




European
Commission

Higher Education Reform Experts

Activity report 2015



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HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM EXPERTS

Activity Report 2015

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Table of contents

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Background
- 1.2 HERE activities in 2015

2. Management of the HERE teams

- 2.1 Composition of the HERE group
- 2.2 Organisation of the work of the HERE teams
- 2.3 Recommendations on the management of the HERE teams

3. International HERE activities

- 3.1 Events organised in 2015
 - 3.1.1 Conference "*Higher Education and Vocational Education & Training in the Erasmus+ Partner Countries neighbouring the EU: Partnership for socio-economic development*" (Istanbul, Turkey, 10-11 March 2015)
 - 3.1.2 Study visit "*Institutional Structures for the Management of Internationalisation and Mobility*" (Berlin, Germany, 18-19 May 2015)
 - 3.1.3 Study visit "*Organising International Credit Mobility*" (Ghent and Brussels, Belgium, 11-12 June 2015)
 - 3.1.4 Seminar "*ICT based learning: opportunities for higher education learning and teaching*" (Petra, Jordan, 26-27 October 2015)
 - 3.1.5 Conference "*Innovating learning and teaching – the next phase of the Bologna Process*" (Tbilisi, Georgia, 3-4 December 2015)
- 3.2 Recommendations on international events

4. Local HERE activities organised in Partner Countries

- 4.1 Follow-up of international events
- 4.2 Technical Assistance Missions
- 4.3 Other local activities
- 4.4 Recommendations on local activities

5. Dissemination and communication

- 5.1 Publications produced by the HERE teams
- 5.2 Media appearances
- 5.3 Use of NEO websites and social media
- 5.4 Recommendations on dissemination and communication

6. HERE support to National Authorities

- 6.1 Support to National Authorities in the Partner Countries
- 6.2 Recommendations on supporting National Authorities

7. Use of Virtual Community

- 7.1 Current features of the Virtual Community website
- 7.2 Recommendations on the use of the Virtual Community

8. Conclusions

ANNEXES

Annex 1 Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs) - Terms of Reference

Annex 2 Code of Conduct for Higher Education Reform Experts

1 - Introduction

1.1 - Background

The network of Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs) was established in 2007, in the beginning of the Tempus IV programme, in order to provide support to the modernisation of higher education in the Tempus Partner Countries. Individual higher education experts were identified by their national authorities in each of the 28 countries, to act as promoters of higher education reforms by organising events, writing articles, providing consultation, etc. In order to enhance the expertise of the network, regular training activities have been organised since the beginning of the scheme by the European Commission and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), with the support of a service provider¹.

With a small financial investment, the HERE initiative proved to be successful, leading to concrete results in the Partner Countries concerned. Therefore, when launching the new Erasmus+ programme in 2014, the Commission decided to continue the initiative under the Key action 3 of the programme (Support to Policy Reform) and to target the same group of ex-Tempus Partner Countries.

Having started as a group of approximately 100 experts in 2009, the HERE group has now around 250 members. These have been nominated jointly by their national authorities and the National Erasmus+ Offices (NEOs) in their countries, with the endorsement of the local EU Delegations. These 250 HEREs come mostly from Universities, Ministries and other governmental institutions, representing a wide range of expertise in different academic areas and different higher education reform topics. The profiles include rectors, vice-Rectors, deans, professors, heads of Study Programmes, administrators, students and other experts of the higher education field. Depending on the country, the size of the group varies from 5 to 15 experts.

HEREs' local activities are coordinated by the NEOs, in cooperation with the Ministries responsible for higher education. Funding for the activities is included in the NEO budgets and based on work plans produced by the NEOs.

1.2 – HERE activities in 2015

The HERE activities under Erasmus+ were launched on a full scale from the start of 2015, following the designation of the individual experts for the period 2015-2017 on the basis of the following principles:

- Ensuring that the selected persons represent the right type of profiles, have a strong interest in higher education reform, are available and have the necessary competences (linguistic in particular) in order to participate in local and international activities,
- Aiming for a balance in terms of gender, age groups and profiles, and
- Renewing at least 50% of the group members, as compared to the previous period.

A call for tender was launched in 2014 in order to identify a service provider that would support the HEREs' international activities during the period 2015-17. The tender was won by a consortium consisting of the University of Barcelona and the European University Association (EUA). This consortium (*the "SPHERE team" – Support and Promotion for Higher Education Reform Experts*) is

¹ UNICA (Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe) until end of 2013, SPHERE consortium (European University Association and University of Barcelona) from 2015

responsible for organising international training events, providing experts for Technical Assistance Missions to the Partner Countries and maintaining a Virtual Community platform for communication, event organisation and dissemination of information among the HERE network².

The 2015 activities show that the new HERE teams and the new service provider were able to quickly take over their respective tasks. At national level, the teams organised approximately 200 events, produced more than 80 articles / publications and contributed to the preparation of a number of legislative reforms and the drafting of new higher education policies and strategies. During the same time, the SPHERE team organised 4 international training events, provided experts for a total of 30 Technical Assistance Missions and put in place the website hosting the HERE Virtual Community (<http://supporthere.org>).

This report has been produced on the basis of the 2015 HERE reports received from the 26 NEOs concerned³, the intermediate report submitted by the SPHERE team for the first 18 months of the service contract period and EACEA's monitoring of the NEO and HERE activities in 2015. The main findings of the report were also discussed in detail with NEO and HERE representatives at a meeting organised by the EACEA in Brussels in May 2016.

This report aims at giving an overview of the HERE activities carried out in 2015 and proposing recommendations for the future development of the HERE scheme. It includes a number of best practice examples, which will hopefully inspire HEREs, NEOs and Ministry representatives when planning their HERE activities for the coming years. Moreover, it should contribute to increasing the visibility of the HERE activities in the Partner Countries and promoting higher education reform among different stakeholders.

2 - Management of the HERE teams

2.1 – Composition of the HERE group

At the time of drafting this report, the HERE group consisted of 248 experts, active in 27 Partner Countries (ex-Tempus Partner Countries). The majority of them (73%) belonged to academic or administrative university staff, 13% represented ministries and governmental agencies, while 6% were students or student representatives.⁴

HEREs	University staff		Ministry representatives	Representatives of Governmental agencies	Students	Others
248 Members	Rectors	13	32	8	16	11
	Vice-Rectors	38				
	Deans	12				
	Other University Staff	118				

² This service contract concluded for 3 years (2015-2017) can be renewed for another 3 years (2018-2020), until the end of the Erasmus+ Programme.

³ Libya is not covered, as the NEO in Libya did not have a HERE contract for 2015.

⁴ Current list of HERE available at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/key-action-3-support-for-policy-reform/higher-education-reform-experts-heres_en

Many of the HEREs have important positions in the academic and governmental institutions. The pool of experts concerned by this report included, for example, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Jordan, the First Deputy Minister of Education and Science in Ukraine as well as the Deputy Minister of Education and Science in Georgia. Furthermore, 13 Rectors served as Higher Education Reform Experts in their countries, together with many Vice-Rectors, Directors General and Heads of Department. In terms of gender balance, 48% of the HEREs are women.

New working modalities were introduced in 2015, in order to better define the role and obligations of the HEREs. These include the "HERE Terms of Reference", as well as the "HERE Code of Conduct", which had to be signed by every HERE after his/her designation (see Annexes 1 and 2). Moreover, it was decided that each national HERE team would designate one of its members as Chair, responsible for coordinating the activities in cooperation with the NEO and the national authorities.

2.2 – Organisation of the work of the HERE teams

All National Erasmus+ Offices (NEOs) organised regular meetings with their HEREs, although the frequency and format of these meetings varied. In several of the Partner Countries, meetings took place on a monthly basis, while in others the teams met twice a year, on a quarterly basis, or with a frequency of even more than one meeting per month. The aim of these meetings was to plan, coordinate and follow-up the activities of the teams. They were organised either for the whole group of HEREs or for smaller working groups focused on specific topics. Although only three of the NEOs reported that minutes were taken and distributed to the HEREs and other local stakeholders concerned, it can be assumed that this recommended practice is more broadly spread among the different teams.

Beyond formal meetings, the exchange of information within the HERE teams and with the NEO took place using traditional communication tools, i.e. email, Skype, phone calls and video conferences.

In order to better organise the work of the HERE teams, several NEOs developed templates and guidelines to support the planning, the implementation and the follow-up of their activities. For instance in Russia, before the start of the 2015 activities, all HEREs were requested to submit an activity plan based on their local context. Furthermore, a reporting template was prepared and used by individual experts in order to report on their activities in a structured and coherent way. Similarly, in Serbia, a template was created for HEREs to suggest new events and activities, and a virtual task board (trello.com) was used by the group for a more efficient planning and follow up.

As mentioned above, all HERE groups nominated a Chairperson. Although his/her role was not always clearly defined, in several countries the Chair, alongside with the NEO coordinator, was responsible for setting up the agenda for meetings and for steering the communication with the Ministry of Education and other external stakeholders. He/she acted also as team coordinator and facilitator within the team and followed up on HERE events and activities organised locally and/or internationally. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the main duties and responsibilities of the chairperson and of the other HEREs were defined in the "Rules and Procedures" document, adopted by the HERE team in February 2015.

The possibility to allocate financial compensations for activities performed by HEREs was introduced in the 2015 NEO Grant Agreements. This mechanism enables NEOs to reward individual HEREs for specific activities that require a particular effort and investment in time and that lead to a concrete input (e.g. writing an article or publication, organising an event, etc.). It should be noted that this possibility was not fully used by all NEOs in 2015, probably due to the novelty of the scheme and to uncertainties as to how to use it correctly and for which type of tasks.



Members of the Syrian HERE team and NEO coordinator at their first meeting in 2015

2.3 – Recommendations on the management of the HERE teams

On the basis of the 2015 reports, some general recommendations can be made for the improvement of the management of the HERE teams in the Partner Countries:

- The activities of the HERE teams should be based on a common planning, agreed with the relevant national authorities.
- The HERE teams should hold regular meetings (at least twice a year) and systematically circulate minutes of their meetings, not only to HEREs but also to other relevant stakeholders outside of the HERE group and in particular to the national authorities concerned.
- The role of the Chairperson should be clearly defined.
- Transparent principles for awarding compensations should be produced by the NEOs and communicated to the HEREs.

3 - International HERE activities

3.1 Events organised in 2015

The aim of the international HERE events is to train HEREs on different topics related to the modernisation of higher education, keeping them up to date on the latest developments and showcasing good practice examples from Europe and from Partner Countries. The topics of the 2015 events were defined in cooperation between the European Commission, the Executive Agency and the SPHERE team, on the basis of the results of a Needs Assessment exercise carried out among NEOs and HEREs in the beginning of 2015.

In total 5 international events took place in 2015, including two conferences, one seminar and two study visits. The conferences are the largest HERE events, dealing with core issues of higher education modernisation and involving around 100-120 participants. The seminars, on the other hand, go deeper into specific topics and are targeting smaller groups of participants (50-60). Finally the study visits are meant for discovering how specific reforms or policies are implemented at individual higher education institutions. Such visits are carried out in groups of 30-50 participants.

The first HERE event of 2015 (conference in Istanbul) was organised by the Executive Agency, while for the others, the support for content and logistics was provided by the SPHERE team.

The links to the event websites are available at the following addresses:

<http://supporthere.org/page/seminars-and-conferences>

<http://supporthere.org/page/study-visits>

The presentations made at each of the events are available on the respective event websites.

The programme of the events was prepared in cooperation between SPHERE and the Executive Agency and external experts were invited to each of the events, to make presentations on their special field of expertise. Many HEREs also contributed actively to the events, acting as speakers, workshop leaders or rapporteurs.

In total, the five events counted with 261 "HERE participations". As some HEREs attended more than one event, this represents 169 individual HEREs who participated in one or more events during the year (i.e. almost 70% of the whole group of HEREs).

The five international HERE events are presented hereafter in chronological order.

3.1.1 - Conference "*Higher Education and Vocational Education & Training in the Erasmus+ Partner Countries neighbouring the EU: Partnership for socio-economic development*" (Istanbul, Turkey, 10-11 March 2015)

The aim of the conference was to discuss current trends and challenges in linking higher education and vocational education and training (VET). In particular, the objective was also to explore partnership options between the two sectors to support VET and socio-economic development.



Preparatory meeting at the Istanbul HERE conference (March 2015)

More than 170 participants representing 25 Partner Countries (including 90 HEREs) attended the event. Throughout the conference, the HEREs, NEOs and other invited experts had the occasion to exchange information and experiences about on-going developments in linking VET and higher education, taking into consideration the diverse social, economic and political traditions which have shaped the definition and organisation of VET systems in the different countries.

The discussions at the conference showed a clear understanding by participants of the role of VET in transition societies, including the need to reinforce links with the higher education sector. Some of the concrete cooperation possibilities that were identified include cooperation in VET teacher training and the development of short-cycle intermediate programmes that can bridge the gap between VET and higher education that still exists in many countries.

3.1.2 Study visit "*Institutional Structures for the Management of Internationalisation and Mobility*" (Berlin, Germany, 18-19 May 2015)

This study visit was the first event organised with the support of the SPHERE team. The objective was to get acquainted with institutional strategies and structures for internationalisation and mobility, mainly through the experience of the Berlin Institute of Technology (TU Berlin), and with contributions from other universities based in Berlin. The Federal Ministry of Education, the German Rectors' Conference as well as the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) also contributed to the event.

The study visit gathered 32 HEREs from the different Partner Countries, who had the chance to meet and discuss with staff and students of the hosting university, as well as with representatives of the other institutions involved in the programme. The participants assessed very positively the two-day event and concluded that, for successful international cooperation, it is essential to find relevant partners, to ensure quality and sustainability in the partnerships, to work towards setting up joint degree courses and to develop cooperation in research. The obstacles identified for increasing mobility in higher education included: complicated administrative procedures, problems in implementing staff mobility, credit recognition, insufficient national funding schemes, as well as geo-political constraints and financial limitations.

3.1.3 Study visit "*Organising International Credit Mobility*" (Ghent and Brussels, Belgium, 11-12 June 2015)

The second study visit of 2015 focused mainly on the practical aspects related to the organisation and implementation of international credit mobility. It was composed of two sessions which complemented each other: a first day hosted by the Ghent University to look at the organisation of credit mobility at the level of an institution with a long and solid experience in implementing student and staff mobility, and a second day in Brussels at the European Commission, focused on the International Credit Mobility action of Erasmus+ and the role of different networks and agencies in supporting this action.

A group of 29 HEREs took part in the visit. Participants appreciated to learn about the practices at Ghent University, with its long experience in international mobility and the high numbers of incoming and out-going mobility flows. Participants were informed about the practical work at the level of the international office and about several projects and tools implemented by the university in order to improve the management of its international activities. While some of these developments might not be accessible to Partner Country institutions, due to the high investment involved, others were considered directly relevant, such as the EGRACONS tool for grade conversion of studies carried out abroad.

The topic and the timing of the visit were particularly relevant since the Partner Countries had just become eligible to participate in the International Credit Mobility action of Erasmus+ and the first call had been recently launched. The participation in this action was discussed in detail during the second day of the visit, hosted by the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission. While participants were eager to take part in the new action, some challenges were raised in relation to finding partners, ensuring credit recognition for out-going students, and attracting in-coming students and staff to Partner Country universities.

3.1.4 Seminar "ICT based learning: opportunities for higher education learning and teaching" (Petra, Jordan, 26-27 October 2015)

One of the top priorities expressed by HEREs and NEOs in the Needs Assessment exercise carried out in early 2015 was to explore new developments in e-learning. In many of the Partner Countries, higher education institutions and policy makers are looking for ways to better harness the opportunities offered by ICT, blended learning and online course delivery, while taking into account the implication for access to and innovation of teaching and learning.



Participants of the seminar on ICT based learning in Jordan (October 2015)

The seminar in Petra was hosted by the Al-Hussein bin Talal University and gathered a total of almost 90 participants, including 46 HEREs and 24 NEO representatives. The main aim was to share practices from Europe and from Partner Countries on how institutions are tackling the e-learning agenda and what the implications are for the national and regional higher education policy landscape. The presentations examined the wide array of possibilities that ICT and e-learning offer, in terms of modernizing teaching and learning, opening access and internationalizing higher education. A specific session on "E-learning to address challenges in conflict regions" was particularly appreciated, due to its relevance in the current geopolitical context.

In their conclusions, the participants asked for a clearer definition of the different approaches/terms used when referring to e-learning practices and the different forms of learning and teaching that they entail. They also underlined that an increased focus had to be given to issues of technical implementation and quality assurance. Finally, they raised concerns on the complementarity between e-learning and traditional learning, as well as on the need for more information on blended learning approaches.

3.1.5 Conference "Innovating learning and teaching – the next phase of the Bologna Process" (Tbilisi, Georgia, 3-4 December 2015)

The topic of the annual HERE conference had been chosen considering the renewed emphasis of the Bologna Process on innovating learning and teaching (and student-centred learning in particular), as expressed in the Yerevan Communiqué of 2015. The topic also served as an overarching theme, being related to different topics tackled at other HERE events during the year.

More than 100 participants from 25 Partner Countries attended the event, including 64 HEREs and 25 NEO representatives. The programme focused on three main topics: 1) student centred learning, 2) the role of ICT in teaching and learning and 3) curriculum design in the context of innovative teaching and learning.



Participants of the 2015 annual HERE conference in Georgia (December 2015)

Particularly lively discussions arouse around the topic of student-centred learning. While most participants agreed that universities should be moving away from the traditional ways of teaching and learning, the debate also showed that this is far from being the reality in most of the Partner Countries.

Introducing student-centred learning requires a substantial revision in pedagogy and assessment methods. It also bears higher costs due to smaller student groups and to changes in the universities' infrastructure. Such changes require political support and should be linked to changes at the level of secondary education, in order to ensure a smooth transition.

3.2 – Recommendations on international events

Following each international event, the HERE and NEO participants were asked to fill an evaluation form in order to provide feedback and give suggestions for improving upcoming international events. On the basis of this feedback and of the discussions during the HERE meeting organised in Brussels in May 2016, the following recommendations can be made for the implementation of future events:

- The format of the events should allow a maximum of time for discussions and group work, and avoid long sequences of lectures/presentations. The content should be more practical / hands-on.
- HEREs should continue to be used as contributors in the events, in the role of speakers, chairs or rapporteurs.

- More material could be provided in advance and some preparatory work could be requested from participants.
- Some events could last longer than 2 days, in order to make it possible to go deeper into the topic.
- Some regional events (=targeting one region) should also be organised, as well as events that gather only a limited number of Partner Countries interested in a certain topic.
- NEOs should pay particular attention to the selection and preparation of participants for the events, ensuring that their profile and experience are relevant for the topic.
- NEOs should aim for a balanced participation of all their HEREs over the three year period covered by the grant agreement.

4 - Local HERE activities organised in Partners Countries

While the international activities represent an important training element for the HEREs, the major part of the HERE activities take place at local level, in the Partner Countries. In 2015, around 200 local HERE events took place in Partner Countries, focusing on different aspects of higher education reform and providing a forum for discussion for local stakeholders. These events, usually organised in cooperation between the NEOs, the national authorities and the HERE teams, gave the possibility to present different developments in the higher education sector, to identify challenges and to work on specific aspects of reforms relevant for the countries in question.

Typically, most local activities consisted of follow-up events of the international training seminars and of events facilitated by the so called "Technical Assistance Missions" (see section 4.2 below). The scope of activities varied, but most of the events gathered between 50 and 100 participants, while some of the larger events reached several hundreds of participants.



Participants of local HERE seminar in Tunisia (November 2015)

It should also be mentioned that, beyond the formal events, the HEREs in the different countries provided continuous advice, guidance and consultancy to higher education stakeholders, including higher education institutions and their staff, local and national authorities, and other relevant entities. HEREs were often consulted for contributions regarding the internationalization of higher education, the implementation of the Bologna process, accreditation and recognition issues, the development of National Qualifications Frameworks, etc.

4.1 Follow-up of international events

Upon return to their home countries, HEREs having benefitted from the possibility to attend international training events are expected to disseminate the information that they have gained to stakeholders in their countries. The 2015 reports show that the HEREs carried out an array of such dissemination events, either at their home institutions or in the context of larger events organised by the NEOs. These events gave the possibility to share the outcomes of the international sessions with diverse groups of stakeholders, stimulating reflection and debate at the local or national level.

Around 150 follow-up activities derived from the international events were organised in the Partner Countries in 2015. These follow-up activities comprised seminars, workshops and round tables in which HEREs acted as speakers or moderators. Furthermore, many HEREs who took part in international events wrote articles for newspapers or journals on the topics that were presented during these events and were invited as speakers to national or local TV shows dealing with higher education topics.

Examples of follow-up by HERE Participants:

*The HERE Team in **Jordan** delivered a series of 10 training seminars to disseminate what HEREs had learnt from the international seminars and conferences they attended. The number of participants ranged from 50 to 100 and comprised higher education stakeholders such as rectors, vice-rectors, deans, academic staff and students. Five of these training seminars followed the Erasmus+ International HERE Seminar "ICT based learning: opportunities for higher education learning and teaching" that took place in October 2015 in Petra, Jordan.*

*In **Tajikistan**, despite the fact that the HERE team comprises only five members, the team managed to organise several local events in 2015, all of them as follow-up of the four international events in which HEREs had taken part. Two HEREs organized a seminar for 120 university representatives, aimed at sharing knowledge gained from the Istanbul conference and the Ghent study visit. On this occasion, HEREs presented how partnership between Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems could lead to a better recognition of competences and qualifications, and contribute to the development of sector-based skills and quality assurance. The experts also presented key points on international credit mobility and how such mobility could be integrated into internationalisation strategies.*

*Building on the Istanbul conference of March 2015, one HERE from **Lebanon** organised a training event at his home university on bridging academia and VET. The event was organised in cooperation with the Directorate General of Technical and Vocational Education and Training. On this occasion, the participants had the opportunity to learn about the main benefits and obstacles in linking Higher Education with Vocational Education and Training.*

4.2 - Technical Assistance Missions

The Technical Assistance Missions (TAMs) are a very popular tool that allows NEOs to invite foreign experts to local events organised by HEREs. A call for TAM proposals is launched once a year by the Executive Agency and the selection is done in cooperation with the SPHERE team. The applications are submitted by the NEOs, but the planned events are agreed with the HEREs and the National Authorities.

A TAM application contains a description of the event for which expert input is requested. These can be large conferences or seminars, but also smaller workshops for a more targeted audience. If the application is approved, the SPHERE team engages an expert with a suitable profile to carry out the mission. The NEO and the HERE team take care of the practical arrangements.

In 2015, a total of 30 Technical Assistance Missions took place, covering all ex-Tempus regions. The highest number of TAMs took place in the Western Balkans and in the Southern Mediterranean countries. The most popular themes of the events were linked to joint/double degrees or programmes (6 events), doctoral studies (4 events) and National Qualifications Frameworks (4 events).

Overall, the 2015 TAMs reached a total audience of 1.754 participants, with an average size of 63 participants per event. The duration was usually of one or two days, and the type of events ranged from small working groups to conferences with more than 100 participants.



TAM workshop in Bosnia and Herzegovina (October 2015)

The TAMs clearly respond to national needs in terms of modernising education programmes, preparing legislative changes or adapting international standards to local conditions. The involvement of representatives of the Ministry of Education in many of the events was essential for ensuring impact and follow-up.

According to the feedback received from NEOs, the quality of the experts proposed by the SPHERE team was high and 60% of them were evaluated as excellent. Short reports drafted by the experts following the events can be found at: <http://supporthere.org/page/tams-2015>.

Examples of TAMs carried out in the Partner Countries:

*In **Montenegro**, the HERE team managed to streamline certain issues of importance for national HE reforms through TAMs and other discussions at the level of the academic community. Among these issues, the topic of doctoral studies was selected for a TAM hosted by the University of Montenegro.*

The aim of the seminar was to raise awareness of researchers on challenges regarding the organisation of doctoral studies, management and centralized governance of the PhD candidates' training, and improving quality and research infrastructure in the field of doctoral studies. Taking into account the similarity between the higher education system in Montenegro and Croatia, the Croatian experience was the closest to serve as an example to establish a system of doctoral education in Montenegro that would be competitive and comparable with those in the EU countries. The seminar showed many similarities and also big differences between the two systems and gave participants food for thought as to how to create policies that fit best the local context.

*The NEO and HEREs in **Azerbaijan** organized a TAM on the topic of "Learning Outcomes", a subject that had been introduced during a HERE study visit. 70 participants from different universities gathered at Khazar University in Baku for a 2-day TAM where an expert (Bologna Expert and Director of Academic Partnerships at Swansea University, UK) focused on curriculum modernization, setting of Learning Outcomes and Mapping. Several HEREs also presented their own experience on curriculum reform and the adoption of ECTS.*

Lessons learned from this TAM include an overview on the current situation of universities in Azerbaijan in terms of ECTS and Learning Outcomes; a definition of timelines, challenges and priorities for the university reform; the identification of benefits in the modernization of programmes and a better understanding of the process for curriculum modernization.

*In **Palestine**, a TAM was organized on institutional accreditation, with the aim to develop a culture of quality improvement in Palestinian higher education. 35 senior representatives from HE institutions involved in quality assurance attended the seminar, held by a representative of the Spanish National Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation. The participants were introduced to the revised European Standards and Guidelines, with a particular reference to institutional accreditation. An interactive workshop approach was implemented to teach how to carry out of site visits and team panel interviews in this process. The participants particularly appreciated the practical side of the workshops, where they also learned how to structure site visit reports.*

4.3 - Other local activities

Other types of local activities were also carried out by the HEREs, depending on the local needs and sometimes the initiatives of individual HEREs. Some examples can be found below:

*In the Republic of **Moldova**, one of the HEREs who is also the President of the Students Alliance of Moldova, developed a questionnaire on student governance by interviewing students from 29 universities. He then drafted a report entitled "Students' Participation in the Republic of Moldova - Realities and Perspectives". Another Moldovan HERE, Rector at the Cahul State University "Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu" followed up on this and contributed to the drafting of institutional regulations on student governance, which have already been approved by the Senate of his university.*

*Another interesting practice was the **Serbian** HERE Team's activity called ABCD HERE – Academic Business Club Development. The aim was to create a "template" session that would be proposed at conferences and professional meetings in different fields, in order to connect and bridge the academic and business communities. For this purpose, it was necessary to identify the current needs of the Serbian labour market, the students' expected qualifications and the employers' opinions on the quality of study programmes. The first session gathered 80 participants and was coordinated by 2 HEREs.*

*The **Kazakh** HEREs, with the support of the NEO, organised a first ever Tempus Exhibition in Kazakhstan, to demonstrate success stories of completed and on-going projects (report available at: <http://erasmusplus.kz/index.php/en/new-eng/item/42-71>). In the same context, the Kazakh HEREs continued their series of Master Classes - a series of training seminars that have become the HEREs' "business card" in Kazakhstan. Over 600 people benefited from such courses, whose topics were identified following a survey prepared and circulated among all universities. The Master Classes were based on the area of expertise of the HEREs and responded to the needs of specific regions and HEIs in Kazakhstan, with topics such as student-centred learning, university-enterprise cooperation, development of university strategies and National Qualifications Frameworks.*

*In **Ukraine**, a cluster seminar for Tempus Structural Measures projects was organised by one of the Vice-Ministers of the Ministry of Education and Science who was a member of the HERE team. 21 projects (11 on-going and 10 closed) were discussed together with project representatives, HEREs and the NEO in order to discuss their results, analyse the challenges and find ways in which the Ministry could contribute to the dissemination and valorisation of some of these results. This cluster seminar produced two sets of recommendations: a general list of action points to be implemented by the different parties concerned (in particular the MoE) and a list of specific recommendations for each of the projects discussed during the meeting. The Ministry expressed its appraisal on the event's outcomes and proposed to organise such a cluster seminar on an annual basis (the second edition took place in November 2016).*

Finally, many HEREs offered support to their NEO in activities linked to the promotion of EU programmes. For example, HEREs having been involved in the Tempus Programme at local level could make use of their experience in proposal writing and their understanding of funding mechanisms and project management. Such HEREs were often asked to contribute to information sessions about the new Erasmus+ Programme, for instance at student fairs, Erasmus+ Info Days or upon request by particular higher education stakeholders.

4.4 Recommendations on local activities

- It is recommended that an annual work plan of HEREs local activities is prepared by the HEREs, in consultation with the NEO and the Ministry of Education. Such a plan should be built around the political priorities of the country and the needs of the higher education stakeholders, so that the most relevant topics are addressed in the activities. The planning should also take into account the themes and timing of the international events organised by SPHERE as well as any higher education event taking place in the country.
- A large visibility should be ensured for HERE local activities (informing/involving the media if and when appropriate). Events organised (or articles published) by HEREs should specifically refer to the HERE action of the Erasmus+ programme under which they have been organised or published.
- Presentations and conclusions of all local events should be posted on the NEO websites and shared with the most relevant stakeholders, in particular the national authorities.

Technical Assistance Missions:

- HEREs should be actively involved in the preparation and follow-up of the TAMs.

- The expert should be properly briefed by the NEO/HEREs on the local conditions, so that he/she could better prepare his/her contribution.
- Ministry and media representatives, as well as students, should be invited to the events.
- It would be useful to distribute the expert's presentations to participants prior to the event, so that the audience is better prepared.
- The events should be interactive, focused on practical examples / case studies.

Follow-up of international events:

- Activities to disseminate information on international events should be planned and agreed in advanced within the HERE team (when preparing the above mentioned work plan).
- Participation in international events should be systematically followed-up with some type of dissemination activity (e.g. event, article or report to national authorities).
- Dissemination events going beyond the HEREs' home institutions should be particularly favoured.

5 – Dissemination and communication

5.1 – Publications produced by HERE teams

Dissemination and communication activities constitute an important part of the HERE activities, permitting to reach wider audiences and address issues relevant for national stakeholders. During 2015, most of the HERE teams produced or contributed to publications that were used as tools by ministries, governmental bodies and other higher education stakeholders for analysing current trends and challenges in higher education. Some of these publications are published on an annual basis while others are produced "ad hoc", depending on policy priorities and needs.

Examples of HERE Publications:

*In **Uzbekistan**, at the end of 2015, the team of HEREs published the third issue of the annual publication "Perspectives on higher education development", with 16 articles written by HEREs and other academics, and reviewed and edited by a group of four HEREs. The publication is devoted to topics such as credit mobility in higher education, teacher training, project management, as well as other issues related to the development of higher education.*

The publication can be accessed through this link:

http://erasmusplus.uz/images/shared/PERSPECTIVES%20OF%20HIGHER%20EDUCATION_latest_2.pdf

*In August 2015, the first edition of "Current trends in higher education in **Moldova**" was published by the Moldovan HERE team. The publication contains a series of academic articles written by the HEREs on the most challenging and pressing issues of the national higher education sector. The publication has been widely distributed among the academic community at different events and made available in the university libraries. It can be found under the following link:*

http://www.erasmusplus.md/sites/default/files/pdf/tendinte_heres.pdf

*In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, 2 HEREs contributed to the development of the “Recognition of Foreign Qualifications and Implementation of Lisbon Recognition Convention in Bosnia and Herzegovina” report, which provides a detailed and systematic analysis of the legislation and practice for the recognition procedures and the state of implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) in the country, alongside with pertinent recommendations. The report covers aspects of recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, while presenting the main challenges in achieving a fair recognition fully aligned with the LRC.*

The document is available on the NEO web page at the following link:

http://www.erasmusbih.com/documents/Recognition_of_Foreign_Qualifications_and_implementation_of_Lisbon_Recognition_Convention_in_BiH.pdf

*The **Armenian** brochure to present the local HERE team and its members can also be mentioned here. This leaflet describes the mission and mandate of the HEREs and presents the profiles of the team members. Such a leaflet helps to increase the visibility of the team among national higher education actors and can be easily distributed at different events.*

5.2 – Media appearances

Appearances in the media constitute excellent opportunities for the HEREs to promote higher education reform topics to different stakeholders inside and outside of the higher education sector. Many HERE events were covered by local media and individual HEREs were often invited to participate in TV and radio interviews or to contribute with articles to local newspapers or journals. In 2015, the HEREs were authors or co-authors of over 80 newspaper and journal articles written on topics pertaining to developments in the higher education sector.

Examples of media appearances:

*In **Russia**, a special issue of the Lobachevsky N. Novgorod State University Journal was published with 7 articles written by the HEREs (see <http://www.vestnik-soc.unn.ru/ru/nomera?jnum=204>). These articles covered the following topics: internationalisation of higher education; enhancement of the international visibility and standing of Russian universities through the participation in international programmes; joint curricula and their role in building the EAHE; integration of internationalisation tools in the universities' on-going activities; the international university networking and its contribution to sustainable growth; and quality assurance of joint degree programmes. All in all in 2015, 21 articles were prepared by the Russian HEREs addressing EHEA consolidation issues.*

*In terms of media appearance, members of the **Turkmen** HERE team produced newspaper and magazine articles and appeared on TV in relation to the international events that they had attended (in particular the Istanbul Conference and the Ghent study visit). Through the media channels, the Turkmen HERE group also introduced its local activities to a wider public and provided information on the Erasmus+ and Tempus Programmes.*

*In **Belarus**, the HEREs (co-)authored over 10 articles in 2015 related to mobility opportunities for young people, management of higher education institutions, quality assurance, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the Bologna Process. Furthermore, the HEREs were interviewed on TV on the topic of quality assurance in education and participated in televised debates on Belarus' accession*

to the EHEA. One of the HEREs also created a web page about the European Higher Education Area, on the website of the National Institute for Higher Education.

5.3 - Use of NEO websites and social media

All National Erasmus+ Offices' websites contain a section dedicated to the HERE activities. However, the visibility of the HERE teams on the NEOs' websites varies from country to country. In some cases the information is rather limited and not regularly updated while on other NEO websites the sections describing the HEREs' mission, profiles and activities are very detailed.

Some good practice examples:

*The website of the **Israeli** NEO contains a clearly structured and thorough presentation of the HERE activities. The section introduces in a very user-friendly way the 2015-2017 experts, and includes information on the past and upcoming HERE events, with reports on the workshops and seminars the HEREs have either organized or attended. For more information please visit <http://www.erasmusplus.org.il/here>.*

*The **Kazakh** NEO's website includes a section dedicated to the HEREs (available under <http://www.erasmusplus.kz/index.php/en/here-en/about-nk-en>). It provides information on the mission and objectives of the team, and also includes an updated list of HERE publications. Short summaries of the international and national activities in which the HEREs have participated are also made available.*

The increased use of social media platforms for communication and dissemination has also had an impact on the communication on HERE activities. In Uzbekistan for example, a regularly updated Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/uzheres/>) has been created to inform the higher education community about the activities of the HERE team and other news related to higher education topics. The page includes information on the HEREs events, on the Erasmus+ Programme and other cooperation and scholarship opportunities, as well as links to publications pertaining to higher education developments both in Uzbekistan and in the EU. The Facebook page was opened in September 2015 and has gathered almost 300 followers so far.

5.4 – Recommendations on dissemination and communication

- Publications and articles produced by HEREs are a great tool for promoting reform in higher education and these possibilities should be further exploited.
- When a HERE contributes to publications or articles, his/her role as Higher Education Reform Expert should be clearly stated in order to bring more visibility to the HERE team and emphasise the work done in promoting higher education reform.
- The HERE sections of many NEO websites could be improved by adding more information on the experts and their activities, and making sure that the page is regularly updated. A link should be included to the HERE Virtual Community website (www.supporthere.org).
- Social media could be used to a greater extent for promoting the HERE activities, thus making it possible to attract new target groups and increasing the visibility of the HERE team.

6 - HERE support to National Authorities

6.1 – Support to National Authorities in the Partner Countries

HEREs have a clear role to play in supporting their national authorities responsible for higher education. They can contribute to policy reform by making available their expertise, by providing updates on latest developments in other countries and by sharing the experience gained during their participation in international HERE events. Different examples of support to national authorities can be found from the 2015 HERE reports.

Many HEREs have collaborated directly with the ministries responsible for higher education and with other governmental bodies working in this field, contributing thereby to policy development and sharing their knowledge and expertise with these public authorities.

Cooperation with the ministries of education has been facilitated by the fact that almost all HERE teams include Ministry (/public authority) officials. As mentioned in the first chapter, 13% of the HEREs come from ministries and governmental bodies dealing with higher education.

Other forms of cooperation with ministries of education can also be identified, such as meetings with ministry representatives to plan the HERE activities, reports addressed by HEREs to ministry officials following the international training events, participation of ministry representatives in local HERE events, participation of HEREs in events (/workshops / roundtables / working groups) organised by the ministries, etc.

As a result of this close cooperation and thanks to their international knowledge and experience, HEREs contributed in 2015 to around 30 national legislative drafts in areas related to higher education.

Examples:

*In **Albania**, 2 HEREs were appointed as members of the National Commission for Higher Education Reform established by the Minister of Education and Sport, a task force in charge of the preparation of reform policy papers in the field of higher education and scientific research. The HEREs were actively involved throughout the reform process that started in 2014 and culminated in October 2015 with the approval of the Law No.80/2015, "For Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania".*

*The most relevant support that HEREs provided in 2015 to the National Education Authorities in **Kosovo** relates to their input to the draft law on Higher Education. The HEREs contributed substantially by commenting relevant provisions and aligning this draft with the best European standards. They contributed with direct input to the cabinet of the Minister and the Department of Higher Education within the Ministry.*

*In **Ukraine**, the HEREs took part in all working groups for reforms within the national higher education, thus influencing in a concrete way the policy making processes. In 2015, various Ukrainian HEREs were involved in the preparation of 17 legislative acts and in the development of a quality assurance system for higher education.*

*In **Kyrgyzstan**, the HERE team contributed to the development of the Action Plan 2015-2017 within the Education Development Strategy 2020 and the Sustainable Development Strategy. It also took actively part in the updating of the ECTS Guidelines in line with those of the EHEA, and produced a set of official documents on qualification frameworks and on the introduction of an independent accreditation process.*

*Responding to the specific national needs and upon request from the **Georgian** Ministry of Education and Science, three of the Georgian HEREs conducted a detailed research on plagiarism in Georgia's Higher Education System. This included desk study and focus groups, interviews, discussions as well as the formulation of recommendations at institutional and national levels. The report is available in English at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8EsOg5UNGftd2IzZkhYYVFLUFU/view>.*

Despite the many good examples, it should be mentioned, however, that the possibilities of HEREs to contribute to national reforms depend on the country and its political situation. In some countries, the lack of political will for reform at governmental level, sometimes combined with a lack of funds or with a conservative mentality in the higher education institutions, can make it very difficult to promote modernisation.

6.2 – Recommendations on supporting National Authorities

- Contribution to national policy reforms should be seen as one of the main tasks of the HERE teams. The NEOs should make sure that the ministry officials are aware of this resource and make the most of it.
- Ideally, a structured cooperation between the HERE team and the national authorities should be established, in order to ensure a regular communication and coordination of activities.
- HEREs should be trained not only on knowledge of EU developments, but also on change-management techniques, so that they are better prepared for their role.

7 - Use of Virtual Community

7.1 – Current features of the Virtual Community website

A "HERE Virtual Community" website was created already during the first phase of the action under the Tempus IV Programme, in order to serve as communication space for HEREs, as event registration tool and as environment for sharing news related to higher education reform. At the start of the new service contract, the website was taken over by the SPHERE team, with the task of updating and further developing this tool.

The current website (www.supportthere.org) contains public and password protected areas. The news and the sections related to HERE events are public, while the Virtual Community discussion forum is reserved for registered users only. These include all HEREs (who are obliged to register to

the Virtual Community), together with the NEOs, Commission and EACEA representatives, as well as some other external users interested in the topic.

Until now, the most frequently used and most functional part of the website has been the section for event registration. For each event, a separate page is created, which contains the programme, practical information for participants, background material on the topic and the registration form. After each event, the presentations are published on the same page, sometimes with pictures from the event.

The discussion forum, on the other hand, has not yet become very actively used. Different discussion threads have been launched, mostly by the SPHERE team but sometimes also by individual HEREs. The reactions however remain limited. It seems that the HEREs are lacking a sense of ownership to use the environment and do not necessarily see its added value.

Another feature of the website which is still under development are the so called "country pages". The idea is to offer a space for each HERE group in which they could present current higher education reforms in their country and any other information related to higher education that could be interesting for the website users. For the moment, seven country pages has been created (Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jordan, Kosovo, Palestine, Serbia, Uzbekistan), and others are under development.

7.2 – Recommendations on the use of the Virtual Community

Ideas to improve the use of the Virtual Community website were collected from the HERE reports and during the HERE management meeting organised in Brussels with NEO and HERE representatives. It was suggested, for example, to:

- Publish content which cannot be found elsewhere, in order to attract users to the Virtual Community
- Produce a mobile version of the website, to be used on smartphones and tablets
- Make it possible to link HEREs' profile to their Facebook or LinkedIn profiles
- Set up specific discussions limited in time, with an expert of a specific field answering questions from HEREs
- Aim for a "user driven approach" with HEREs as initiators of discussions
- Create a discussion group animated by HEREs who are also members of the Bologna Follow-up Group
- Create regional discussion groups
- Go ahead with producing country pages

8 – Conclusions

The main aim of the network of Higher Education Reform Experts is to promote the modernisation of higher education in Partner Countries surrounding the EU. Since its establishment 8 years ago, in the framework of the Tempus programme, the network has gained visibility and importance through the involvement of HEREs in policy development and their activities to promote modernisation through events, publications and media appearances.

While 2015 was the launching year of HERE activities under Erasmus+, the results are impressive and show a high commitment by the NEOs and HERE teams. With the organisation of around 200 local events and the publication of more than 80 articles and publications, the teams have kicked off their activities on a full scale, reaching a wide target audience in their countries. The many contributions to national legislation and policy development also show that HEREs are an effective instrument in accompanying the education reform process.

The role of the SPHERE team in supporting the HERE activities should also be highlighted. The international training events organised for HEREs in 2015 were highly appreciated by the participants and contributed to the professional development of the individual HEREs. In addition to the training aspect, the possibility to network and exchange views with HEREs from other countries constituted one of the major assets of these events. Moreover, the SPHERE team successfully supported the organisation of 30 Technical Assistance Missions in the Partner Countries, by identifying experts and providing advice to NEOs in the preparation of the missions. The possibility to invite prominent foreign experts brings a clear added value to the local HERE events and is particularly appreciated by the NEOs and HEREs.

It can be concluded that 2015 was a successful starting year for HERE activities under Erasmus+. With a limited budget (25.000€ in average per year per Partner Country), the HERE teams delivered a high number of valuable outcomes, which are in line with the objectives of the Erasmus+ programme and with the EU cooperation strategy with neighbouring countries. Voluntary convergence of the Partner Country higher education systems with EU developments in higher education has been supported by these activities, which contributed to the implementation of the Bologna process in the 12 Partner Countries having signed the declaration and to a wider adoption of its principles in the non-signatory countries.



Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

Erasmus+ : Higher Education - International Capacity Building

Brussels, 18 March 2014

Erasmus+ Programme

The Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs)

Terms of Reference⁵

1. Objectives and mission of the HEREs

The purpose of the National Teams of Higher Education Reform Experts is to provide a pool of expertise in order to promote reforms and enhance progress in Higher Education in the countries concerned and therefore participate in the development of policies and reforms in Higher Education in their respective country.

The mission of the HEREs is threefold:

- support policy development in their respective countries by supporting modernisation reform processes and strategies in Higher Education, in close contact with the local authorities concerned and in particular as regards for instance curriculum development, modernisation of governance, management and functioning of higher education systems and institutions, strengthening relations between the higher education sector and the wider societal and economic environment, etc.
- support policy dialogue with the EU in the field of Higher Education possibly in synergy and coordination with the various policy platforms established under the Erasmus+ programme or other potential initiatives established by, and under the guidance of, the European Commission.
- support Erasmus+ and former EU programmes projects by disseminating their results and outcomes, notably best practices and innovative initiatives and exploiting them for modernisation and development purposes.

2. Geographical scope

HERE teams will be established in some of the Partner Countries eligible for participation in the Higher Education Capacity Building actions, in particular in the neighbouring area (Eastern Europe and Southern Mediterranean), the Western Balkans and Central Asia and Russia.

⁵ Established after the NEOs/NCPs coordination meeting on 12/13 February 2014.

3. Profile of the HEREs

The HERE scheme is a “peer-to-peer” exercise. Although HEREs do not replace the work done by Ministries, Rectors Conferences, Quality Assurance Agencies, academic recognition centres, National Erasmus+ Offices (NEOs), etc., they should be well embedded in the national higher education environment and cooperate closely with national authorities.

Members of the national team of HEREs should hold (or have held) one of the following positions (or a combination thereof):

- (Vice-)Rectors,
- Deans and Heads of Department,
- Senior Academics,
- Directors of Study,
- Responsible of administrative services (such as International Relations Offices, Quality Assurance departments, Career orientation services, etc.)
- Ministry officials dealing with higher education
- Other Higher Education experts and researchers
- Students

Whatever their status or functions, HEREs must be highly motivated and concerned by their overall mission, available to attend and actively participate in the proposed events, willing to report widely about the results and to initiate activities locally.

Further to their appointment, HEREs will have to sign a **Code of Conduct** stating their responsibilities and duties in relation to their activities as HEREs. In particular, the absence of conflict of interests and the experts' availability to participate in the activities abroad and the coordination meetings in his/her home country will be essential.

4. Size and composition of the HERE teams

As a group, each national team of HEREs must have the necessary knowledge and expertise to provide counselling to institutions and peers on the different areas covered under their mandate. In this context, the **composition** of the team must provide a suitable balance between the various profiles (academic/administrative/Student representatives) and fields of competences. The inclusion of at least one student within the team should be ensured.

In order to ensure that each members of the team has the knowledge and competences required to fulfil the tasks assigned, training will be provided through international training events suchs as conferences, seminars and study visits.

The **size** of each national team of HEREs will vary in accordance with the size of the country and the number of higher education institutions, with an estimated number of 5 to 15 members per team.

A **Chair** will have to be identified by each national team of HEREs with the responsibility of coordinating the activities of the group and being the privileged contact person for external stakeholders.

5. Activities

In order to fulfil their mission national teams of HEREs will perform activities at national and international level, targeting primarily:

- all Erasmus+ and on-going Tempus beneficiaries as well as potential Erasmus+ beneficiaries in the country (i.e. higher education institutions and individuals; civil society; non-governmental organisations; enterprises, professional organisations, research institutions, vocational training institutions; etc.) and any other stakeholder in the field of higher education.
- National authorities in charge of higher education and their affiliate bodies.

5.a Activities at international level

Activities at international level will be organised by an external service provider, under the supervision of the European Commission and the Executive Agency, and will correspond to the following types:

- a) **Thematic seminars** designed to meet specific needs common in various Partner Countries. The aim of the thematic seminars is to provide new knowledge and practical experience. They may include field visits at higher education institutions or other relevant stakeholders. They will also provide a platform for questions, discussion and exchange of practices on specific topics and processes.
- b) **Study visits** that will take place in prominent EU or Partner Country universities, focusing on specific topics and fields of interest, common to various Partner Countries. Such visits will provide an opportunity to meet with academic and non-academic staff directly responsible for the introduction and the implementation of specific reforms or policies in the field of Higher Education. The visits will include meetings with several types of stakeholders as well as presentations, question & answer sessions and debates.
- c) **International large-scale conferences** including key note speeches by prominent experts and specific workshops dedicated to the attention of the HERE teams of all Partner Countries. Such conferences will deal with themes and topics connected to the core issues of the modernisation of the higher education sector in fields such as governance, management, funding, curriculum development and lifelong learning.
- d) **Technical assistance missions.** Specific technical expertise and advice by EU or Partner Country experts will be provided locally to HERE teams to carry out training and consultancy activities in the Partner Countries, targeted at a wide audience of university staff, officials and other higher education stakeholders. The service provider will identify relevant experts, who can be entrusted with such short term missions. These technical assistance activities will be organised upon specific request from the HERE teams, channelled by the NEOs.
- e) **Surveys / publications:** HEREs may be involved in the preparation of surveys or publications commissioned by the European Commission or EACEA in relation to the Higher Education sector, its institutions, policies, reforms and modernisation process.
- f) **Virtual expert community and material:** HEREs will be provided with a web platform to communicate, liaise and exchange. This includes the provision of information materials, brochures and case studies.

The support services required for the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the international HERE activities will be provided by the European Commission and EACEA with the support of an external provider.

5.b Activities at national level

In addition to the international activities referred to under 5.a above, HERE teams will have to perform counselling and advisory activities at national level and more concretely:

- a) **At institutional level**, HEREs' work will consist in counselling, advising and providing assistance to higher education institutions with regards to the introduction and implementation of reforms.

Higher Education Reform Experts should be actively involved in all kinds of promotional and awareness-raising activities about HE reforms in general and EU higher education programmes and initiatives in particular. Experts with specialist knowledge and experience may be recruited for the development and delivery of training activities for HEREs in those areas.

- b) **At national level**, HEREs will support national authorities in designing, implementing and monitoring policy reforms in the field of HE. Overall, this could include the following types of activities:

- Advice and expertise;
- Involvement in policy making process, preparation of national reports, codes, draft laws & decrees;
- Organising or participating in seminars, workshops, roundtables (teaching, training, informing, disseminating);
- Lecturing, participation in panel discussions and debates;
- Interviews (radio, TV, newspaper, specialized press), public appearances;
- Drafting of reports, analysis, studies;
- Publication of papers on the HE reform processes in the Partner Country.

6. Appointment of the HEREs

HERE teams will be designated (/renewed or reconfirmed) for a period of 3 years (renewable) starting as from 01 January 2015.

HERE candidates (new or already in place) will be proposed by the NEOs and the national authorities in the Partner Countries. This proposal will have to be endorsed by the respective EU Delegation and confirmed by the EACEA in line with the criteria defined by the European Commission.

7. Management of the HERE teams

The setting up of the HEREs' initiative together with the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the HEREs' activities in support to the higher education modernisation and reform processes in the Partner Countries is based on joint responsibilities shared between the European and Partner Country responsible bodies.

The European Commission is responsible for the general steering of the HEREs' initiative according to its political priorities. In particular, the Commission will give guidance related to the themes to be considered for training and events. This includes also steering of the content, priority setting, overall monitoring of the activities and budget of the action, definition of the selection criteria and profiles of the HEREs. It also includes regular review and approval of the HEREs overall objectives and results achieved based on ex-ante & ex-post information, reports and presentations submitted by the EACEA.

The EACEA is responsible for validating the selection of the individual HEREs in accordance with the criteria and profiles defined by the European Commission. The EACEA is also responsible for approving and monitoring the HEREs' activity plan and budget included in the NEO grant agreement, ensuring a coherent and coordinated approach for all involved countries. Finally, it is also responsible for managing the service contract with the external provider that will support the organisation of HEREs' activities at international level.

The EU Delegations in the Partner Countries are closely associated in all HERE activities. They endorse the appointment of the HEREs in the Partner Country.

The National Authorities propose the appointment of the national teams of HEREs, in liaison with the NEOs. They will set strategic goals and targets for the work of the HEREs, in the light of the state of progress of higher education reforms at national and institutional level.

The National Erasmus+ Offices (NEOs) provide administrative, logistical and financial support to the National Teams of HEREs, supporting and coordinating their activities, following the strategic goals and targets set by the national authorities. They act as intermediaries between the EU (/EACEA) and the HERE teams, as well as between the Erasmus+ Capacity Building projects (/on-going Tempus projects) and the HERE teams. In close cooperation with the National Authorities, NEOs participate in the process of appointment of the Higher Education Reform Experts.

From a management point of view, NEOs must

- implement the budget allocated to the HEREs as part of their grant agreement (see section "8. Funding" below);
- monitor the activities of the HEREs;
- prepare and submit to the EACEA annual reports and a final report about the activities implemented by the HERE team;
- keep the national authorities informed on the implementation of the HEREs' work programmes.

8. Funding of the HERE activities

The travel and subsistence costs incurred by the HEREs for their participation in international events, as well as the direct costs related to local initiatives involving the HEREs, will be covered by the specific budget dedicated to the HEREs in the NEO grant agreement. No remuneration is foreseen for the HEREs, but a limited part of this budget could be used to compensate certain specific tasks carried out by the HEREs, subject to prior approval by the EACEA.

The organisation of the international HERE activities will be financed through a service contract with an external service provider.



Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

Erasmus+ : Higher Education - International Capacity Building

Code of Conduct for Higher Education Reform Experts

Purpose

In order to ensure the successful implementation of the Higher Education Reform Experts' (HEREs) activities in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme, the undersigned undertakes to observe the principles set out in the Code of Conduct and to be guided by them whenever acting in the role of HERE either in his/her home country or abroad. Failure to act according to these principles can lead to his/her exclusion from the HERE team.

Mission

As defined in the Terms of Reference for the Higher Education Reform Experts (in Annex), the mission of the HEREs consists in promoting reforms in Higher Education in their country, by supporting policy development at national level as well as policy dialogue with the EU, and by supporting initiatives linked to the modernisation of higher education. HEREs shall be available to participate in activities consisting of counselling and advising higher education institutions, being involved in policy making activities at national level, organising events or participating in events as speakers, lecturing, giving interviews, drafting reports or studies, etc. The HERE activities in the Partner Countries are approved and monitored by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in cooperation with the European Commission, while the administrative, logistical and financial support is provided by the National Erasmus+ Offices (NEOs).

Cooperation at national level

At national level, HEREs act as members of a team, supported by the National Erasmus+ Office and following the strategic goals set by the National Authorities. The HERE identified as Chair of the national team will have the responsibility of coordinating the activities of the group and being the privileged contact person for external stakeholders.

The nominated HEREs commit themselves to regularly attend the meetings of their team and to be available for missions at national level (e.g. presentations, meetings, lectures). They shall follow closely the higher education reform developments in their country and take actively part in the planning of the HERE activities.

Participation in international events

Regular international training activities (conferences, seminars, study visits) will be organised for HEREs by a service provider selected by the EACEA. The NEO will select the HEREs invited to participate to these events and will cover the costs linked to their participation. The selection shall be based on the relevance of the topic in relation to the profile of the HERE.

HEREs selected to take part in an event commit themselves to make the most of this training opportunity. They will carry out any necessary preparatory and follow-up work, accept to act as speakers if requested, participate in the debates and contribute to dissemination activities in their home country.

Professional behaviour

In the context of the HERE activities, the individual HEREs should consider themselves not only as representatives of their country, but also as persons closely associated to the Erasmus+ programme. They are expected to contribute to the good image of the Erasmus+ programme and to act according to the general principles of professionalism and courtesy.

At the international training events, HEREs shall show respect towards their hosts and towards the other participants by respecting the schedules and not engaging in any parallel activities. They shall take part in all activities of the programme and participate constructively in the debates. They shall also comply with the instructions of their NEO concerning reporting after the events and shall provide all necessary supporting documents related to the costs incurred.

HEREs shall avoid any potential conflicts of interest by not allowing themselves to be influenced or guided by personal considerations, personal interest (financial, familial, emotional or other) or political pressure which might be regarded as being in conflict or incompatible with the integrity and objectivity required for performing their activities in support of the Erasmus+ programme.

Financial aspects

When being nominated for the task, HEREs shall be aware that they are not remunerated for their activities. However, their travel costs and costs of stay linked to national or international activities will be covered by the NEO. It will be up to the NEO to decide on the exact rules for such reimbursements, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the NEO grant agreement with the EACEA.

In addition, individual HEREs could be awarded a limited financial compensation for carrying out certain specific tasks. Such compensations will be allocated by the NEO, after prior approval by EACEA.

Entry into force

This Code enters into force at the date of its signature by the Higher Education Reform Expert and remains valid for the whole period of his/her assignment (2015-2017).

The undersigned commits to respect the principles presented in this Code of Conduct for the entire period 2015-2017.

Name:

Function:

Date and Place:

Signature:

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http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/key-action-2-cooperation-for-innovation-and-exchange-good-practices/capacity-0_en

General questions about the programme:

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