nations Secretary General

TRAINING ON FUNDAMENTALS OF BUILDING A STRATEGIC INTERNATIONALIZATION PLAN AT UPC, BARCELONA, SPAIN

BARCELONA, Spain – From February 18 to 24, the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC) – BarcelonaTech, hosted a training workshop on Fundamentals of Building a Strategic Internationalization Plan within the Erasmus+ Boosting Strategy and Marketing for Internationalization of Armenian Universities (BOOST) project. The training, conducted by UPC and Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV), Spain, aimed to introduce the Strategic Planning Cycle from the perspectives of European best-practice and know-how.

The project consortium partners from Armenian State Pedagogical University (ASPU), American University of Armenia (AUA), Shirak State University (ShSU) after Nalbandyan, Vanadzor State University (VSU) after H. Tumanyan, Yerevan State Conservatory (YSC) after Komitas, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia (RA), National Information Centre on Academic Recognition and Mobility (ArmENIC), as well as Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech), Estonia, were trained



on the diagnosis phases by SWOT analysis, environmental scanning on trends in higher education through implementation, evaluation, and execution of corrective action. The interactive training was concluded with the facilitators' feedback and recommendations to the internationalization action plans prepared by each institution for implementation at the institutional level, respectively.



The training was followed by a coordination meeting of consortium members with representatives from European partner institutions: Instituto Superior Técnico (IST) in Portugal, UPC in Spain, URV in Spain, and Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) in Sweden. The consortium members discussed project results and achievements and shared their plans of upcoming activities corresponding to work packages.

VSU: ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ENHANCEMENT AS A STARTING POINT OF INTERNATIONALIZATION

It is an irrefutable fact that most, if not all, universities strive to enhance their international profile by incorporating an intercultural and international dimension into their teaching curriculums and research. Functioning as a multifaceted process, internationalization comes in all forms and breadths, and the extent to which it is prioritized markedly differs from one university to another. The VSU community, being genuinely committed to the internationalization process, adopted bilingual instruction as a core component of the university strategy for internationalization. Not surprisingly, this served as the starting point of the VSU internationalization agenda, considering that use of English as a medium of instruction has evidently been growing significantly in recent years. Hence, to foster internationalization at home, the VSU Chair of Foreign Languages, with the strong support of the University leadership, embarked on a project aimed at enhancing the English language proficiency of the university teaching staff so they would be able to teach their respective academic subjects in English within the "English Language and Literature" academic program. In pursuit of this goal, Head of the Chair of Foreign Languages Lusik Vardanyan, with the support of more than 30 bachelor





and master students of the English Department, has been working with two groups of administrative and academic staff since June 2017. At the outset, the level of English language proficiency required for this purpose was determined, which led to adopting a multi-level and multi-component approach to two inextricably interwoven activities that the academic staff has enthusiastically been involved in teaching and learning. The dual role that the staff has assumed makes this project unique in its kind – all project participants act as both teachers and students, realizing each role with great love and responsibility. As to the

content of the course, it incorporates a myriad of activities, including but not limited to subject-specific vocabulary and terms, grammar, discussions and debates, lessons and presentations by the participants. The implementation of this project will continue until the expected outcomes are fully met.

SHSU: ENHANCING OWNERSHIP FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION

In April 2018 ShSU BOOST project team organized an in-house training with the university staff and students. During the meeting the team discussed the concept and process of internationalization, the steps towards it, the importance of Strategic Internationalization Plan (SIP), definiteness and tangibility of the strategy, and viability of its

implementation. University staff and students were also introduced to such tools as SWOT and SOAR to assist them in conducting self-assessment at the departmental and unit levels. The audience was also informed about the importance of addressing the communication strategy for every phase of the SIP.



The training resulted in changing ShSU staff and student perceptions of the internationalization process, as they realized that ownership of the internationalization process belongs to all structural units within ShSU. This allows them to take part in the process and to feel responsible for the SIP implementation.

DISSEMINATION CONFERENCE AT VSU, VANADZOR, ARMENIA

VANADZOR, Armenia – On 12 June 2018, VSU hosted a National Conference within the framework of the Erasmus+ BOOST project. The conference was designated to discussing the main issues related to the implementation of the strategic plans for national and institutional internationalization of higher education. The local consortium members presented the prevalent opportunities and challenges in the internationalization of Armenian



HEIs. The conference discussions also addressed elements of the reform adopted at the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Ministerial Conference – Paris Communiqué, as well as issues related to qualification

recognition articulated by the Lisbon Convention.

The conference was attended by representatives from regional universities, namely Ijevan Branch of Yerevan State University (YSU), Vanadzor Branch of Armenian National Agrarian University, as well as vocational educational



institutions, namely Vanadzor State Medical College, VSU College, and Lori Regional State College. Most of the presentations were followed by constructive and useful discussions on the key issues and new challenges of the internationalization of HEIs.



TRAINING ON MARKETING AND INTERNATIONALIZATION AT IST, LISBON, PORTUGAL

LISBON, Portugal – On June 18-22, the IST in Lisbon hosted a training workshop on Marketing and Cultural Challenges in Internationalization within the Erasmus+ BOOST project. The training aimed to introduce approaches to marketing and internationalization of HEIs from the perspectives of European best practices and know-how.

The BOOST project consortium partners from ASPU, AUA, ShSU, VSU, YSC, the RA Ministry of Education and Science, and ArmENIC had the opportunity to acquire useful and effective skills for boosting international visibility, preparing communication and marketing strategies, conducting international market analysis and networking with international universities.

On the first day of the training, the



consortium's Armenian partners each pitched brief five-minute presentations on their respective universities using their existing marketing approaches. Afterwards, the training facilitators provided feedback on each presentation and offered recommendations for further improvement.



During the course of the training, partner country representatives from IST in Portugal, KTH in Sweden, UPC and URV in Spain, and TalTech in Estonia shared their interesting experiences on internationalization models, including how to market institutions using university staff and students; use of academic rankings as marketing tools; the impact of projects on the marketing process; and other international marketing and recruitment models, such as the International Ambassador's program; analysis of media and communication strategies; using Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) as a fostering strategy, etc. Not only were the presentations immensely useful to all participants, but also advantageous for developing the National

Internationalization Strategy of the Republic of Armenia, which is one of the major project outcomes expected from the RA Ministry of Education and Science as a consortium partner. The training program was concluded with a project management meeting where the consortium members discussed project results and achievements and shared their plans of upcoming activities relevant to work packages. It was agreed that each Armenian university will prepare a draft marketing and communications strategy for their respective university in accordance with their individual priorities, which will be ultimately reflected in the overall internationalization of higher education institutions in the country. As part of the cultural program, the consortium partners visited the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum. They were greeted by Dr. Razmik Panossian, Director of the Armenian Communities Department at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, who briefed them on the history of the museum.



BEST PRACTICES IN INTERNATIONALIZATION

TÉCNICO LISBOA'S INTERNATIONAL AMBASSADOR PROGRAM



Técnico Lisboa is regularly approached by its partners in order to encourage its students to take up mobility studies in partner schools and to participate in their fairs, while disseminating information about the activities of Técnico.

In this regard, the International Area (AAI) has set up the Técnico Ambassador Program for creating a network of International Ambassadors who will actively disseminate and promote Técnico throughout their mobility studentship outside Portugal.

The International Ambassador Program aims to foster international visibility effectively using in-house resources.

Mobility students (national and international) act as ambassadors abroad and receive triple certification: the Ambassadors Training Certification, the soft skills certificate for completing formal training and ambassador certificate as their diploma supplement.

Técnico Lisboa's International Ambassadors must complete compulsory training in ambassadorial skills before starting their dissemination initiatives. The purpose of this training is to familiarize Ambassadors with the types of activities they should engage in, while empowering them to deliver Técnico's institutional presentation and answer the most frequently asked questions by prospective foreign students.

The training starts with gaining institutional knowledge (academic

courses offered by the institution and other relevant facts) and is complemented by Communicating and Making Oral Presentations, a cross-cutting soft skills training module.

Ambassadors receive a certificate of participation in the program upon completing the requirements, along with a starter kit of necessary material for their perusal.

The Ambassadors' duties include

- Attending all three compulsory preparatory activities.
- Submitting a witness statement or video of their previous mobility experience (for foreign students) or experience as an ambassador (for national students).
- Be accessible by email throughout the program, through which he or she is able to clarify questions posed by students interested in a mobility period in Técnico or in the destination/country of origin of the ambassadors involved in the program.
- Organizing during the program duration at least one event as ambassador and presenting a summary report (2 pages) of the event describing the activities carried out with photos that provide proof of the event.

Program recognition

A certification of participation is awarded upon completion of the compulsory training program and fulfillment of the requirements from Técnico Lisboa Ambassadors, including realization of at least one dissemination event.

Main results that justify the project/initiative as Best Practice (impact and exploitation)

- Implement an initiative that fosters the international visibility

of their university;

- Become familiar with a model practice that will generate significant return on minimal investment;
- Learn how to use available in-house resources to train students and generate value; and
- Increase Ambassadors skills and prestige through certification.
- This will result in a win-win relationship between students and the institution.

STUDYIN ESTONIA PLATFORM

Study in Estonia is a cooperation platform of institutions of higher education in Estonia to increase the visibility of Estonia as an attractive study destination and promote the possibilities available there for international students. Currently, its activities are coordinated by the Archimedes Foundation within the framework of Dora Pluss, financed by the European Regional Development Fund.



In addition to providing instruction in English, this platform also has a well-working system of support services for international students. TalTech has developed online new student counselling support virtual office and student guide: <https://www.ttu.ee/students/student-support-services>.

DISSEMINATION CONFERENCE AT YSC, YEREVAN, ARMENIA

YEREVAN, Armenia – On September 27, the International Conference on "Prospects for Higher Education Internationalization" took place at YSC. Welcoming the conference participants was the Deputy Minister of Education and Science, Hovhannes Hovhannisyan, and the Head of ERASMUS+ National Office, Lana Karlova.

The conference started with presentations of the activities carried out within the BOOST program for the internationalization of universities. Next, on the conference agenda were the presentations of BOOST partners from Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Estonia, and the United States, who spoke about their experiences with the internationalization of their respective universities, touching upon their development perspectives and approaches to building intercultural communication skills.

The arts sphere was covered by YSC. The representatives were YSC professor, Honored Artist of Armenia, A. Talalyan, and foreign student S. Gharibyan. At the end of the conference, the participants enjoyed surprise renditions of classical and national music by several foreign students.



TRAINING ON JOINT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND CREDIT MOBILITY AT TALTECH, TALLINN, ESTONIA



TALLINN, Estonia – Between October 22 and 26, TalTech organized a one-week study tour within the framework of the Erasmus+ BOOST project. The training was titled "Joint educational programs and credit mobility" and involved 21 participants from the BOOST partner universities of Armenia, including ASPU, AUA, YSC, ShSU, VSU, the RA Ministry of Education and Science, as well as ArmENIC. During the training, TalTech staff, along with the European partners of the project, introduced

the participants with the full life-cycle of drafting and implementing joint educational projects, the university recognition process, the internationalization strategy and marketing of universities, the Erasmus Mundus joint postgraduate programs, the implementation of Erasmus+ credit mobility programs, and other related topics.

On October 23, the participants visited Tartu University and were introduced to the internationalization mechanisms and projects of the university.

The coordinators of the project also held their periodic Project Management meeting on October 23. During the meeting, the Armenian and European partners discussed their respective achievements, financial position, expenses incurred, and future activities of the project.



IN-HOUSE TRAINING AT ASPU, YEREVAN, ARMENIA

YEREVAN, Armenia – On December 12, following the training workshops in Lisbon and Tallinn, ASPU hosted an in-house training where the Armenian consortium members shared their know-how and lessons learned from the trainings in European universities. The Head of International Cooperation Unit at ASPU, Marianna Harutyunyan, welcomed the participants from the HEIs, as well as the RA Ministry of



Education and Science. Following her remarks, the representatives from AUA, VSU, ASPU, YSC, and ShSU made presentations on higher education internationalization strategy, strategic plan development, internationalization at home, recognition of joint degree programs, increase of university visibility, marketing strategies, internationalization ambassador

program, credit recognition and institutional strategic plan. European best practices were presented in comparison with the prevalent Armenian ones. The participants showed great enthusiasm and interest in the topics covered by the presentations and were actively engaged in the discussions that ensued.



ARMENIC STUDY: FRAUD IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Nowadays, internationalization of higher education is one of the most important and central components of university strategic plans and national educational policy agendas. HEIs are striving to promote internationalization and raise their own institutional visibility in the world of higher education. However, alongside these positive trends of internationalization, mobility of students and staff, as well as development of information technologies, the phenomenon of fraud is also growing. Like any other important sector that has direct impact on the welfare of society, the phenomenon of fraud in international higher education, though not new, is growing in extent and magnitude finding new victims and adversely affecting new institutions and markets.

In 2017 ArmENIC conducted a study and published its findings in a handbook entitled "Fraud in International Higher Education." The aim of the handbook is to raise awareness of the issue and enhance the capacity of Armenian HEIs,

employers, applicants, and students in detecting and combating fraud in higher education, particularly with fake diploma mills and fraudulent qualifications mimicking international norms.

Chart 1 depicts the top 10 locations of diploma mills and Chart 2 shows the percentages of fraud in 114 countries, by sector. Though in 2014-2015 fraud in education ranked sixth in 23 different sectors, the number of cases revealed was relatively the highest at 132.

Combating fraud in international higher education requires uniting forces by focusing on the quality of education, as well as by scrutinizing the nature and status of institutions issuing diplomas in higher education. Information about HEIs is freely accessible to the public, including

detailed information on their accreditation, recognition of their educational programs at national and international levels, and academic and professional qualifications and competences of their teaching staff. As fraud in higher education is constantly evolving,

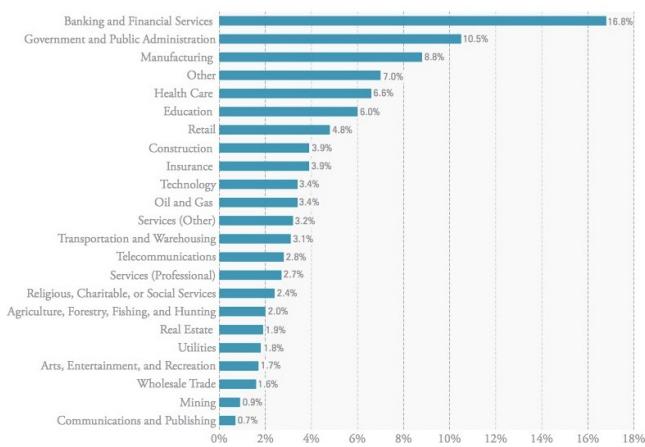
it is necessary to continue to develop new approaches and upgrade the ways and means for fighting against this damaging phenomenon.

For full information regarding the study results or the handbook, contact info@armenic.am.

Chart 1: Top 10 European Locations of Fraudulent Diploma Mills

Countries	Mills	Percent increase in fraud over prior year
United Kingdom	339	25%
Italy	43	207%
Belgium	36	33%
Netherlands	34	13%
Switzerland	21	31%
Ireland	20	25%
Germany	13	0%
Spain	12	33%
Austria	11	0%
France	11	57%

Chart 2:



REFLECTIONS BY MOBILITY PARTICIPANTS



"One of the best opportunities ever given to me has been the chance to study at Linköping University, Sweden, on a student exchange program. At the very beginning, everything seemed a little complicated, hard and even impossible at times, but once I got used to the new environment, I started appreciating every moment spent there. Most students hesitate whether or not to apply for studies abroad, thinking it might be hard to live in a completely unfamiliar place away from home. However, I'd like to say, that it is one of the best parts of the program. Once away from families and friends, students learn to become more independent and self-confident. Besides, being away from everyone, the necessity of making new friends in an intercultural and international community becomes a great asset. The exchange year gave me a lot – it was the best opportunity for me to make lots of friends, overcome my insecurities, fears and to become a better student overall. I am so happy to be among those who forever cherish the unforgettable moments of exchange student life."

Rima Arustamyan, VSU, Armenia

Exchange student at the University of Linköping in 2017-2018 academic year



"Studying as an exchange student in Paris Lodron University of Salzburg was one of the best experiences I have ever had. Within the framework of the Erasmus+ Mobility Program, I had a chance to study for one semester in one of the most beautiful cities in Europe with a rich cultural heritage. Studying in an intellectually stimulating and inspiring environment, I enriched my academic knowledge under the guidance of international scholars, as well as built a strong social network with students from all over the world. Studying abroad also took me out of my comfort zone, broadened my horizons, and made me more open-minded, more independent and a confident person. The skills and knowledge that I gained during the exchange program brought me one step closer to my goals."

Martina Sardaryan, AUA, Armenia

Exchange student at the University of Salzburg in spring 2018



"I am very much grateful to the BOOST project for this wonderful opportunity to attend a one-week training at Instituto Superior Tecnico, Lisbon. The visit to this university gave me a great insight into the European expertise of enhancing the visibility of HEIs. The presentations made at the training will definitely help enhance our institutional communications strategy."

Margarit Hovhannisyan, AUA, Armenia

Visited IST in June 2018 within Erasmus+ BOOST project

PROJECT PARTNERS

ARMENIAN PARTNERS

- RA Ministry of Education & Science
- Armenian State Pedagogical University after Khachatur Abovian (ASPU)
- American University of Armenia (AUA)
- Yerevan State Conservatory after Komitas (YSC)
- Shirak State University after Mikayel Nalbandyan (ShSU)
- Vanadzor State University after Hovhannes Toumanyan (VSU)
- National Information Center for Academic Recognition and Mobility (ArmEnic)



EU PARTNERS

- Universitat Politècnica De Catalunya (UPC), Spain
- Instituto Superior Técnico (IST), Portugal
- Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV), Spain
- Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Sweden
- Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech), Estonia

