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Our vision is to become a country of knowledge, fully integrated within the European educational area. Our goal is to enhance the internationalization processes of Armenian higher education institutions (HEIs) while prioritizing the mobility of students, faculty and administrative staff; the introduction of study programs in foreign languages; and, the internationalization of research. As the BOOST Project aims to promote the internationalization of Armenian HEIs through the development of national and institutional policy frameworks and tools, it will directly contribute to the achievement of the aforementioned goals. The RA Ministry of Education and Science expresses its readiness to ensure the project's success and sustainability through its direct involvement.

Mr. Vahram Mkrtchyan
 RA Deputy Minister of Science & Education



ABOUT THE PROJECT

OBJECTIVE

To foster and promote further internationalization of Armenian HEI through development of national and institutional policy framework and tools.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Develop national policy framework and tools for facilitating internationalization practices in Armenian HE,
- Create a National Platform and online tools for mapping and benchmarking internationalization processes in Higher Education,
- Build capacities of International Cooperation Office (ICO) staff of HEIs,

MoES and social partners on strategic management, marketing and cultural challenges as well as implementation of credit mobility, ensuring holistic approach to internationalization management issues,

- Create or enhance ICO resources and service-oriented centers at the Armenian HEIs, including development of strategic and marketing plans and tools.

OUTCOMES

- Creation and implementation of 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 in place.



BOOST PROJECT IN PROGRESS

The Erasmus+ BOOST Project has planned and implemented several capacity-building activities that directly contribute to the implementation of the main objectives set forth in the Project Proposal. Following the kick-off meeting in February 2017, various events have been conducted within the one and a half year. Particularly in May 2017, the project Coordinator Armenian State Pedagogical University after Khachatur Abovian (ASPU), initiated an inter-project coaching by ERASMUS + HARMONY /Development of approaches to harmonization of comprehensive internationalization strategies in higher education, research and innovation at EU and partner countries/project of the Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University and Eurasia International University.

The inter-project coaching was initiated taking into account the similarities in overall objectives of these two projects, which is the development of an internationalization strategy of higher education institutions in Armenia. The HARMONY team shared the project results that have already been reached in the first 18 months of the project. The meeting was particularly focused on the questionnaires and methodology developed by the HARMONY project in order to assess the state of internationalization in partner universities and countries like Armenia, Russia, Belarus, UK, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Germany and Greece. The data obtained by questionnaire later served as a basis to carry out benchmarking analysis within the BOOST project aiming to examine the level of internationalization

of Armenian higher education institutions using other post-Soviet and European universities for comparison. The main achievement of the benchmarking analysis, however, carried out within the BOOST project was the case study of national strategies of each benchmarked country.

Thus, the data gathered within the HARMONY project on the internationalization level of each country Higher Education (HE) was in most cases the direct reflection of national strategies. The results of the benchmarking analysis were



also applied to conduct SWOT analysis of HE internationalization in Armenia.

The first step in reviewing the internationalization practices and policy framework of EU countries was the study visit to the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Sweden which was held on June 7-9, 2017. During the visit, the participants got acquainted with the international projects and internationalization procedure of KTH, the EU integration process in higher education and internationalization strategies and trends in European higher education. The participants were acquainted with the activities of the Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (STINT) as a sample of best practice of implementation of an internationalization strategy. STINT promotes internationalization of Swedish higher education and research by enhancing competitiveness and strengthening attractiveness of Swedish universities.

To further enhance knowledge of *The participants were trained on the diagnosis phases for SWOT, environment scanning on trends in HE through implementation, evaluation and correcting measures.*





the International Cooperation Office (ICO) staff of HEIs, Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) and partner entities on strategic management, and to develop skills to build strategic internationalization plan, a training

workshop was organized at the Universitat Politecnica de Catalunya (UPC), Spain on 19-23 February, 2018. During the training workshop, the presenters introduced the Strategic Planning Cycle from the perspective of European best-practices and know-how approaches.

The participants were also trained on the diagnosis phases for SWOT, environment scanning on trends in HE through implementation, evaluation and correction measures. The interactive training was concluded with facilitators'

feedback on recommendations for internationalization action plans prepared by each institution to be further implemented within their respective universities at the institutional level.



FROM IDEA TO ACTION

THE IDEA

Is it enough to have an idea to start the development of Project Proposal? Of course, generation of worthy idea is crucial to start the process. However, it is not enough. Once the idea is born, it needs efforts to find like-minded people to join the initiative, get common understanding and win support by bigger team. This is how it happened with the Erasmus+ BOOST Project, when the American University of Armenia (AUA), driven by the need to set an international cooperation office, started campaigning the idea which then evolved in developing a Project proposal that would enhance and promote internationalization of Higher Education in Armenia.

THE PARTNERSHIP

Sparked with the idea, AUA advocated it with Armenian State Pedagogical University after Khachatur Abovian (ASPU) and, together with Universitat Politecnica de Catalunya (UPC), they started the development of the Proposal.

Partners from EU Instituto Superior Tecnico (ICT), Portugal, Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Sweden, Rovira and Virgili University (URV), Spain and Tallinn University of Technology, (TTU), Estonia, having big experience and large international cooperation, joined the initiative to share their knowledge and experience with Armenian Partners (Ministry of Education and Science, ASPU, AUA, Shirak State University

after M. Nalbandyan (ShSU), Vanadzor State University after H. Tumanyan (VSU), Yerevan State Conservatory after Komitas and National Information Center for Academic Recognition and Mobility (ArmEnic). To bring in different viewpoints on HE internationalization, different Universities and organizations have been contacted to join the initiative and share their experience with the Consortium.



Developing a proposal

What should be considered when developing a grant Proposal? There are several guidelines on how to write proposals, how to specify aims and objectives, etc., but the experience proves that Proposal development needs wider knowledge of not only the technical approaches in writing proposal, but also the corresponding background; in this case global trends in HE, Internationalization issues, national and international policy papers. Basic literature, articles and reports might provide a valuable insight to the vision the Proposal should follow. Another source for the proposal development is findings from previous projects, reports, guides drawing lessons from practitioners in the field. Getting to know other's experience might make you look at the things outside of the box and see the bigger picture you would like to have at the end of the Project.

Understanding your needs is another crucial part of the Proposal writing. Going around getting

information, figures, what went well and wrong, advice from stakeholders not directly involved in the Project will enhance your Project and ensure support of bigger community. Consider each opinion on the issue concerned, that might make your Proposal even stronger. Define the problem and state the goals that will finally drive you to writing the narrative part of the Project. Consider also the impact and sustainability issues of the Project and the groups it will target.



Consider funding guidelines, eligibility criteria and evaluation:

Sometimes sparked with the idea, the team working on the Proposal development leaves out important information on eligibility criteria, funding rules and evaluation criteria that will cause your Project

not being evaluated further. Read carefully the funding rules and consider them during the Project proposal development. Lost with guidelines, focus of the Project and ideas? Get feedback from Partners and peers that might give you unbiased and frank opinion. Find someone who has had experience in similar processes and don't be afraid of approaching them and getting informal information and some guidance.

And you're finally there! Here you are, the Project has been positively evaluated and you got the funding. The bigger process starts at this point: the coordination of the Project which needs sufficient professional capacity involving different structures of the organization participating in the Project. Communication, involvement of all stakeholders in the Process, finding solutions to challenging situations, keeping the ethical and professional values, the high spirit of the Consortium needs big efforts, emotional intelligence and professional approaches to the Project Management.

SOME KEY FIGURES ON HIGHER EDUCATION INTERNATIONALIZATION IN ARMENIA

The National Information Center for Academic Recognition and Mobility is a member of the international network of ENIC-NARIC organizations, which are obliged to contribute to the implementation of the challenges mapped out in the Bologna Declaration. The Center provides information on national and foreign education systems, qualifications, national qualification frameworks as well as provides advice on the recognition and assessment of qualifications.

While speaking about the internationalization of the Armenian higher education system and HEIs, it is important

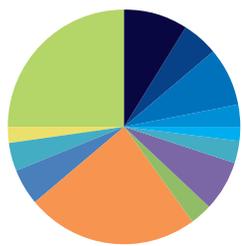
to figure out which are the target countries for Armenia and which country graduates tend to continue education in Armenia.



According to the applications and requests received by the National Information Center for Academic Recognition and Mobility in 2017,

it is possible to have an idea of the present situation.

Chart 1 below shows the geographic origin of foreign qualifications considered by the Center which were evaluated by the ArmEnic for academic or professional purposes. Most probably, the geography of foreign students choosing Armenia as a study destination is wider but universities that are actively

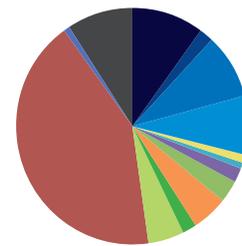


- USA 9%
- Israel 5%
- Germany 8%
- Iran 3%
- Lebanon 2%
- Britain 3%
- Ukraine 7%
- China 3%
- Russia 24%
- Syria 5%
- Georgia 4%
- France 2%
- Other 25%

recruiting students do not always ask advice of the Center and thus our information may not always be fully reflective of the reality. As it can be seen, the majority of applicants seeking recognition were holders of Russian qualifications (24%). The qualifications obtained in the USA consist 9% of the total number, Germany 8%, Ukraine 7% and Syria 5%. In case of outbound mobility – when individuals with Armenian qualifications choose to study further in other countries or for employment purposes, the Center provides an advisory statement on their qualifications. The advisory statements are provided both to individuals and various organizations.

Chart 2 shows the requests received by the organizations while the requests of individuals are not included since in many cases the

final destination is not mentioned. According to 2017 data, 42% of total requests were received from Georgia. During 2017, ArmEnic also received requests from the USA (10%), Germany (9%), Sweden (5%) and Russia (5%). It is important to state that there was an increase in requests received from the Ministry of Health of Israel (8%) which related to medical qualifications obtained in Armenia.

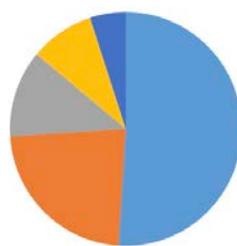


- USA 10%
- Belgium 2%
- Germany 9%
- Israel 8%
- Italy 1%
- Poland 1%
- Canada 2%
- India 3%
- Sweden 5%
- Ukraine 2%
- Russia 5%
- Georgia 42%
- France 1%
- Other 9%

ARMENIA AS A MEETING POINT BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

What is internationalization? And how will this program affect us musicians? Similar questions arose when we were invited to become members of the Erasmus+ BOOST consortium and participate in the process of developing a national internationalization strategy in the field of higher education. The questions were natural, as the number of foreign students in the Yerevan State Conservatory named after Komitas constitutes almost 13% of the total number.

Conservatory diplomas are recognized in different countries of the world; students and



- Middle East 51%
- Eastern Europe 23%
- South Caucasus 12%
- Western Europe 9%
- South America 5%

graduates perform worldwide in the best concert halls, work in famous orchestras, prestigious colleges, conservatories, etc. By conducting some research, we realized that it is necessary to expand the number of countries



from which foreign students come to our institution. The chart in right shows the geography of the foreign students of the Conservatory.

AUA: REFLECTIONS BY MOBILITY PARTICIPANTS

To create more opportunities for its faculty, students and staff, AUA expanded its cooperation beyond US Higher Educational Institutions and established partnership with European universities through Erasmus+ and Linnaeus Palme mobility projects. Among other partnerships, cooperation with Audencia Business School provided excellent opportunity for cross-cultural learning and exchange of best practices. Below are some reflections by faculty and students.

"It was a pleasure to teach HR Essentials to a group of young, enthusiastic and motivated students at Audencia Business School, Nantes. The class was comprised of students representing Europe, Asia and the United States. It was a very dynamic group – quite fulfilling for me to manage all of that diversity in a teaching setting."

Mane Beglaryan

Lecturer, Manoogian College of Business & Economics, AUA



"I realize that my expectations were merely an oversimplification of what I actually experienced. Immersing myself in French culture and lifestyle has opened a well of new perspectives and outlooks on life. Be it the dinners with my host family, tasting the best of French cuisine coupled with long conversations, or late night walks through the small streets of Nantes, here, I discovered the French "art de vivre" or the art of living. I learned to be bold and open to novelty."

Ani Keshishian

BAB Student, AUA



"I decided to come to AUA as it offered me a change. Armenia was a country which I had never heard of and it looked very nice and special. Another reason was the variety of courses offered by AUA, English and Communications Program. These classes are amazing both content-wise and discipline-wise. Moreover, due to the system, it is very easy to reach the faculty outside the class session hours. This makes the study very easy. The main difficulty I encountered when I arrived was the language outside the campus. Everyone speaks either Armenian or Russian, and I speak neither. But eventually I managed to overcome this barrier. And I have learned some Armenian words. I am taking back to Audencia another look with me, another look of me and of the world in general."

Gildas Fleureau

Audencia Business School

"Everything was so interesting and intensive from the first day: international environment, different cultures, and more. These type of programs are not just about gaining new professional skills but also evolving as a person, going beyond the boundaries of perceptions and what we think we know. Audencia gave us an opportunity to observe everything from a practical point of view and be prepared for the real job market. The most important takeaway from this program for me would be completely new way of thinking and if course plethora of professional advantages created during my studies here."

Lilit Ohanian

MBA Student, AUA

INTERNATIONAL CREDIT MOBILITY FROM THE STUDENTS' POINT OF VIEW

Seventy-five students from Vanadzor State University after H. Tumanyan (VSU) have already had the opportunity to study in a number of EU universities in Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Sweden. Sixty-seven students among them have completed or are still accomplishing their mobility programs within the scope of the Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility (ICM) Program and eight Masters students have studied in Poland under the umbrella of the Master's Double Degree Program in the scope of the bilateral agreement between VSU and Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland.

For the purpose of the organization of a maximally optimal mobility, informational meetings, workshops and seminars are periodically

organized by the relevant departments of the University which raise the awareness of mobility opportunities, experiences, and challenges both among the University students and staff. In the framework of these periodic discussion-meetings, the mobility students who have successfully accomplished their mobility periods at various EU universities, make short presentations addressing issues related to their experiences before, during and after their mobility.



The majority of the mobility students consider mobility an overall positive experience. “The mobility program is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to combine quality education with a more challenging life, and to become more self-confident and motivated”, states Erik Dallakyan, a former mobility student from VSU. The mobility experience fosters the students’ personal and professional growth by allowing them to change their habitual cultural environment and educational setting. The additional benefits from these changes may be evidenced by the fact that on termination of their mobility periods abroad students gain experience in living alone in a new country, dealing with various issues of lodging, communication, education, and financial management in everyday life. By studying at various European higher education institutions (HEIs), students learn new approaches, methods, and means of teaching and learning, which contribute not only to their professional growth, but also to the replenishment of the ethodological basis at VSU

by means of shared experience. Fostering individual research through developing strong research skills among the students of VSU is a priority objective, and sharing the experience of mobility students is contributing towards this. All the students mention the acquisition of new friends and travel experience as an added value to their mobility studies. Almost all the students mention that they have not experienced culture shock upon their arrival, and although there have been insignificant issues in terms of their stay in the host country, the students consider those issues “normal and natural, and learn survival skills by overcoming them”. However, since the overall process of mobility organization and implementation is a complicated and manifold experience involving different aspects, it is practically impossible to avoid all problems and issues. Among the most common challenges that the students had to deal with in terms of the organizational process of their mobility was the preparation of all the necessary documents. Some students had to face such problems as discrepancies

between the course catalogues and the curricula of the sending and receiving institutions.

In order to prevent the recurrence of these and other problems, the students suggest creating former and aspiring mobility student networks for the exchange of experience and distribution of necessary information.

Notwithstanding the fact that the mobility process implies but is not limited to the mentioned problems, the benefits significantly surpass the drawbacks. “Within a day, I traveled over 4549 kilometers to find the miracle of the streets of Porto, to get education within the walls of FLUP (Faculdade De Letras Universidade Do Porto), to make the coolest friends at the workshops and ESN (Erasmus Student Network) trips, to have a new family under the same roof, to gain lifelong memories, to come as one but to stand as a whole nation”, says Lusine Manukyan, a former Erasmus+ student at the University of Porto. Lusine and her Erasmus+ program friends consider student mobility an invaluable chance of development and growth in case of being open to completely new approaches to life and education.

SHIRAK STATE UNIVERSITY: PROMOTING THE UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONALLY

The BOOST project team from Shirak State University after M. Nalbandyan (ShSU) initiated the creation of a university promotional video to raise awareness of the University located in the culturally rich city of Gyumri in Armenia. Marketing and promotion of higher education institutions are still an important area for improvement in Armenia. To strengthen the efforts to publicize its programs, the BOOST project team produced a short video about ShSU. For this purpose a group of young people, including two from abroad, drafted the plan of the video together with the ShSU team. In addition to showing the University's facilities/programs and active student life, effort was made to also show the historical city We hope it will attract potential international students to consider mobility opportunities with ShSU, to experience Armenian culture and traditions while in Gyumri.

The promotional video is available in both English and Armenian.

shsu.am/information-materials-brochures-videos/ - Armenian version

shsu.am/information-materials-brochures-videos-en/ - English version



PROJECT PARTNERS

ARMENIAN PARTNERS

- RA Ministry of Education and Science (RA MoES)
- 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 Politecnica De Catalunya (UPC), Spain
- Instituto Superior Tecnico (IST), Portugal
- Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV), Spain
- Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Sweden
- Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech), Estonia



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