



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

Erasmus+, EU Solidarity Corps
International Capacity Building

Brussels, 15/03/2021
EACEA.A.4/RR-BE-21D001914
File code: 2016-3629

Prof. Ruben Mirzakhanyan
Rector
Armenian State Pedagogical University
TIGRAN METS 17
AM- 375010 Yerevan

Email: rector@aspu.am

Subject: Final Report 573975-EPP-1-2016-1-AM-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP

Dear Professor Mirzakhanyan,

Please find below the result of the assessment of the Final Technical Implementation Report and the Financial Statement of the above-mentioned Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education (CBHE) project.

As result of this assessment, and in accordance with the Grant Agreement and with the Guidelines for the Use of the Grant, your project implementation has been qualified as **“GOOD”** (please refer to the Categories of qualification at the end of this letter). The comments below provide more detailed feedback on the content and financial outcome of the project.

1. Final Technical Implementation Report

In terms of relevance, this the BOOST project is consistent from its incept with the commitment of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia (MoESCS) to prioritize the internationalization of higher education as a key priority in reforming higher education in Armenia. BOOST project results support the Ministry’s strategic approach of internationalisation in higher education at the national level and promote attractiveness of Armenian higher education at international level. In this sense, BOOST outcomes are certainly pertinent in the current Armenian context, they are compliant with the foreseen/expected results and they will contribute towards raising the profile of Armenia as a study destination.

The consortium has developed a 5-year National Strategy for Internationalisation that will serve as a reference for the Armenian HEI’s to align their institutional internationalization strategies. The “Methodological Guidelines for the National Model of Academic Programmes and Recognition of foreign qualifications and Credit transfer” systemize the presentation of the Armenian academic offer. These legislative framework documents have been accompanied with the development of the national platform “Study in Armenia” that integrates a mapping and benchmarking tool for the review, monitoring and comparison of the internationalisation processes of higher education institutions in line with the targets set at national level. Each Armenian beneficiary has developed a marketing plan and the International Cooperation Offices

(ICOs) have been equipped and their staff trained in strategic management, marketing, cultural challenges and implementation of credit mobility. Furthermore, in-house trainings in Armenian Universities for internal and external ICO staff have been successfully organized, thus enhancing the capacity building activities to participants outside the consortium.

As far as the quality of the project design and implementation is concerned, most activities have been carried out in line with the work plan and besides delays due to the political situation in Armenia during the first implementation year, no important deviations can be underlined. In the final report, the delays at contracting phase and the difficulties linked to the political situation after the Velvet Revolution that resulted into political transition and an appointment of the new temporary cabinet of Ministers, are highlighted as the main challenges for a timely implementation.

The results achieved by the project are available in the Erasmus+ Projects Platform and of good quality. The activities carried out for the drafting of the National Strategy and the creation of the Platform, such as the benchmarking study, have been assessed as relevant for facilitating internationalization practices in Armenian HE. Next steps will be to implement the Action Plan for the Strategy for HE Internationalization and to develop a monitoring and assessment procedure for the achievement of the strategic goals identified in the National Strategy. The Agency would very much appreciate to see the evolution of the process next year during the foreseen control monitoring visit in Armenia.

The equipment declared in the financial statement corresponds to the agreement reached with the Agency in March 2018. The equipment is allocated to each of the ICOs in the Armenian Universities and is used to support the internationalization development.

The assessment of the BOOST website and promotional materials and publications reveals that the project has adhered to the visibility, exploitation and publicity obligations in accordance with grant agreement provisions I.10.8 and I.10.9.

The BOOST project rests upon a pertinent partnership that has enabled a proper transfer of knowledge from EU partners to Armenian HEIs and ensured the appropriate involvement of the MoESCS of the Republic of Armenia. Proof of bilateral cooperation beyond the Erasmus+ grant between Armenian and EU beneficiaries is provided in the Report.

The members of the consortium have fulfilled their roles and responsibilities in a proper manner. The partnership diversity including Armenian HEIs i representative of different regions in the country as well as . private or public institutions Has impacted positively the project results. The involvement of MoESCS and ARMENIC, increased during the second half of the project, has been assessed as crucial for the adoption and dissemination of the 5-year National Strategy on Internationalisation and for the development and operationalization of the National Platform for Internationalisation of HE (which is hosted by MoESCS).

Project management practices and tools have proved to be effective throughout the entire project lifecycle. However, a less centralised financial management approach in the hands of the coordinator could have contributed to enhance grant management skills in less experienced universities and to a more balanced distribution of responsibilities and staff costs.

We could distinguish the direct benefits that the project brings about to individuals and HEIs involved as well as the indirect impact that the project could have on raising the profile of Armenia as a study destination.

Indeed, we acknowledge the development of staff capacities through the participation in several international trainings on different topics as a relevant contribution of the BOOST project to the Armenian Universities. The Report evidences that these training activities have contributed to

improve the staff competences for the strategic development of the ICOs in the long term, in particular thanks to the in-house trainings for ICO staff.

In addition, the Report provides sufficient information on the structural changes implemented at the International Cooperation Offices (ICO) of the beneficiary institutions. The reorganization within the Centres, the new services provided, the systematization of procedures and the creation of new functions are examples of the impact that the BOOST project has achieved at the governance level of the involved Armenian beneficiaries. Even if the Report does not provide evidence that any of the partners has devised a financial sustainability plan, there seems to be concluding evidence to believe that Armenian Universities have the political willingness to support the ICOs after the project lifecycle.

However, in spite of the involvement of the national authorities in the last phase of the project, and the achievement of systemic developments, the Report does not provide quantitative evidence of the impact at system/national level at the end of the project implementation. Only indicators to be measure the future impact of the project are provided and therefore no proof of the impact achieved at national level after three years is given.

In order to maximize the impact of the project, the consortium must ensure adequate sustainability measures for the ICOs at institutional level and close cooperation with the MoESCS at national level. Indeed, the last is crucial to ensure that the new National Law on Education and Research currently under Governmental approval incorporates as many elements as possible from the National Strategy for Internationalization developed by BOOST project.

The Agency recommends the consortium to devise and implement concrete measures to ensure the sustainability of the ICOs and the National Platform after the project lifecycle. The Marketing Plans, the Methodological Guidelines and the staff training must be continuously updated, the Platform needs maintenance and the achievement of the strategic goals identified in the National Strategy must be monitored and assessed.

We would like to uremind you that the Agency is placing a special emphasis on the sustainability of the projects and the dissemination and exploitation of the results. For this purpose, we are conducting regularly ex-post impact monitoring visits to the project partners, to find evidence and good practices on the impact of the projects on individual, institutional and national level.

We would therefore like you to keep this in mind, and we strongly encourage you and your partners to continuously reflect on qualitative evidence and collect quantitative information on the impact of this Erasmus+ project even after the project end, such as for instance cooperation of the partnership, Number of internationalisation activities, including international mobilities, cooperation projects, joint degrees..., number of international students recruited, etc.

2. Financial Assessment

Please note that the Agency's financial analysis is based exclusively on the documents that were submitted to the Agency. If after having considered our comments carefully you wish to contest the final amount of the grant, the amounts contested by you must be *identified individually and accompanied by the corresponding supporting documents*.

Each supporting document should be numbered and its reference number recorded in **a list detailing all the supporting documents provided with their respective amounts indicated, and showing as the result the total amount contested**. If there are several documents to justify a single cost, the total of the various amounts must be given. Absence of supporting documentation to justify the declared costs will mean that the corresponding amounts remain ineligible.

In order to be accepted for further review, your observations - presented as indicated above - must be **signed by the legal representative** of your institution and be sent by post or by email at the latest **within 60 calendar days following the dispatch of this letter**.

Following the Agency's analyses of your observations a second and final letter will be sent to you, finalising the assessment exercise. Further observations or appeals will *not* be accepted.

We will consider that the absence of any observations from you within the above-mentioned deadline of **60 days** is equivalent to your formal, unconditional and irrevocable agreement to the amounts mentioned in the Agency's assessment below.

Please find below the deductions and comments concerning the financial evaluation of your report:

Costs corresponding to the 3-days inter-project meeting in Portugal of Ms. Marianna Harutyunyan and Ms. Anna Hakhumyan that were initially booked under the Subcontracting budget heading have been transferred to the budget headings Travel Costs and Costs of Stay.

Travel Costs

Ref. no. – Name	Problem identified	Amount concerned (€)
P3-25	No authorisation received for a mobility from a city where no beneficiary from the consortium is located.	360,00
Total		360,00

The ineligible amount under the "Travel Costs" budget heading is € **360,00**.

Costs of Stay

Ref. no. – Name	Problem identified	Amount concerned (€)
P1-26	The agenda of this project activity in Tarragona shows 3 days and a half of work. The maximum Costs of Stay that can be reimbursed to the project is 6 days per participant.	120,00
P1-27		120,00
P1-28		120,00
P1-29		120,00
P1-30		120,00
P2-20		120,00
P2-21		120,00
P2-22		120,00
P2-23		120,00
P3-24		120,00
P3-25		120,00
P3-26		120,00
P3-27		120,00
P3-28		120,00
P4-21		120,00
P4-22		120,00
P4-23		120,00
P4-24		120,00
P5-28		120,00
P5-29		120,00
P5-30		120,00

P5-31		120,00
P6-14		120,00
P6-15		120,00
P7-17		120,00
P7-18		120,00
P7-19		120,00
P7-20		120,00
Total		3.360,00

The ineligible amount under the "Costs of Stay" budget heading is € **3.360,00**.

Equipment Costs

Ref. no. – Name	Problem identified	Amount concerned (€)
0827048621	Difference in the exchange rate is ineligible	11,75
1403398379		14,04
0827048621		28,28
3516899345		63,04
0827297324		16,73
7152354693		49,56
2513830044		39,00
6758010599		
Total		222,40

The ineligible amount under the "Equipment Costs" budget heading is € **222,40**.

Summary

On the basis of the above analyses, the total eligible costs have been calculated as follows:

BUDGET HEADINGS	AWARDED BUDGET (in €)	DECLARED EXPENSES (in €)	CONFIRMED EXPENSES (in €)	INELIGIBLE (in €)	ELIGIBLE (in €)
Staff Costs	335.821,00	360.904,00	360.904,00	0,00	360.904,00
Travel Costs	146.970,00	119.025,00	120.595,75	360,00	120.235,75
Costs of Stay	238.080,00	183.000,00	184.042,00	3.360,00	180.682,00
Equipment Costs	105.000,00	98.886,79	98.886,79	222,40	98.664,39
Subcontracting Costs	21.500,00	20.149,49	17.536,74	0,00	17.536,74
Special Mobility Strand	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
TOTAL	847.371,00	781.965,28	781.965,28	3.942,40	778.022,88

Declared co-financing: € **48.818,92**

According to Article I.3 of the Grant Agreement, the Executive Agency shall reimburse **100%** of the eligible actual costs and eligible unit costs. Therefore, the amount of the final grant is € **778.022,88**.

Consequently, you may expect a payment of € **15.388,98**. This amount represents the amount of the final grant of € **778.022,88** minus the amount of pre-financing already paid of € **762.633,90**.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that, in addition to the means of redress referred to in the agreement, the following means are available for challenging this decision.


If you believe that this decision is affected by an error or irregularity, you may request a review of the Agency's decision, clearly stating the reasons for disagreement, preferably within one month of receiving this letter, by writing to the following address:

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
Department A: Erasmus+, EU Solidarity Corps
Unit A4 - Erasmus+: Higher Education - International Capacity Building
Mr Ralf RAHDERS (Head of Unit)
J-59 06/033
1, Avenue du Bourget
BE-1049 Brussels
EACEA-EPLUS-CBHE-PROJECTS@ec.europa.eu

If you believe there has been a maladministration you may also lodge a complaint to the European Ombudsman in accordance with and under the conditions laid down in Article 228 TFEU within two years of becoming aware of the facts on which the complaint is based (see <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu>).

Yours sincerely,



Ralf RAHDERS
Head of Unit

Cc (by email): marianna.harutyunyan@aspu.am

Very good (at least 75 pts out of 100): The consortium has achieved its objectives and delivered the expected results in full, as outlined in the Grant agreement. All the results and outputs are of very good quality. No major concerns or areas of weakness have been identified during the project implementation phase. Impact on partner countries institutions and/or Higher education systems, sustainability and exploitation of results are fully addressed.

Good (between 74 and 60 pts out of 100): To a large extent, the consortium has fulfilled its objectives and delivered (most of) its expected results as outlined in the Grant agreement. Most of the results and outputs are of good quality. Some concerns or areas of weaknesses may have been identified in the project implementation and/or its final results. Impact on partner countries institutions and/or Higher education systems, sustainability and exploitation of results are satisfactorily addressed.

Fair (between 59 and 50 pts): The consortium has fulfilled some of its objectives and delivered some of its expected results outlined in the Grant agreement. The quality of some results and outputs are acceptable. Weaknesses and concerns have been identified in the project's implementation and/or delivering of its final results. Impact on partner countries institutions and/or Higher education systems, sustainability and exploitation of results are not satisfactorily addressed.

Weak (less than 50 pts out of 100): The consortium has not fulfilled its objectives in terms of project implementation and/or delivery of expected results as outlined in the Grant agreement. This may apply to the low quality of most of the results and outputs, serious weaknesses in the project's implementation, lack of impact on partner countries institutions and/or Higher education systems, and /or sustainability and exploitation of results not addressed.