



**Multiethnic Resource Centre on Civic Education Development**

**Study of the quality impact of  
Tempus and Erasmus projects in Georgia  
(2009- 2013)**

**Report**

The study was implemented in partnership with the Public Policy Institute of Armenia

July-August 2015

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## Introduction

The present study refers to the impact and long-term results of the European Commission funded Tempus and Erasmus Mundus projects at the higher educational institutions of Georgia. It is based upon the data received through the use of the qualitative methods of the study. The target groups of the study are the beneficiaries of three Georgian educational institutions: the Tbilisi Iv. Javakhishvili State University, Ilia State University and the Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University. The study is useful and instrumental for raising the quality of the projects, it identifies the existing problems and offers recommendations for their resolution.

## Study methodology

The study is based upon the qualitative methods. To collect the data methods such as personal interviews, focus-groups and document analysis were used, as well as the method of comparative analysis, which implied comparing the experiences of each university with each other within the single project, as well as comparing the efforts and resources of the universities to ensure the sustainable and long-term effect of the selected projects, taking into account the general objective of the study.

The selection methodology of the universities was based on the quantity of the projects implemented within the frameworks of the Tempus and Erasmus, which is a solid guarantee for ensuring that, in terms of the coverage, the bigger number of the beneficiaries will provide for the general conclusions and recommendations to be well grounded and justified. As regards the project selection methodology, it is based upon the matching principle, which implies that all three target universities were simultaneously involved in the implementation process. During the preparatory works four projects were identified, which all three universities participated in:

- Tempus - “Promoting Internalization and Comparability of Quality Assurance in Higher Education“.  
Project ID: 511035-TEMPUS-1-DE-TEMPUS-SMGR
- Tempus – “The Development of human resources, evidence base and quality standards in addictology in Georgia”

Project ID: 544219-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-CZ-TEMPUS-SMHES

- Tempus – “Promoting Internalization of HEIs in Eastern Neighborhood Countries through Cultural and Structural Adaptations”

Project ID: 544125-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-AM-TEMPUS-SMGR

- Erasmus Mundus – “Enhancing Learning in ENPI Countries Through Clean Technologies and Research-related Activities” (ELECTRA).

### **Aim of the study**

The aim of the study is to assess the Tempus and Erasmus projects implemented by the EU and to determine whether the participants of the projects have the resources and motivation to disseminate widely the results – the knowledge and the experience, once they are back home, as well as to establish the extent of the impact of these projects on the ongoing processes in the education system. The study is oriented on dissemination of the professional knowledge proper, as well as on the promotion and support for the European values and principles in terms of culture.

### **Target groups**

In total, 18 beneficiaries (representatives of academic and administrative staff, in some instances a single person assumed both, academic and administrative positions), local coordinators, representatives of the National Erasmus Office Georgia took part in the study together with the non-participants of the addressed projects, which makes it an important instrument to study the extent of the impact and the multiplier effect of the projects.

### **General overview of the Tempus and Erasmus projects**

17 Georgian universities are involved in the Tempus and Erasmus projects (11 state and 6 private higher educational institutions), which means that almost half of the higher educational institutions in the country benefit from this opportunity. The Tempus projects have been active in

Georgia since 1995. In general, the programme includes 27 non-EU countries, including Georgia. In the period of 2009-2013, 45 projects were funded within the Tempus, where Georgia was involved, though many more project proposals were submitted.

In terms of cooperation, the biggest number of projects were implemented in partnership with the UK, Germany, Italy, France and Spain. It is noteworthy, that the large majority of the implemented projects (805) concern the reform of the higher education system, which is of particular importance for Georgia. This particularly contributes to not only to the revision of the curriculum, but also development of joint Master's programmes and introduction of entirely new professions in the university area.

For the mentioned period, the functions of the Tempus project coordinator university in Georgia are performed by 3 institutions:

- The Tbilisi Iv. Javakhishvili State University – 3 projects
- Ilia State University – 2 projects
- David Tvildiani Medical University – 1 project

As regards the second phase of the Erasmus Mundus for 2009-2013, the participants included 740 beneficiaries (students of Bachelor's, Master's and PhD degrees, post-PhD students, administrative staff).

### **Study results – Tempus**

The selection procedure for the Tempus projects implies nominations of candidates from various departments. The applications are reviewed by the relevant supreme body of the university responsible for the international affairs. The selection process at the university is in no way based on the competition. In some way, this is caused by the lower number of the administrative and academic staff participating in the Tempus project compared to that of the students, and therefore, the candidates' capacities, subject area, etc., are widely known. The practice at the Batumi State University showed that the university tries to send group as diverse as possible to

the partner university, deficiency in the foreign language has not been established as a barrier in the short-term visits, as the simultaneous interpretation is provided by sending university. However, such practice is not shared by all universities within all projects. No problems have been revealed in terms of information accessibility in any educational institution and there are no limitations on participation.

Selection of adequate candidates becomes more difficult at the upper levels of education due to the shortage of the qualified staff. Absence of the mechanism for revealing the plagiarism is one of the problems that characterize the PhD level. To this end, the Batumi State University came up with the initiative to implement a project – to check the quality of the PhD research and to improve the standards.

Distribution of the tasks between the coordinator universities and consortium members does not pose a problem and mainly, it is decided upon by the coordinator institution; although some projects offer flexibility to introduce changes to the planning of a certain part of the project and to adapt it better to the university's needs and to the overall conditions existing in the education system of the country.

The diversity in the composition of the participants makes it difficult to establish a stabile network, on the one and, but, on the other hand, it opens equal opportunities for all. Participation implies deepening one's professional knowledge, introducing novelties and at the same time, acquiring cultural values, which becomes more evident after coming back home and is easily applicable in the working environment.

*“When back home, the participant becomes more tolerant in his/her working environment” – Tea Gergedava, Head of the International Relations Department at the TSU notes in an interview.*

While learning at the European university, the contacts with the sending university is not constant, it is limited to preparing a final report, which implies conducting information sessions at the faculty, to the staff of the department or/and to other persons concerned. The final report is

prepared at the university by the project coordinator, in some cases mid-term reports may be required. The extent to which the process is bureaucratic depends on the specific project and the coordinator university. In some cases, there are more requirements that create additional problems for the local representatives. The case of the TSU shows that the technical requirements raised by the European universities create additional problems for the local representatives in delivering effectively, e.g. the requirement to purchase the computer technologies which is produced only in Europe is physically impossible to meet, as no such products are sold in Georgia.

The form of the cooperation is an important factor for well-functioning of the project. The practise of the consortium established for years has changed today, which creates additional challenges to the university – they are forced to seek and negotiate with potential partners independently. Personal contacts of the professors and teachers and various kinds of experiences of cooperation with the European universities play a significant role in this process. However, it is more difficult for less successful educational institutions; in some cases they do not even get replies on their inquiries.

The success of the project depends on how well and realistically it is planned. If it is aimed at addressing unrealistic tasks, the implementation of the project is hindered and the result never materializes. Another important factor is the motivation of the participants – whether they are prepared to institute changes, and the readiness of the management of the university – whether they are ready to invest more resources to disseminate and sustain the results. The study revealed the trend according to which the university is not ready to invest its resources in all projects; but if the project concerns the introduction of the novelties in the general university area, which is still directly or indirectly linked with the improvement of the quality of the learning process or that of the management of the university, it may be more active. The Tempus project on “Promoting Internalization and Comparability of Quality Assurance in Higher Education“ was considered as the most successful among the selected projects, which was confirmed by the comparative analysis of the data from the three universities. The Ilia State University conducted reforms in this area of the management as well as in measuring the quality of learning. The decentralisation process was promoted. A “fact based decision-making” model was introduced

that minimizes the bias in the management. Questionnaires were developed to evaluate the teaching courses. The same reforms were undertaken at the TSU, although there is still an acute need in an administrative reform. Herewith, the vulnerability of the universities must be noted with regard to sustaining the achieved results. Periodical, and in some cases frequent changes of the administrative personnel directly influence the sustainable impact and results of the project and affect negatively the image of the institution itself. The educational institutions in the Capital are less vulnerable in this context.

The most visible results of the Tempus projects are the new courses and revised syllabi. For instance, a Master's programme on Addictology was developed at the Ilia State University through the Tempus project "The Development of human resources, evidence base and quality standards in addictology in Georgia".

The revision of the syllabi and curriculum is useful not only for the project beneficiaries, but also for other persons concerned, as the participants are able to share the knowledge and innovative approaches to their colleagues. In some cases the university also shares such approach (the Ilia State University and the Batumi State University). Simultaneously, they share the information about the projects to all interested persons, including outside the university, and the knowledge.

*Lela Turmanidze, administration of the Batumi State University: "I also thought that in Georgia there was a competition among the universities and we used to hide our results. It appeared otherwise, the more open you are and show your results, it does not matter – let others copy them; in the end, you are doing more to develop and this is exactly what is called a healthy competition – you help your colleague or partner institution to develop, who in turn helps you to develop."*

It should be noted that the mentioned projects also contributed to the internationalisation of the universities and their progress in the international rankings. The indirect result of these projects are more openness and transparency and an incentive, motivation, to some extent, for further development. Another important fact is that an interuniversity cooperation culture is being introduced in the country. Although there are still some serious problems in this regard, several



universities managed to overcome the established frames. The cooperation implies a partnership with different subjects of the education system within the project. Considering the specificities of the project, the participants may include the ministry of education or legal entity of public law engaged in the education area, as well as the NGOs.

### **Study results – Erasmus Mundus**

In the Erasmus Mundus case, the selection process is competitive and therefore, the total number of the applicants is rather high; however, due to limited places many good students fall out of the competition. The factor of the national quota, different indexes of the intra-university competition of the educational institutions in the country is also important, which implies that the students of big universities have little chance for participation. In this regard, the regional educational institutions have the advantage, as there is less competition there. As for the quota, the regional quota does not allow Georgia to send more good students to the educational institutions abroad, as compared to other neighbouring country, which may send a less competitive student because he/she is the national of the country in question that was allocated a certain number of places to fill.

Lack of information was not noted as a problem by any respondent. The universities are actively engaged in the promotion of these programmes; the informational meetings are held several weeks prior the application deadline.

An important criteria for the participation is the efficiency in the English language. Each university has its individual checking criteria; in some cases advanced level certificate of the knowledge is required and in some – it is not or they have to pass internal exam only. This creates certain unequal conditions for the participants of the Erasmus projects throughout the country, as the dependence on the university requirements may not serve as a universal measure. The participants also referred to inadequate knowledge of the English language by the professors at the host universities, which hinders the process of learning and abate the expectations defined within the project.

*The students of the Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University: “The most difficult part for me was that I had no lectures in English. The lectures were in Portuguese, which considerably decreased the level of my knowledge. In fact, I had to have individual meetings with the teachers in order to get the minimum of required information...That is why it was not that productive for me. If not for the practical exercises, I would not have been satisfied with my learning there”.*

*“The knowledge delivered by the teacher at the lecture and that given by the teacher during one-hour meeting is not consistent. It is not balanced at all and does not bear results at the exams. There were teachers, who used to attend conferences all the time that made it impossible to interact with them, save in distance and occasional meetings in their office.”*

*“One of the teachers used to let us go from lectures in five minutes because he did not speak English”.*

Another important factor for Erasmus appeared to be cultural adaptation and adjustment to the environment, sharing the values. The aim of the project is not only academic but also cultural and students manage to use this well. In some cases, they are even obliged to present in different form their national culture and traditions and vice versa, other European students get to know Georgia better and make different future contacts in Georgia that significantly contributes to the formation of the positive image of the country and to raising awareness about it.

As for the monitoring of the learning period, there is no universally applied method. In some cases, the host university submits periodically the questionnaire to the Erasmus participant to fill in and in others – the evaluation is not conducted at all. As regards the sending university, the communication with the university is limited to agreeing the subjects defined in the learning agreement with the university priorities; no report or mid-term evaluation is required.

Unlike with the Tempus experience, there are certain mechanisms to disseminate the long-term results of the Erasmus project. This implies a participants’ network. There is an Erasmus student network in Georgia; in some cases Erasmus participants’ clubs are being formed within the universities. These students help other students prepare for participation in the Erasmus and offer

them practical advice. Although, besides the practical aspects, there is no other kinds of methods to disseminate the results of the knowledge acquired. It must be noted that, in terms of the study, the Erasmus students' network can define certain trends and address the needs. There is a lack of possibility to measure the long-term contextual and qualitative elements of the learning in the case of the Erasmus. Nevertheless, it must be mentioned that the student-participants are more competitive at the labour market and having foreign education background, easily manage to get a job. Yet, this could not be accepted as a general conclusion or a measurement. In terms of the gender equality, the Erasmus project is balanced; on the contrary, girls are more active than boys. There are no fixed quotas in this regard.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

To sum up, it may be said that the EU-funded projects contribute to adjusting the Georgian education system to the European standards. Yet, identification of shortcomings and addressing them is an important component that needs more focus from the project organisers. Considering the problems and needs of the target universities identified through our study, we offer the following recommendations:

- A unified approach has to be developed with regard to the project monitoring and evaluation. A reporting mechanism must be valid not only for the university implementing the project, but the participant must be responsible before the sending university as well. The evaluation must be conducted periodically in order to allow the time for addressing the shortcomings identified.
- It will be useful to concentrate more on the evaluation mechanism of the degree of the PhD researches.
- Administrative and academic mobility needs to be balanced. Some universities follow a specific approach and need more projects in administrative mobility, while in others no priority is attached to either component.

- In Tempus there is a need for a network or a platform to ensure the sustainability that will help its participants feel the responsibility towards the project and contribute to greater dissemination and continuity of the impact.
- More focus needs to be made on the academic component within the Erasmus and it must not depend on which university the student will be allocated or whether the student will be “successful” at all.
- Attention must be paid to the efficiency in the language within the Erasmus. There must be no inconsistency between the possibilities of the university to send/accept the candidate with adequate knowledge and the project requirements.
- A practical component needs to be emphasized. After returning home, a student or a researcher must have adequate conditions to conduct the study in order to use his/her knowledge more effectively. Special needs in this regard concern the area of the exact and natural sciences.