



Higher Education Reform Experts

Activity report 2017



WHY ARE
WE
HERE?

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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. The main aim of the network of HEREs is to promote the modernisation of higher education in Partner Countries surrounding the EU. The network is composed of individual higher education experts that are selected by their national authorities in cooperation with the **National Erasmus+ Offices (NEOs)** in 25 Partner countries : Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo , Montenegro; Serbia); Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan; Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan); Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine); the Russian Federation; South-Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine , Syria, Tunisia) ¹.

The HEREs act as promoters of higher education reforms by organising information and training events, providing advice to national authorities, drafting publications, 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 EACEA, with the support of a service provider. The framework of the HERE activities are outlined in more detail in the Terms of Reference at the end of this report.

Since 2015 the consortium **SPHERE (*Support and Promotion for Higher Education Reform Experts*)**, consisting of the University of Barcelona and the European University Association (EUA), is in charge of managing the HERE network. The SPHERE team organises international training events, selects and engages experts for training seminars (Technical Assistance Missions) in the Partner Countries and maintains a Virtual Community platform for communication, event organisation and dissemination of information among the HERE network: <https://supporthere.org/> .

Sections 2 to 5 of this report present the HERE training events organised by SPHERE and EACEA at the international level (study visits, seminars and conferences) and the different types of activities organised at local level in cooperation with the NEOs and the local stakeholders. Section 6 of this report is based on the 2017 national HERE reports produced by the 25 NEOs and are presented by regions. These national reports have been structured as to present the 2017 higher education developments in the respective countries, to outline the contributions of the HERE team to the national higher education development and to highlight three main achievements of the individual HERE teams. The aim of the reports is to give visibility to the activities carried out and the outputs produced by HEREs and NEOs at national level, and to give inspiration to colleagues in other countries when planning their HERE activities for the coming years.

At the end of each national report, links are provided to the HERE section of the individual NEO's websites where the composition of the national HERE teams and details of their activities and publications are provided. Eight of the NEOs also present the link to their HERE Facebook pages.

1.2 COMPOSITION OF THE HERE GROUP

In December 2017, the HERE group counted 249 members. The 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. Among the 249 HERE there were 17 rectors, 27 vice-

¹ The HERE action originally covered 27 Partner countries, but in 2017 the number decreased to 25 countries, as for contractual and political reasons no activities took place in Morocco and Libya.

rectors, 12 deans, 9 heads of departments, 5 heads of research, 30 representatives of International Relation Departments/Offices, 8 representatives from Quality Assurance Departments, 62 professors, 16 lecturers, and 14 students. On the side of the Ministries the HERE group counts two Ministers (Albania and Algeria), 3 Deputy Ministers (Palestine, Jordan and Ukraine), 14 heads and deputy heads of departments, 5 representatives of Commissions for Quality Assurance and Accreditation, 12 representatives from government agencies and 10 leading advisors to the Ministries. In terms of gender balance, 48% of the HEREs are women.

Depending on the country, the size of the national HERE team varies from 5 to 15 experts. The precise number of HEREs per country is indicated at the beginning of each national report². HEREs' local activities are coordinated by the NEOs, in cooperation with the Ministries responsible for higher education. Funding for local and international activities is made available via the NEO budgets.

2. HERE training events organised in 2017

2.1 TRAINING EVENTS AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

The aim of the events is to respond to the HEREs' needs and to strengthen their ability to develop and implement reforms at institutional and national level. The focus is put on:

- Awareness raising about European higher education policy, namely the EU Modernisation Agenda and policy developments in the EHEA, and how these policies can be adapted to Partner Countries.
- Capacity building to actively contribute to higher education reform at national level with focus on knowledge sharing.
- Enhancing networking between HEREs of different countries and regions, and with European experts.
- Peer learning approaches that allow individual HERE and HERE teams with different levels of knowledge and experience to learn from each other.

The topics of the events are defined in cooperation between the European Commission, the Executive Agency and the SPHERE team, taking into account specific interests expressed by NEOs and HEREs. A needs assessment was carried out in the beginning of 2017, followed by consultations of HERE teams and NEOs through feedback surveys and evaluation forms received after local and international events, at NEO meetings and through meetings with NEOs and HEREs.

In total 5 training events took place in 2017 including one conference, two seminars and two study visits. The study visits are dedicated to HERE participants only, while the seminars and the conference also include NEO participants and Bologna experts. SPHERE conducted pre-event surveys to ensure that events address the actual needs of HEREs, and postings were made on the Virtual HERE Community platform prior to and after events containing discussion questions and references to resources.

Table of events organised in 2017

Type of event	Title	Date	Location
Seminar	Students in focus:	5-6 April	Narxoz University,

²The list of HEREs is available at https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/key-action-3-support-for-policy-reform/higher-education-reform-experts-heres_en

	Student as partners in higher education governance and quality assurance http://supporthere.org/almaty2017	2017	Almaty, Kazakhstan
Study Visit	Research based teaching: Universities, Entrepreneurship and the Knowledge Triangle http://supporthere.org/milan2017	30-31 May 2017	Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy
Seminar	Universities and social engagement http://supporthere.org/nicosia2017	13-14 June 2017	University of Nicosia, Cyprus
Study Visit	Quality culture in practice: Scotland and the University of Edinburgh http://supporthere.org/edinburgh2017	5-6 October 2017	University of Edinburgh, UK
Annual Conference	EU and its neighbours: Higher education policy and cooperation http://supporthere.org/brussels2017	11-12 December 2017	Brussels, Belgium

The five events are briefly presented hereafter grouped by type of event. More detailed information on each event can be found through the links to the virtual HERE platform mentioned in the table above.

2.1.1 The Seminars engaged speakers from Europe, from the host institution and from the HERE group. They were designed as participative and discussion-oriented events, which mixed case studies and presentations with break-out group work.

Students in focus: Student as partners in higher education governance and quality assurance, Narxoz University, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 5-6 April 2017

58 participants attended this event, including HEREs, speakers and local participants from Narxoz University, SPHERE team members and one EACEA staff member. Six student HEREs participated upon an explicit recommendation to involve students, which was made in the call for nominations for participants. The seminar was a response to the positive feedback received from both the seminar on European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in practice in Lviv, Ukraine, and the 2016 Annual Conference in Barcelona (cf. HERE activity report 2016), regarding the critical role of student engagement in institutional and national policy reform. It was hosted by Narxoz University in Almaty and highly supported by the NEO in Kazakhstan, a country actively engaged in improving its student participation culture.

The learning outcomes were to:

- Different approaches towards student participation in university governance and QA in their specific national and regional contexts.
- Understand the pro's and cons of student participation as well as the implications regarding legal framework, institutional autonomy as well as organisational and financial implications
- Reflect on the situation of student participation in their own institution/system, regarding achievements and challenges and the potential for enhancement.
- Relate student participation to the broader context of higher education reform, with regards to good governance at system and institutional level, enhancement of internal and external QA, enhancement of education and promoting democratic society and citizenship.

Universities and social engagement, University of Nicosia, Cyprus, 13-14 June 2017

A total of 60 participants attended the seminar, including HERE, speakers, local participants from the University of Nicosia, SPHERE team members and one EACEA staff member. The event tackled a complex topic, which covers a wide range of contextual issues that universities face: inclusion, access, as well as social outreach and the social engagement missions of universities. The seminar was hosted by the University of Nicosia, with the support of the Center for the Advancement of Research & Development in Educational Technology (CARDET), an independent nonprofit organisation that has conducted extensive research on migrant integration and education. Migration and refugees were among the sub-themes tackled, given the pertinence of the topic to European and Mediterranean higher education systems at present.

The learning outcomes were to:

- Identify different institutional strategies with regards to inclusion, and how these strategies help HEIs to respond to a changing student population and specifically those that may be marginalized;
- Identify some of the key issues associated with access (financing, outreach, retention and student services, RPL) and how HEI in different systems are addressing them;
- Identify good practices in how HEI are utilizing technology and ICT, including online and distance learning, to enhance access;
- Assess how the 'social mission' of the university is woven/can be woven into curricula design
- Gain an overview of specific HEI strategies and programmes to include migrants and refugees, and some of the challenges associated with this;
- Connect the university social mission with that of research and identify good practices accordingly.

2.1.2 Study visits are intended to present a 'case study' of an institution or a country. These events are very practice oriented and require high level of support and collaboration from the host institution to engage their staff and students in the event programme. In some cases, national authorities, other universities and external partners who worked closely with the host institution are invited to present.

Research based teaching: Universities, Entrepreneurship and the Knowledge Triangle, Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy, 30-31 May 2017

The event counted 55 participants, including HEREs, speakers and local participants from the University of Milan, SPHERE team members and two EU staff members. The visit demonstrated how universities can work with industry and how teaching and research can be productively articulated.

The learning outcomes were to:

- Comprehend a strategic framework, within which to articulate research and teaching;
- Collect concrete examples of how research can inform teaching and learning;
- Assess the dual role of professors as researchers and teachers;
- Understand the challenges, the benefits and the means of engaging industry in research as well as in the teaching process;
- Obtain a better understanding of entrepreneurship and how it can be integrated into the teaching and programme design;
- Consider the European policy framework for university-business cooperation and for entrepreneurship in higher education.

Quality culture in practice: Scotland and the University of Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom, 5-6 October 2017

A total of 57 participants attended the study visit, including HERE, speakers and local participants from the University of Edinburgh, SPHERE team members and one EACEA staff members.

This study visit was a follow-up to both the seminar on European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in practice in Lviv, Ukraine, and the Almaty seminar of student engagement (cf. section 2.1.1). It was organised in cooperation with both the University of Edinburgh, which has an exemplary and consolidated internal QA system, and with Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (SPARQS), which supports student engagement in Scotland.

The learning outcomes were:

- Generate awareness for the ESG 2015 in practice in a particular institution, especially regarding internal QA (for ESG 2015 see https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf);
- Discuss and debate the institutional responsibility for QA and the need to build capacity for this;
- Understand the process that one institution has gone through to this effect and the role of leadership in creating structures and incentives for quality culture;
- Learn about the management of quality culture within institutions, and how students, staff and other stakeholders are engaged accordingly.

2.1.3 The annual Conference aims at linking the themes in the broader context of European and international developments and policy reform and at facilitating enhanced networking between HEREs.

EU and its neighbours: Higher education policy and cooperation, Brussels, Belgium 11-12 Dec. 2017

Among the 137 participants, there were 67 HERE participants, 8 Bologna experts, 21 NEO representatives and 41 speakers and participants, mainly from EU institutions. The conference focussed strongly on the mission of the HEREs to contribute to policy reform, policy development and implementation. It was also designed as a promotional event, to raise visibility of the HEREs' work and their policy mission, especially with regards to the EU external relations and neighbourhood policy. The event took place in Brussels, in order to facilitate high participation of EU officials from different services and policy sectors.

Two new approaches were integrated into this conference, which seemed to be successful, according to the event evaluation survey:

- 1) HERE were divided into sub-regions and were able to discuss with EC members the specific EU policy frameworks targeted at those regions (Southern Med, Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership, Central Asia).
- 2) Bologna Experts were invited and a dedicated session was provided on enhancing cooperation between the Bologna experts teams and the HEREs, which is something that had been frequently requested by HEREs.

The event objectives were to:

- Take stock of the HERE activities from 2017, and more generally the achievements and lessons learnt since 2015;
- Provide HEREs with an opportunity to showcase national activities and results to an international policy audience;
- Assess explicit and implicit goals and priorities under ongoing regional and interregional policy frameworks (European Higher Education Area, EU neighbourhood country policies etc.);

- Discuss the goals of the EU's Renewed Agenda and its potential relevance for the context of the countries neighbouring the EU;
- Demonstrate the role of HEREs in Bologna-like reform development and implementation;
- Frame the HERE activities within the context of EU-Partner country policy commitments and processes, so as to demonstrate their relevance and added value;
- Highlight the role of student HEREs in contributing to HE reform;
- Define goals and strategies for the HERE activities 2018-2020: how can the HERE be best supported and empowered? How can their work be best promoted to better contribute to overriding policy frameworks?

An event report of the conference was posted on the HERE platform:

http://supporthere.org/sites/default/files/here_annual_conference_report_final.pdf

2.2 HERE ADVISORY BOARD

Prior to the annual conference, the first meeting of the HERE advisory board took place in Brussels on 10 December 2017. The board composed of 8 HEREs has been set up in order to involve HEREs more closely in the programming and follow-up of the international HERE training activities. A Call for nominations was sent to the NEO in September 2017 asking each NEO to designate one HERE. The following eight HERE were finally nominated for the duration of one and a half year:

Eastern Europe

1. Georgia: Ketevan Gurchiani, Associate Professor, Ilia University
2. Belarus: Siarhei Piashkun, Head of International Office, Polotsk State University

Southern Mediterranean Countries

3. Lebanon: Chafik Mokbel, Acting Secretary General of University of Balamand Research Council
4. Israel: Ma'ayan Hagage, Student, Academic Affairs Coordinator, Nat. Israeli Student Union

Western Balkans

5. Montenegro: Mira Vukčević, Full Professor, University of Montenegro
6. Bosnia & Herzegovina: Aleksandra Nikolic, Lecturer, University of Belgrade

Central Asia

7. Uzbekistan: Igor Vikhrov, Expert in medical education, Tashkent Pediatric Medical Institute

Russian Federation

8. Russia: Alla Akulshina, Director of International Programmes, Voronezh University

The advisory board meets with the SPHERE team twice a year and is consulted electronically on a regular basis in order to provide feedback on upcoming events. It also generates feedback on content for the HERE Virtual Community and website, and ensures greater ownership and involvement of the HEREs in the programming and follow-up of the international training activities. The board has provided precious input to SPHERE for the programming of the 2018 events.

2.3 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MISSIONS – TAMS

TAMs are national and, in smaller numbers, regional events which entail providing one or two international experts to contribute to a training event, seminar or conference on a pertinent higher education theme. The activities should be part of the national work plan for the HERE and/or part of the planned higher education reform process underway in a specific country or region. A TAM should provide a clear added value with regards to national higher education reform objectives. The TAMs are very diverse in size, format and

purpose: some are larger conferences of over 100 participants, some are seminars of 30 and some are smaller focus groups with the ministry.

A call for TAM proposals is launched once a year by the EACEA in cooperation with the SPHERE team. The applications are elaborated by the NEOs in cooperation with the HEREs and the National Authorities. A TAM application contains a description of the event for which expert input is requested. The SPHERE Team developed and expanded an expert pool for responding to the TAM requests, comprised mainly of practitioners from European universities. The expert is generally proposed by SPHERE, but he/she can also be proposed by the NEO. One country can be granted up to 3 national TAMs per year.

In 2017, the NEOs were encouraged to develop joint TAM proposals to address specific topics in a regional context, collaborate and pool resources. A regional TAM involves at least two or more countries on a theme of common interest. For this type of TAMs which are bigger events, two to three experts may be requested. One country can participate in up to two regional TAMs per year.

From a total of 76 TAM proposals submitted, 56 proposals and 64 experts were selected for implementation according to the following criteria:

- 1) relevance of the topic (in the context of the HERE mandate and HE reform),
- 2) quality of the proposal,
- 3) feasibility regarding timing and
- 4) requested input from the expert.

58 TAMs involving a total of 62 experts finally took place in 2017 as a result of two previously planned TAMs being carried over from 2016. As per the general prevalence of themes, TAM requests fell into the following categories:

- Quality Assurance (external/internal) (9)
- Teaching methods, eLearning and digitalization (9)
- Teaching staff development (8)
- Qualification frameworks (8)
- Financial management/Funding models (7)
- Employability and entrepreneurship (6)
- Doctoral studies (5)
- Internationalization/mobility (5)
- Lifelong Learning (4)
- Recognition of prior learning, social engagement (2)
- Joint degrees (1)
- Student centred learning/learning outcomes (1)
- Students' self-governance (1)
- Human resources (1)
- Other (Intellectual property, curriculum for teaching computing, University Governance)

In 2017, TAM requests have become more specific, suggesting that NEOs and HEREs are increasingly identifying precise needs, policies and institutional interests, such as the following examples demonstrate: 'Accreditation of Continuous Professional Development in Health Care' (Egypt); 'Developing a national platform for Open Online Learning' (Russia) and 'Academic Library Development' (Uzbekistan). In addition, many TAMs have been requested as a direct follow-up to training seminar or study visit themes, and a number of experts who contributed to seminars were subsequently requested for TAMs. Another observation concerns the increased number of TAMs that treat issues related to research policy and management and its intersection with higher education, such as in the regional TAM in the Western Balkans

on funding models, research capacity and quality of PhD studies³. Finally, a number of countries have requested a follow-up TAM to a previous TAM as a means to delve deeper into a topic and/or provide institutional training for implementation (example: Israel, 'Development of institutional internationalisation strategies', as a follow up to a 2015 TAM on 'Developing a national strategy for internationalisation' and various TAMs on quality assurance requested by the Ukraine).

The experts who contributed to TAMs fill in an evaluation of the event, which is edited and published on the Virtual Community Website (cf. list of TAMS <https://supporthere.org/page/tams-2017>). The NEOs also complete a questionnaire after each TAM, which is submitted to EACEA and to SPHERE. Finally, after each event, the HEREs are asked to describe how they apply the gained knowledge in their national context. The evaluation forms received from these three sources demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with the TAMs. In the majority of cases, NEOs and HEREs have found the experts 'very relevant' and have utilised and disseminated the presentations and the outcomes of the events organised. The evaluation forms confirm that the HERE teams are actively using the TAMs for policy reform; many events are organised with the ministry and feed into the development of ongoing higher education legal reform. The international experts' evaluations also demonstrated true enthusiasm for the TAMs as a tool for policy change in Partner countries.

3. Events and activities carried out by the HERE in the Partners Countries

In the context of their professional activities and with the input received during the HERE training events outlined above, the HEREs have carried out a range of activities in the Partner Countries. In 2017, more than 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 with the NEOs, the national authorities and the HERE teams, gave the possibility to present and promote 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 TAMs (see section 2.3). A non-exhaustive list of these local events and activities can be found in the national reports. It was however worth underlining some of the activities implemented in the following sections.

3.1 FOLLOW-UP OF INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

HEREs having attended international training events are expected to disseminate the information gained to stakeholders in their countries. The 2017 national 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. In these events, they shared the outcomes of the international sessions with diverse groups of stakeholders, building capacity and stimulating debate at local or national level. These follow-up activities comprised seminars, workshops and round tables in which HEREs acted as speakers or moderators.

The events addressed topics like university ranking in view of achieving excellence (Serbia), Curriculum guidelines according to the new bylaws (Albania), the utilisation of ICT tools and technology to enhance Higher Education studies (Syria), Programme design to address employability (Lebanon), Academic Policy of the University: administration, tools and subjects (Kazakhstan), Higher Education Standards (Ukraine) and Research based education (Georgia).

³ A magic triangle of Higher Education in the Western Balkan region: Funding Model - Research Capacity - Quality of PhD Studies, host: Montenegro, participants: Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina

3.2 HERE SUPPORT TO NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

HEREs have contributed directly 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.

Cooperation with the Ministries of education has been facilitated by the fact that almost all HERE teams include Ministry /public authority officials. Nearly 20% of the HEREs come from ministries and other governmental bodies dealing with higher education. Many of them are members of national committees and task forces which contribute to the preparation of laws and national strategies in higher education.

In many Partner countries, the HEREs collaborate 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. The HEREs assist the Ministry in the development of different reports, and the preparation of the annual work plans in line with national priorities.

Other forms of cooperation with Ministries of education have been reported, 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 and participation of HEREs in events organised by the Ministries in the form of workshops, roundtables or working groups.

Beyond the more formal events and activities, 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 internationalisation of higher education, the implementation of the Bologna process, accreditation and recognition issues, the development of National Qualifications Frameworks, etc.

To give some examples:

- The HEREs from the 12 partner countries who are member of the Bologna process⁴ contributed to the preparation of the Bologna report by providing data, checking statistics and editing papers.
- In Albania, several missing bylaws for the Law on Higher Education and Scientific Research in the national Higher Education Institutions were prepared by the HEREs.
- In Serbia, HEREs participated in public discussions about the new law on Higher Education and provided recommendations for the law improvements.
- In Kosovo, HEREs adopted a proposal for developing policies for public-private partnerships with the aim to improve cooperation between Higher Education and the Labour Market, to include business and industry representatives in HEI councils and boards, and to establish cooperation in internships for students.
- In Kazakhstan, the HEREs contributed to the revision of the Law of Education by introducing articles to enhance the autonomy of HEIs in Kazakhstan.
- In Kyrgyzstan, the HEREs updated the National Qualification Framework concept in 2017 and developed an action plan for its implementation.
- In Turkmenistan, the HEREs contributed to the development of the Digital Education Concept, which was approved by the Ministry in September 2017.

⁴ Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Montenegro, Russian Federation, Serbia, Ukraine

- In Israel, the HERE team focused its efforts on the promotion of internationalisation in HE and met with policy makers at The Council for Higher Education to advise and take part in shaping a new policy by developing a budgeting model to encourage internationalisation.
- In Moldova, a study elaborated by a HERE representative from the Ministry of Education on the Quality Assurance in HE allowed to assess the results of the external evaluations and to submit recommendations for improving the quality of bachelors' degree programmes.
- In Egypt, the HEREs contributed to the development of the medical and engineering sections, as well as to the private entities laws.
- In the Russian Federation, the HEREs have provided advice concerning requirements to design and deliver Higher Education curricula.
- In Armenia, the HEREs have prepared and promoted programme accreditation with the active participation of students aiming to enhance student-centered education.

More examples of support to national authorities can be found in the HERE national reports section.

3.3 SUPPORT TO THE PROMOTION OF THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

Many HEREs supported their NEO in the promotion of EU programmes, during information days / sessions on specific actions of the Erasmus+ Programme, at student fairs or upon request by particular higher education stakeholders. In Uzbekistan, the HERE initiated the International Credit Mobility (ICM) Conference, which was organised by the NEO in December 2017. This was the first big ICM conference in Central Asia gathering students and teaching staff who shared their experiences gained during their mobility stay in Europe.

4. Dissemination and communication

4.1 PUBLICATIONS PRODUCED BY HERE TEAMS

Publications produced by the HEREs are cornerstones that allow visualising the work that has been carried out nationally to support education reforms. Many of the 2017 publications deal with the ongoing reform developments, like University autonomy, Qualification frameworks and Employability (Algeria), Research Based Education and Knowledge Triangle (Moldavia), Internationalisation (Russia), Universities self-evaluation, Diploma Supplement development guidelines and ECTS guidelines (Kyrgyzstan), Quality Assurance (Georgia), Recognition of Foreign Qualifications and Implementation of Lisbon Recognition Convention (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Several NEOs prepared publications jointly with HEREs on topics such as the impact of EU programmes on Higher Education in Montenegro, Actual Trends in Higher Education in Moldova and Main Directions of the Modernisation of the National Higher Education System of Belarus. In Georgia, a survey report was published by a joint team composed of NEOs and HEREs on “The Role of Universities in Regional Development”, focusing on the role of universities as contributors to the development (economic, social and cultural) of individual regions and of the country as a whole.

In Armenia, the HEREs contributed to the translation and publication of the ECTS guide; in Tajikistan as in other countries, the HEREs shared their knowledge and expertise through the publication of articles in various university newspapers. In Uzbekistan, the HERE team was involved in selecting and editing 24 articles for the 5th edition of the traditional annual publication “Perspectives of higher education development”.

Finally, NEOs and HEREs drafted overviews of their national Higher Education Systems reflecting new elements and recent changes in all aspects of the Higher Education sector in their countries, which were published by EACEA in February 2017.

4.2 USE OF NEO WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

All NEOs websites contain a section dedicated to the HERE activities. Although the quality and level of details vary from one country to another, the HERE sections have improved since 2016. They provide information on the HEREs' team members, their mission, profiles, activities and publications. Other NEO websites also include regularly updated information and pictures on the international and national HERE events. Five NEOs have a separate Facebook page for HERE activities, while some others present HERE activities on the general Facebook page of the NEO.

4.3 HERE VIRTUAL COMMUNITY WEBSITE

The HEREs Virtual Community Website (www.supporthere.org) consists of a public and a password protected area. It has been further developed in 2017 by the SPHERE team with input of the HEREs and includes the following features:

- The **HERE database** (password protected) contains the HEREs' name, title, affiliation, fields of expertise and picture. It is intended to facilitate networking and also provides an entry way to event registration and the Virtual Community. HEREs must be registered in the database in order to be able to register for individual events. There are 580 registered users including, next to the current and former HEREs, the NEOs, relevant local actors, such as ministry representatives that have shown interest to be registered, European experts that attend and speak at events or TAM, and EU staff members. The database is also open to Bologna Experts to enhance synergies between the two related initiatives.
- The Virtual Community Website provides **public information and news**, which is updated regularly by the SPHERE team. This includes news and information on EU higher education policy and the Bologna Process, relevant events, calls for proposals for major EU funding streams in higher education and a calendar function. This information is not exhaustive but provides a selection of what could be important for the HEREs in terms of understanding the issues identified in the European policy landscape, and relevant to HE reform in their own countries. From June 2016 until 31 December 2017 the number of page views on the website was 85.519, of which 9.616 were new visitors. The countries that most visited the website were UK, Belgium, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Serbia and Kazakhstan.
- The website has a dedicated space for "**country pages**", which have been developed by the NEOs. The pages present current higher education reforms in individual countries, HERE activities and any other information related to higher education that could be interesting for the website users. Links to TAMs that took place in the country are cross-referenced on the country pages. So far, nineteen country pages have been created: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo, Lebanon, Moldova, Montenegro, Palestine, Russia, Serbia, Syria, Tunisia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan have provided Country pages. The country pages can be found at <http://supporthere.org/page/sphere-country-information>. The national reports section in this report also indicates the links to the individual country pages.
- A **Library function** has been added to the Virtual Community Website. This allows HEREs to search thematically for research materials that have been posted (in the Virtual Community or elsewhere).

- The **Technical Assistance missions** carried out in each country are listed on the website at the following link: <http://supporthere.org/page/technical-assistance-missions-tam>
It shows the TAMs that have taken place, the country, the expert and a short description of the event (as provided by the expert in his/her analysis). The SPHERE Team is encouraging NEOs to send links to presentations from TAMs that can be posted as well. This feature still needs to be further developed, as few NEOs have provided access to these presentations so far.
- Another aspect of the Virtual Community is the **discussion forum** section. As of December 2017, there were six discussion groups on the following topics: Qualification frameworks; HERE events afterthoughts; Joint degrees and programmes; Student engagement; the Bologna process; Universities, industry cooperation and entrepreneurship. It cannot be detected how many HEREs have consulted the forum, as many do this via their email (where the post alerts are received), yet do not post. Albeit the limited participation so far, it was decided to continue the discussion groups to prime events and post key resources. For the study visits in Milan, Nicosia, and in Edinburgh as well as the Annual Conference in Brussels, the discussion forum was used to assess participants' interest and level or experience in the topic.
- The website contains **mini-sites** that have been created to announce and manage the training events. They consist in downloadable practical information, including information on visas and local hotels, as well as maps of the city and venue, suggested background reading, the programme, the registration form, the evaluation form, the pre-survey (if relevant), information on the host and all presentations from events and photos. The mini-sites are open and public, except for the practical information and the registration form.

4.4 HERE NEWSLETTER

A HERE newsletter was developed and distributed for the first time on 27 September 2017 per email to all members in the HERE database. The newsletter intends to showcase the work of individual HERE teams, to provide feature interviews with selected HEREs and also to promote TAM results. It also collects news and references to relevant policy events in higher education, in EU and in HERE countries. It is published twice a year and can be consulted and subscribed at the following link: <https://supporthere.org/page/newsletter>

5. Conclusions

The activities carried out in 2017 HERE show an increasingly stronger and targeted involvement of the HEREs. The type and content of the activities implemented respond to the local needs and were often based on the initiatives of individual HEREs.

At national level, the HERE contributed to the preparation of a number of legislative reforms and the drafting of new higher education policies and strategies. In many Partner countries HERE collaborate 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. The HEREs assist their Ministry in the development of different reports, and the preparation of annual work plans in line with the national priorities for the Higher Education sector.

The fact that almost 20% come from Ministries and governmental bodies dealing with higher education facilitates the cooperation and the transfer of knowledge on reform measures to Ministries, as well as to other national and local authorities. HERE contributions continue to be focused on Bologna type reforms such as the internationalisation of higher education, accreditation and recognition issues and the

development of National Qualifications Frameworks. The 12 HERE team belonging to the Bologna member countries assisted in the preparation of the Bologna report.

Many of the publications produced by the HERE dealt with ongoing reform developments, like University autonomy, Qualification frameworks and Employability, Research Based Education and Knowledge Triangle, Internationalisation, Universities self-evaluation, Diploma Supplement development guidelines and ECTS guidelines, Quality Assurance, Recognition of Foreign Qualifications and Implementation of Lisbon Recognition Convention.

The largest professional category in the HEREs group (75%) is represented by Higher Education Institutions' staff members, in particular professors, representatives of international relation departments/offices and vice rectors. The HERE activities and its impact at the institutional level are proportionally significant. Training of Higher Education Institutions' staff members has been an important part of the HERE activities, in particular in the form of follow-up of international training events and TAMs, as well as in providing advice, guidance and consultancy to higher education stakeholders. Many HEREs also supported their NEO in the promotion of Erasmus+ programmes, for example during information days or events organised for specific actions of the Erasmus+ Programme. The HEREs' input is also reflected in the HERE sections of the NEO websites which have become more consistent and detailed. Some include regularly updated information on the international and national HERE events.

During this third year in their supporting function to the HERE action, SPHERE has confirmed its expertise in developing the content and managing the logistics of training events and Technical Assistance Missions (TAMs). The topics of events have been selected so as to build on each other by following-up on previous events. Among the HERE trainings events organised by SPHERE, study visits were the most appreciated format by the HERE participants. It was therefore decided that as from 2018, the number of yearly study visits would be increased to three and the number of seminars decreased to one per year.

The HEREs also highly value the TAMs for being a flexible tool allowing the HEREs to explore specific topics more deeply within their own national contexts. The objective to organise a minimum of 55 TAMs per year has been upheld for 2018, even if matching the schedule of a locally organised event and the availability of a specific training expert is often challenging. The regional TAMs approach was deemed largely relevant and a creative means to address reform issues at regional level.

The fact that TAM requests have become more specific in the choice of topics shows that NEOs and HEREs are increasingly identifying precise needs and catering requests to specific policy and institutional interests. TAMs are utilised to support policy reforms; many events are organised with the ministry and feed into the development of ongoing higher education legal reform. The most popular themes in 2017 were quality assurance, teaching methods, eLearning and digitalisation, teaching staff development and qualification frameworks. In addition more TAMs treated issues related to research and its intersection with higher education. Many TAMs have been requested as a direct follow-up to training seminar or study visit themes, and a number of experts that presented at seminars were subsequently requested for TAMs, which allows adapting the learning content to the national situation.

The HERE Virtual Community website is becoming an increasingly equipped information tool on Higher Education reform. A new feature includes a library function which allows HERE to search thematically for literature that has been posted in the Virtual Community or elsewhere. A bi-annual HERE newsletter was released in September 2017 showing the work of individual HERE teams and providing feature interviews with selected HEREs and news and references to relevant policy events in higher education.

Through the establishment of a HERE advisory board, eight HEREs have been directly involved in the programming and follow-up of the international HERE training activities, therewith increasing the ownership

of the HEREs in this action. Starting from its first meeting in December 2017, the group has proven to be of precious assistance as a sounding board for the interests of the HEREs in the preparation of events.

In 2018, SPHERE will start to summarize the learning outcomes from the training events in the form of reports including key policy messages and lessons learnt, which will be posted on the virtual community website in the document section of the given event. This will allow HEREs who did not attend the event to be informed on its content and it will assist those HEREs who organise nationally follow-up sessions from the training events.

6. HERE National Reports 2017

6.1 WESTERN BALKANS

6.1.1 - ALBANIA

7 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Albania in 2017

The Higher Education reform agenda of the country has progressed in 2017, with some of the main achieved milestones listed below.

The UK's Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and Albanian Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education (ASCAL) completed the institutional review and accreditation process for all Albanian HEIs, and provided specific assignments for each individual HEI in the process of quality enhancement in their institutions. In addition, the draft student's survey was prepared and will be used in 2018 for the preparation of the first official ranking of HEIs in Albania.

A number of missing bylaws for the Law No.80/2015, "For Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania" were prepared, while the full package of bylaws and regulation is expected to be enacted in 2018.

The Strategy for Scientific Research was developed with the support of foreign assistance, and served as a basis for drafting of the new Law on Scientific Research currently under consultation. This marked the first year where the Statistical Institute of Albania gathered and elaborated the national data on the private and public sector contribution to the scientific research in the country, which were used to determine Scientific Research Development Duties 2017-20122. In addition, work has started for the development of the list with national criteria for evaluation of HEIs contribution to the scientific research and innovation.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

The support to the implementation of the Higher Education reform was provided through the active involvement of Albanian HERE members in the working groups established by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth for preparing the bylaws and other supporting regulations for the approved Law for Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions. Some of the main bylaws prepared by their working groups comprised the CoM decisions on "grades and titles" stipulating criteria for earning Prof and Assoc. Prof titles in Albanian HEIs; on "evaluation of scientific-research activities of HEI's basic units" stipulating procedures and evaluation criteria for scientific-research activities of HEI's departments; on "elements of study programs in Albanian HEIs" stipulating core elements for the organization, implementation, and evaluation of study programs in Albanian HEIs, on "Codification of study programs" stipulating core elements for the reorganization of existing and the opening of new study programmes in Albanian HEIs.

In addition, the Albanian HERE enhanced understanding and debate among Higher Education Institutions in Albania regarding current changes in the HE framework and communicate the feedback received in the national seminars to the MoESY, as to inform and influence the preparation process of bylaws and other regulations.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. Organization of the National seminar on the "Re-evaluation of study programmes: link between study programmes and learning outcomes". This event aided in presenting and debating important educational aspects such as curriculum mapping, student centred learning, course and program outcomes, the gap

between LOs and competencies, transversal skills, civic competencies etc. and their relevance in the new national framework for the evaluation and reorganization of HEIs study programmes in Albania. In addition, the participants learned and debated on the international models and practical applications of using curricular mapping in improving the quality of learning in higher education institutions.

2. Organization of the National seminar on the “Importance of PHD Studies” in Durres, which served understanding and debating relevant skills, frameworks and good practices employed for the organisation of qualitative doctoral studies at international level. The seminar also provided the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and Albanian Higher Education Institutions with ideas and recommendations to finalise the relevant bylaws.

3. Organization of a local seminar on “Curriculum guidelines according to the new bylaws” at the University of Vlora. During the seminar lecturers and academic staff presented and debated the new requirements and challenges posed by the Higher Education Law on the Albanian Higher Education Institutions in their study programme reform process. The participants deliberated ways to better meet those challenges from an institutional standpoint. In addition a list of issues and proposals was prepared and addressed to the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth to feed into the preparation process of the respective bylaws.

Links to further details

- HERE section of NEO website: http://erasmusplus.al/?page_id=593
- List of HEREs on NEO website: <http://erasmusplus.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Albanian-HERE-Team.pdf>
- HERE publications or articles: Recommendations of the Round Table on ‘How to boost the participation of Albanian Higher Education Institution in Erasmus + and Horizon 2020’ <http://erasmusplus.al/?p=1296>
- HERE event pages: http://erasmusplus.al/?page_id=1034
- HERE Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Albanian-HERE-for-Erasmus--1815269242080077/>



National HERE Seminar on “Importance of PHD Studies”, 18 October 2017, University “Aleksandër Moisiu” of Durrësi.



National HERE Seminar on “Re-evaluation of study programmes: link between study programmes and learning outcomes”, 26 May 2017, city of Korça, Albania

6.1.2 - BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

10 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in 2017

The following higher education reform activities were ongoing in 2017:

- The implementation of “*Priorities 2016-2026 Higher Education Development in Bosnia and Herzegovina*” started in 2017. The Priorities cover the following fields: Good Governance and Management; Resources; Connection between Labour Market and Higher Education; Qualification Standards; Student Experience; Internationalization; Statistics.
- The implementation of the Strategic Directions of Higher Education Development in the Federation of BiH 2012-2022 and the Education Development Strategy of the Republika Srpska 2016- 2021 are ongoing and various projects are funded for their implementation.
- The process of programming of IPA II for the country in the field of Employment and Education took place with a focus on education for employment in accordance with the Reform Agenda for BiH.
- The Council of Ministers of BiH designated a coordinating institution and a contact point for the road map and implementation of the EU Directive on Regulated Professions 2005/36EC and 2013/55EU. Further actions on detailed learning outcomes for 18 different qualifications in the 3 cycles across 6 sectors (Social Sciences, Biomedicine and Health, Natural, Biotechnical, Technical sciences, Humanities) have been developed and were piloted at 6 public universities.
- A working version of a self-certification report has been developed that will be used in the referencing process. Activities on drafting a referencing report for LLL that include self-certification part are ongoing. Preparations for the establishment of the new Inter-sectoral Commission for the National Qualification Framework are ongoing. In the meantime its role is resumed by different working groups and SBs within projects dealing with development and implementation of the elements of the National Qualification Framework.
- The Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance in BiH (HEA) prepared a revision of some of the legal documents (e.g. Decision on the Norms for Determining Minimal Standards in Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina) related to the accreditation process within its competences and aligned them with revised European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance.
- The European Network of Information Centres in BiH and the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (ENIC/NARIC) elaborated the *Recommendations on Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications for the Purpose of Employment* and published in the „Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina“, No: 81/17. The Recommendations are a result of the Centre's endeavour to facilitate recognition of foreign higher education qualifications in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to bring closer practices of recognition of the European Area of Recognition (EAR) to competent recognition authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

The HERE team provided support to all above mentioned initiatives through active participation in various working groups, round tables, meetings and seminars, including participation at the ministerial meeting of the Western Balkans Platform on Education and Training, which was held in Belgrade in 2017. Some HERE members were directly involved in the reform processes in the country and joined various national working groups contributing therewith to Higher Education developments in the country. They provided recommendations on different documents, laws and regulations.

The HERE team also assisted in answering the questionnaire of the European Commission, chapter 26, on Education and Culture.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. Contribution to the BiH Bologna Follow-Up Group Implementation Report
2. Participation in the ministerial meeting of the WB Platform on Education and Training held in Belgrade in 2017.
3. Development of the analysis „*Obtaining and Use of Academic Titles in Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina*“.

Links to further details

- HERE section of NEO website: <https://www.erasmusbih.com/index.php/here>
- List of HEREs on NEO website: https://www.erasmusbih.com/documents/List_of_HEREs.pdf
- HERE publications or articles:
https://www.erasmusbih.com/documents/2017/Obtaining_and_Use_of_Academic_Title_in_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina_final_19112017.pdf
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/countryfiche_bosniaherzegovina_2017.pdf
https://www.erasmusbih.com/documents/Recognition_of_Foreign_Qualifications_and_implementation_of_Lisabon_Recognition_Convention_in_BiH.pdf
- HERE event pages: <https://www.erasmusbih.com/index.php/here>
- Country page on SPHERE website: <http://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-bosnia-and-herzegovina>



TAM "The management of human resources in public higher education", Banja Luka, 20/10/2017

6.1.3 - KOSOVO

8 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Kosovo in 2017

In 2016 a proposal for developing policies for public-private partnerships has been initiated by the MEST linking the cooperation between Higher Education and the Labour Market. An electronic platform has been developed for the Higher Education Management Information System and administrative instructions have been drafted and approved by the Minister in 2017. The electronic platform has been successfully piloted for the academic year 2016-2017 and Higher Education Institutions' administrative staff members have been trained. The aim of the proposal was to include business and industry representatives in Higher Education Institution councils and boards and to establish cooperation in internships for their students. All Higher Education Institutions in Kosovo have now set up their industrial boards. This proposal also includes reviewing of study programmes and curricula in compliance with labour market needs. The Kosovo Accreditation Agency has specified the requirements related to study programmes and curricula in compliance with labour market needs through a reaccreditation process. In addition the proposal foresees the development indicators and metric measures in monitoring the approximation of education system and labour market needs.

A new law on regulated professions has been approved in 2017 and the MEST is in the process of setting up an Agency. The new law on Higher Education is still in progress.

The Institute for Research and Development in Education that was established in 2016 at the Faculty of Education to promote training programmes for enhancing teaching methodologies, drafting syllabuses and other teaching skills training was operational, but with limited capacities due to the budgetary restrictions.

In the final conference on Financing Models for Higher Education Institutions in Kosovo the draft version of a White Paper on Higher Education was adopted that proposes schemes to provide incentives to the business sector for recruiting graduates.

In the Kosovo Education System Improvement Project (KESIP), the MEST has addressed the issue of financial management reforms for the modernization of Higher Education, research and the labour market and produced a study on Higher Education autonomy and financial management.

The MEST initiated and designed new PhD programmes and curricula focusing on joint PhD partnerships with other HEIs and to support academics and researchers in developing potential projects. In 2017 five PhD programmes have been accredited and three of them are new study programmes.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

HERE seminars, conferences, round tables and workshops organised in 2017 strongly supported the developing policies for public-private partnerships, the cooperation between Higher Education and Labour Market, the adoption of a new law on Higher Education and regulated professions, the establishment of an Institute for Research and Development in Education, new financing models for HEIs in Kosovo, Kosovo Education System Improvement Project, the establishment of an alumni networks, the development of the research sector in Kosovo, and the development of the National Qualification Framework.

The HERE team advised different national authorities and Higher Education stakeholders on how to best conduct ongoing reform measures. The HERE team members have participated in various national working groups where they transferred their know-how on Higher Education development, reform and modernization gained at various international HERE conferences.

The HERE publications on the national Higher Education system and the Kosovo country page reflected new elements and recent changes in all aspects of the Higher Education sector in Kosovo.

A Rectors' conference was organised in September 2017, three HERE members attended the Conference, provided active contribution, shared experiences and exchanged views on HEIs management in Kosovo.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. Reviewing and development of a draft law on Higher Education which aims to create, develop, protect and transmit knowledge through teaching and scientific work.
2. Delivery of the White Paper on Higher Education including recommendations to amend the draft version of the White Paper. The HERE insisted on the provision of financial autonomy to all Higher Education Institutions operating in Kosovo.
3. Adoption of a proposal for developing policies for public-private partnerships with the aim to link the cooperation between Higher Education and the Labour Market, to include business and industry representatives in Higher Education Institutions councils and boards and to establish cooperation in internships for students.

Links to further details

- HERE section of KEO website: <http://www.erasmuspluskosovo.org/here>
- List of HEREs on KEO website: <http://www.erasmuspluskosovo.org/here-bio>
- HERE publications or articles: <http://www.erasmuspluskosovo.org/publications>
- HERE event pages: <http://www.erasmuspluskosovo.org/category/activities>
- KEO/HERE Facebook page: www.facebook.com/erasmuspluskosovo/
- Country page on SPHERE website: <https://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-kosovo>



HERE Seminar "Internationalization of Higher Education – Best practices", 14 December 2017, MESTK

6.1.4 - MONTENEGRO

11 HERE team members

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

A new Law on Higher Education has been adopted in June 2017 and has introduced the following changes:

- The structure of studies has been changed with the introduction of two years master studies to replace the former system consisting of 1 year specialist studies and 1 year master. The existence of the specialist study frequently created a barrier in relation to the students' mobility. It is therefore expected that this change will, amongst other, contribute to increase students' mobility in the future.
- 25% of the curricula need to consist of a practical part, and it has become compulsory for university units to establish cooperation agreements with labour market representatives.
- The establishment of a National Agency for Control and Quality assurance in Higher Education, which will also serve as an accreditation body.
- The creation of a National Agency for EU programmes.
- The creation of new higher education financing model is also underway.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

The HEREs actively participated in the public discussion on the new Higher Education law and provided suggestions and recommendations on law improvements.

Some of the HERE members directly participated in the national working groups that have prepared a legislation in the field of Higher Education. The HERE members were also involved in the working group for creating amendments and changes to the Law on Higher Education, which defines the Higher Education policy at state level in Montenegro.

One of the HERE members is involved in the creation of a National Agency for Quality Assurance and has been appointed in the governing board of the Agency.

Part of the HERE members were involved in activities related to creation of a new higher education financing model, and again some HERE members prepared the final report and questionnaire for the BP ministerial conference.

The TAMs organized, as well as international events in which HERE members took part helped to improve the Higher Education system and accelerated the implementation of the reforms by integrating good practises in the local context.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

Local events organized through TAMs initiated further discussions on relevant topics for the Higher Education sector in Montenegro, in particular in relation to doctoral studies and internationalisation. It also gave an impetus for developing CBHE projects on these topics.

A regional HERE seminar on doctoral education was organized on 25-26 September in Budva, Montenegro. The event gathered more than 40 participants from Serbia, BiH, Croatia and Montenegro. The seminar dealt with the planning and design of doctoral programmes and structures to support the organisation of doctoral studies, such as doctoral schools, funding of doctoral education, quality assurance in doctoral education and international collaboration and networks in doctoral education, as well as building research capacity in general. During the seminar several important points in doctoral education like Quality Assurance, research capacities and financing were elaborated. In addition to this, at the margin of the regional HERE seminar, an agreement on joint PhD studies was signed between the Faculty of Pedagogy from Montenegro and the Faculty of Pedagogy from Zagreb. Recommendations for policy makers at national, regional and EU level were developed, which were presented at the Western Balkans Platform on Education and Training ministerial conference organized in September 28-29 right after the very seminar. The University of

Montenegro developed a CBHE project on the topic of doctoral studies that was inspired by the recommendations made at the regional Seminar in Montenegro.

2. A TAM on “Recognition of Prior Learning” was held in Podgorica in November 2017. The event aimed at raising awareness on the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, in particular the benefits, procedures and possibilities of recognition of prior learning in the Montenegrin context, as well as European practices and legislation in this field. Individual meetings with professors and Ministry representatives were organised, so as to utilise the seminar materials and expert advice in the field of recognition when drafting legislation or resolving specific recognition cases. Members of the HERE team were directly involved in the changes and amendments of the new Law on Higher Education that was adopted in June 2017.

3. The National Erasmus+ Office prepared a publication on “Impact of EU programmes on Higher Education in Montenegro”, which was published in the last quarter of 2017. The HEREs contributed to this publication by writing articles on the reform of higher education in Montenegro.

Links to further details

- HERE section of NEO website http://www.erasmusplus.ac.me/?page_id=5777&lang=en
- List of HEREs on NEO website <http://www.neomontenegro.ac.me/t.php?id=72&l=en>
- HERE publications or articles
<http://www.neomontenegro.ac.me/uploads/file/NEO%20publikacija%202017.pdf>
- HERE event pages <http://www.neomontenegro.ac.me/uploads/file/NEO%20publikacija%202017.pdf>
<http://www.neomontenegro.ac.me/t.php?id=87&l=en>
- Country page on SPHERE website
http://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-montenegro#_Toc488825419



Regional HERE seminar (TAM) in Budva – Parallel working group, 25/9/2017



TAM “Recognition of prior learning”, University of Montenegro, Podgorica, 29-30/11/2017

6.1.5- SERBIA

15 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Serbia in 2017

A unique register of institutions (institutes, higher education institutions, innovation organisations), employed researchers, teachers and associates has been established in the information system of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Development "DOSITEJ". The aim of the Register is to increase the quality and monitoring of higher education and research in Serbia at the institutional level. It will enable real-time system performance monitoring and transparency through an open data portal. It contains a unique register of contractual engagements of researchers, teachers and associates.

For teachers in accredited study programs, the data on their accreditation workload is expressed in the average number of contact classes per week at the level of a school year. This will enable transparency concerning professional engagement at more than one institution.

In September 2017, the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia adopted a new Law on Higher Education:

- The Higher education institutions' enrollment process has been modified. Namely, the law specifies a minimum requirement of 48 ECTS to be allowed to progress to the following academic year financed from the state budget. In addition, candidates are enrolled on higher education academic or vocational studies based on the general or vocational secondary education final exam, whereas the criteria for the classification and selection of candidates will be established by the higher education institution.
- The law also regulates the formation of a council of employers at each higher education institution with a view to establishing a link between the higher education sector and the economy.
- The Law stipulates the establishment of the National Accreditation Body, introduction of new standards, as well as changes in the appeals procedure and procedure for issuing work permits.
- New solutions provide opportunities for teachers, researchers and students to set up spin-off and start-up companies, as well as the possibility to engage industry experts in the teaching process. The introduction of short study programmes and studies for working students is also envisaged.
- New registers of accredited study programmes, employees and students are being introduced, which will serve as a basis for a new financing system. Students will be provided with a Unique Educational Number so that their progress can be monitored.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

- The HEREs contributed by participation in the public discussion about the new law and by providing recommendations for the law improvements.
- The HERE TAM events organized locally encouraged discussion among the teachers at universities and colleges of applied studies about important issues such as reflexive practice in teaching. Thanks to their event on university ranking, they pointing to possible pitfalls of the university ranking by challenging the participants to think about what type of excellence they wish to have: one excellent university (or a small number of such HEIs) or an excellent HE system that is ranked well in a European or Global perspective.
- University Lifelong Learning and recognition of prior learning are highly important topics and worth to be promoted through new events and policy initiatives. The HEREs interest into them could be taken as a good basis for new actions.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

The HERE events that took place during 2017 are considered to be the highlights of the HERE activities:

1. TAM events on Reflexive practicing in teaching

2. TAM event to address university ranking in view of achieving excellence
3. University Lifelong Learning and its place at HEIs in Serbia

Links to further details

- *HERE* section of *NEO* website: <http://erasmusplus.rs/european-networks/here-team/?langkl=lat>
- List of *HEREs* on *NEO* website: <http://erasmusplus.rs/european-networks/here-team/?langkl=lat>
- *HERE* publications or articles: http://erasmusplus.rs/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Nacionalne-preporuke_web.pdf?langkl=lat
<http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/372888/Наше-високо-образовање-али-чија-корист>
<http://www.nedeljnik.rs/nedeljnik/portalnews/akademik-vladica-cvetkovic-srbija-ne-moze-da-odmakne-od-ustanickih-prioriteta-uvek-je-nesto-prece-od-obrazovanja/>
- HERE* event pages: <https://erasmusplus.rs/european-networks/here-team/?langkl=lat>
- Country page on *SPHERE* website: <https://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-serbia>



Seminar "Global University Rankings and their Impact" at the Rectorate of the University of Belgrade, 7-8/11/2018. The speaker Prof. Elen Hazelkorn, adviser of the Irish Ministry of Education, gave examples of ranking practices.



HERE presenting during videoconference on "Lifelong Learning in Higher Education", Conference Hall of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Belgrade, March 3, 2017. Two representatives from the European University Continuing Education Network gave video link presentations.

HERE National Reports 2017

6.2 CENTRAL ASIA

6.2.1 - KAZAKHSTAN

11 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Kazakhstan in 2017

The main developments in the national education policy are specified in the Law on Education and the State Programme for Education Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2016-2019). The main priorities in 2017 were:

1. Improving access to higher and post-higher education at Bachelor, Master and PhD levels. In 2017 the number of grants was considerably increased. Around 7,000 grants were allocated only at Bachelor level;
2. Updating the content of education in the context of its practical orientation, promoting student centred learning, development of programmes jointly with employers and foreign universities based on the NQF descriptors;
3. Modernization of pedagogical education through the revision of the content of secondary education and the transition to trilingual education;
4. Internationalisation of higher education: expand external academic mobility, develop double-degree programmes jointly with foreign Higher Education Institutions, attract foreign leading scientists to teach, invite foreign specialists to take up top-management positions;
5. Integration of education and science to strengthen research capacity of universities and to foster closer cooperation between science and business.

Following to the National plan “One hundred concrete steps”, since 2017 it has become a priority to increase academic and managerial autonomy of HEIs based on the experience of Nazarbayev University. A draft law on amendments in the Law of Education has been submitted for consideration to the Parliament. This legislative act stipulates considerable expansion of academic and managerial autonomy of HEIs based on transferring a number of competences and rights from the Ministry of Education to HEI.

Another priority is the development of human capital. Public control and accountability in university governance will be strengthened by setting up Steering Committees that involve representatives of business, national and local authorities and community members to supervise financial aspects, academic strategy and staff matters. Election of public university rectors by Steering Committees has proved its efficiency and will be continued.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

The expertise of the team members is well recognized by the Ministry of Education and the HEREs are consulted on specific topics. Several HEREs are members of working groups under the Government, Ministry of Education and other national organisations and agencies. In this capacity they contributed to the development of by-laws and revisions of legislation along with training seminars, consultancy and presentations at the national level.

The HERE team also ensures synergy with other EU supported initiatives through participation in the activities organized by the EU Delegation and the Central Asian Education Platform.

Valuable input in enhancing the visibility of the HERE team at the national and Central Asian levels was made through their contribution in preparing and conducting the 2nd Meeting of Central Asian Ministers for Education organised in Astana on 23 June 2017. The Ministerial meeting was hosted by the Kazakh Ministry of Education and Science in cooperation with the European Commission, the Central Asian Education Platform and the European External Action. The event was aimed to take stock of the achievements in mutual cooperation in Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training as well as to define the prospects of cooperation for the future. Four HEREs were involved in preparing the Meeting and proactively participated in conducting and chairing the sessions and in drafting documents.

The HEREs also had an active role in the Forum of University Rectors from Central Asia and the European Union, which took place in parallel to the event. The objective was to further promote cooperation and

exchange of experience between EU and CA Higher Education Institutions. The Forum was chaired by HEREs, the European Commission and the Ministry of Education.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. Contribution to the revision of the Law of Education. The introduction of articles on enhancing autonomy of HEIs in Kazakhstan is likely to produce a significant progress in pursuing academic and managerial freedom of universities.
2. Contribution to the development of 26 by-laws and coherent capacity building of Higher Education Institutions' staff through regional seminars helped university deputy-rectors and heads of the department/units to implement the new laws and tools. At present the majority of HEI in Kazakhstan have aligned their systems and reporting with policies and regulations.
3. Contribution of HEREs to capacity building of university staff: the training activities organised by the NEO and the HEREs are high in demand as University management and academic staff members have no access to regular training. In 2017 the NEO organised together with the HERE 4 seminars for over 350 people coming from all regions throughout country. The topics of the seminars included Academic Policy of Higher Education Institution, Internationalization: Strategic Management in HEI and Academic Policy: Administration, Instruments and Subjects.

Links to further details

- HERE section of NEO website <http://www.erasmusplus.kz/index.php/en/here-en/about-nk-en>
- List of HEREs on NEO website <http://www.erasmusplus.kz/index.php/en/here-en/contacts-en>
- HERE publications <http://www.erasmusplus.kz/index.php/en/here-en/publications-2>
- HERE Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/erasmuspluskz/>
- Country page on SPHERE website <http://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-kazakhstan>



Regional Seminar “Academic Policy of the University: Administration, Tools and Subjects” - Kyzylorda, 4-5/12/2017



HEREs of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan at the Regional TAM “The role of National Qualifications Framework in higher education policy reform” - Almaty, 19-21/4/2017

6.2.2 - KYRGYZSTAN

7 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Kyrgyzstan in 2017

A Higher Education Action Plan for 2017-2020 has been developed by the Ministry of Education with the contribution of the HERE team. In accordance with the action plan the following reforms have been implemented with the direct input of the HEREs:

- development of national qualification framework for all levels of vocational education: the HEREs updated the concept developed in 2016 (and approved by the Ministry of Education), and developed an action plan for its implementation; in this process the contribution of the Erasmus+ project EURDiQ was crucial;
- the content of vocational education was improved: the HEREs participated in the review and analysis of 20 educational standards and educational short-term programmes in cooperation with employers;
- as members of an inter-sectoral working group, the HERE team developed a methodology on the development of sectoral qualification frameworks;
- improvement of the quality of teaching and of the educational environment in higher education: the HEREs participated in the development of programme on rationalisation of HVET;
- development of a legal and regulatory framework for e-learning at all levels of vocational education: the HEREs developed a draft regulatory framework for the implementation of e-learning (the model was taken from the e-learning guidelines conceived by the Tempus QAMEL project);
- enhancement of the quality assurance system: the HEREs contributed to the update of the regulations on QA system, the amendments to the law on independent accreditation in Kyrgyzstan and the update of the standards and proceedings on programme accreditation;
- professional development of teachers and trainers: the HEREs disseminated results and materials of Erasmus+ projects on teaching methodologies and career development in universities.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

In 2017 two members of the HERE team, Svetlana Sirmbard and Chinara Adamkulova, joined the Education Council under the President of Kyrgyzstan and lobbied the above mentioned reforms through consultations on higher education best practices in EU countries and results of Erasmus+ projects.

HERE's publications on self-evaluation, Diploma Supplement development guidelines and ECTS guidelines helped other universities to better understand and reform management system in higher education institutions (e.g. ECTS has been transferred into the management information system).

Resulting from their regular participation in the development of a three-year action plan under the Education Development Strategy 2020, the HEREs are following latest developments and are involved in the planning for the next period of the higher education reform.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. The HEREs contributed to the development and the introduction of e-learning in the country. They developed a Concept for e-learning and an action plan for its implementation in the period 2017-2020, which was approved by the Ministry of Education and Science in December 2017.
2. The HEREs updated the National Qualification Framework concept in 2017 and developed an action plan for its implementation
3. The HERE's publications on self-evaluation, Diploma Supplement development guidelines and ECTS guidelines helped other universities to better understand and reform management system in higher education institutions (e.g. ECTS has been transferred into management information system).

4. Amendments have been made to the Government Decree on accreditation of educational activity in December 2017: the amendments have been initiated by the HEREs and were related to the introduction of eligibility criteria for accreditation agencies on the basis of European experience and best practices.

Links to further details

- HERE section and list of HERE on NEO website <http://erasmusplus.kg/en/here-section/here-team/>
- HERE publications or articles <http://erasmusplus.kg/en/here-section/publications/>
<http://erasmusplus.kg/en/here-section/here-activity-report/>
- HERE event pages <http://erasmusplus.kg/en/novosti/>
- Country page on SPHERE website <http://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-kyrgyzstan>
- Asian Development Bank assessed the HE development in Kyrgyzstan and made reference to Erasmus+, - Tempus and its impact on higher education reforms:
<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/175940/higher-education-kgz.pdf> (page 10)



Seminar on: «The new administrative and management approaches in higher education» for managers and top managers of higher educational institutions, Bishkek, 6-7 June 2017



Study Visit on Research based teaching: Universities, Entrepreneurship and the Knowledge Triangle, Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy, 30-31 May 2017. HERE participants from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan.

6.2.3 - TAJIKISTAN

6 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Tajikistan in 2017

The commitment of the Government of Tajikistan to education is reflected in the national policy introduced by the government to improve the education sector. The framework for education in Tajikistan is set out in legislation, but the specific arrangements for education are largely described in the National Strategy for Education Development (NSED 2020). Its main goal is to create the conditions to ensure universal access to relevant and quality education. The areas of concern in higher education identified in the National Strategy for Education Development 2020 are (i) an inadequate technical base and access to information; (ii) lack of integration of higher education with research activity; (iii) lack of faculty development programmes; (iv) lack of an internal planning and assessment of educational quality by higher education institutions; (v) lack of a public education quality assurance system for open evaluation of institutions; (vi) lack of a distance learning system; (vii) low enrolment in higher education and (viii) disconnection to the labour market.

The state educational standards of the new generation have been introduced at all levels of higher education and were developed with the involvement of employers. The key objectives highlighted in the strategic documents include the modernisation of the content of education, the development and support of innovations, the increase of the number of hours for self-study, the change of the teacher's role in the educational process, as well as the transfer to pedagogical competence-based standards and module programmes with the involvement of employers.

In 2017, the Ministry of Education and Sciences adopted a Ministerial Decree on the "Development of the National Qualifications Frameworks" compatible with the EHEA.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

The HERE team made a strong contribution to the modernization process of higher education reform through different activities, such as seminars and consultations to disseminate information about the latest developments in EU higher education policy reform. They also shared their knowledge and expertise through the publication of articles in various university newspapers, based on research and study visits. The organised seminars aimed at promoting best practices of European and Central Asian universities, for example in relation to quality assurance in higher education, the development of qualifications frameworks and the adoption of the competence-based approach as a tool for designing educational programmes. Moreover, the experts contributed to the identification of objectives aligned with Bologna principles for the development of long-term proposals in the framework of the World Bank Higher Education Support Programme.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. HEREs organised a follow-up seminar of the TAM seminar on "Internationalisation of Higher Education: Experience of European Universities", where the participants had an opportunity to explore the role of national academic programmes in promoting the internationalisation, learn about national initiatives, and familiarise themselves with the European experience in internationalisation (e.g. how to set strategic priorities and deliver results in international student recruitment, impact of the external and internal student mobility on the financial sustainability of HEIs, etc.).
2. The HERE Team published 18 articles related to the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme in Tajikistan, e-learning and teaching, quality assurance and student participation in quality assurance, joint diplomas, national qualifications frameworks etc.

3. The HERE Team provided expertise and support to national authorities in the preparation of the policy document on the development of the National Qualifications Frameworks, as a result and based on the recommendations of the Tempus project on “Qualification Framework in Central Asia: Bologna based principles and regional cooperation”.

Links to further details

- HERE section of NEO website: <http://erasmusplus.tj/?cat=16>
- List of HEREs on NEO website: <http://erasmusplus.tj/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/National-Team.pdf>



TAM on internationalisation, 5/12/ 2017, Dushanbe. HEREs are leading the working groups.

6.2.4 - TURKMENISTAN

4 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Turkmenistan in 2017

In 2017 the number of HEIs in the country was twenty-four with 41.200 students (8.4 % more than in 2016 in response to the introduction of eleven new specialties in HEI curricula.) One new higher education institution was established, the Institute of Communal Services in Dashoguz city, which started by enrolling 400 students in 2017.

According to the Programme on the Development of Innovative Activity for 2015-2020, Turkmenistan continued the adoption of innovative technologies, interactive teaching techniques, improvements in curriculum content and teacher retraining. In 2017, the expansion of innovative technologies resulted in developing university research and technological parks, covering areas like nano-, bio- and information technologies, electronics, robotic engineering, genetics and molecular biology.

In February 2017 the Government supported the establishment of a Commission that was charged with drafting a Concept for the Digital Development of the Education Area, which was approved in September 2017. The Concept is intended to foster the progress of educational institutions, bring high-quality information resources to all levels of education, enrich the content of teaching curricula and improve the activity of scientific and methodological centres, departments, faculties and other structural units of HE Institutions.

In December 2017, the Ministry of Education of Turkmenistan organised several interventions to demonstrate the application of the Digital Concept. A general video conference connected six higher education institutions of Ashgabat and was followed by a series of joint on-line lectures and tutorials involving students of economics and engineering specialties.

In May 2017, the Government established a new procedure for the approval of foreign diploma and invested funding for students with honours to study at foreign universities. Based on interstate agreements concluded by the Ministry of Education of Turkmenistan and affiliated ministries, 1282 students started their study abroad in 2017.

2. Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

The HERE team participated in the development of draft proposals for the Digital Education Concept in Turkmenistan. Two experts provided their advice and shared information obtained from SPHERE seminars. One HERE took active part in drafting development proposals and recommendations for establishing the Educational Centre for Sustainable Development Goals in Turkmenistan. The Centre was established and opened in September 2017.

The HERE team organised seminars in the form of presentations and workshops concerning the EU experience in implementing student-centred learning, best practices of e-learning in Europe, innovative teaching and learning, and assessment practices. All the activities were addressed to the needs of higher education institutions and helped the teaching staff to have access to this information.

The student HERE made presentations at two institutional conferences of the Turkmen State Institute of National Economy to share modern EU experience of student involvement in the governance of HEIs and HE systems.

Other presentations were organised at the home institutions of the HEREs, covering topics of SPHERE events and sharing related materials.

3. Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. HEREs worked in the Commission for establishing an Educational Centre for Sustainable Development Goals in Turkmenistan. One HERE took part in drafting development proposals and recommendations.
2. HEREs contributed to the development of the Digital Education Concept in Turkmenistan, which was approved in September 2017.
3. One HERE team member prepared an article for the “Diyar” magazine about the 2017 HERE Annual Conference “EU and its Neighbours: Higher Education Policy and Cooperation”.

Links to further details

HERE section of NEO website:

<http://www.erasmusplus.org.tm/en/heres/objectives-and-mission-of-the-heres/>

List of HEREs on NEO website: <http://www.erasmusplus.org.tm/en/heres/higher-education-reform-teams/>

HERE events page: <http://www.erasmusplus.org.tm/en/heres/events/>

Publication on SPHERE events:

http://www.erasmusplus.org.tm/site/assets/files/1073/visiting_sphere_seminars_2015_-_2017.pdf



Round table discussion on new technologies in education, organized by Ministry of Education of Turkmenistan, Pedagogical school, May, 2017



Student HERE participants from Turkmenistan and other countries at the HERE seminar on 'Students as partners in HE governance and quality assurance', Narxoz University, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 5-6 April 2017

6.2.5 - UZBEKISTAN

11 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Uzbekistan in 2017

Like other national policy sectors, higher education is currently being reformed based on governmental decrees and laws. The country's five year development strategy (2017-2021) and the resolutions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on measures to further develop the higher education system as well as the participation of the economic sector in improving the quality of training of specialists in higher education are the basis for the current national reforms. The five-year strategy includes developments in the local Higher Education system following the Bologna Process.

In the context of the adopted Comprehensive Development Programme of the Higher Education System for 2017-2021, the contribution of Erasmus+ cooperation to the overall modernisation of Higher Education in Uzbekistan is highly relevant. It ensures governmental support to the implementation of the different Erasmus+ actions, reinforces mobility and contributes to the sustainability of Capacity Building projects.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

All the HERE activities are aimed at supporting the above-mentioned reforms. During the last contractual period, two of the Uzbek HEREs worked at the Ministry of Higher and Specialised Secondary Education as heads of units and could utilise their knowledge enhanced through HERE trainings to directly apply best practices from the Bologna Process.

In July 2017 the HEREs and the NEO, in cooperation with the Strategy Development Centre, organised a cluster meeting on "Innovative approaches to the modernisation of higher education in the context of the Bologna process". At this event, the members of the HERE team made presentations on key issues of the Bologna Process and its pros and cons. Group discussions in a world café format provided participants the opportunity to exchange topics together with the HEREs in small groups. The recommendations of the meeting were published as a report and submitted to the main stakeholders, including the Ministry of Higher and Specialised Secondary Education (MHSSE).

The MHSSE has a close cooperation with the HEREs and is aware of their capacities. The HEREs assist the Ministry in the development of different reports and the organisation of events. The HEREs develop their annual work plans in line with the main priorities of the Ministry.

Following each international seminar organised by SPHERE, the NEO submitted detailed reports to the MHSSE, including specific recommendations relevant to the current modernisation agenda of higher education in Uzbekistan. These reports were prepared by the HEREs based on the seminar materials. The HEREs also provided the Ministry on specific request with comprehensive materials or analytical briefings on specific topics.

Another contribution was the International Credit Mobility (ICM) Conference, initiated by the HEREs and organised by the NEO in December 2017. This was the first ICM conference in Central Asia, which gathered students and teaching staff who shared their experiences gained during their mobility stay in Europe. The HEREs communicated the results of the conference to the MHSSE and highlighted the challenging recognition issues of international mobility. The participants' articles and abstracts were collected, edited by the HEREs and published in a report.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. The HERE team was directly involved in selecting and editing 24 articles for the 5th edition of the traditional annual publication "Perspectives of higher education development". Thanks to the MHSSE support announcing a Call for Papers, external contributors representing non-academic organisations involved in development of the higher education system provided their articles to this annual

publication. For the edition 2018, other donor and international organisations will also be asked to submit papers.

2. Cluster meeting on “Innovative approaches to the modernisation of higher education in the context of the Bologna process” on 4 July 2017, with an analytical report submitted to national authorities on aligning with the Bologna process. In cooperation with the Strategy Development Centre and with the support of the MHSSE, the thematic cluster meeting was organised in a world café format that facilitated discussions. Participants were mainly contact persons for Erasmus+ Capacity Building and ICM projects as well as HEREs. A summary of the meeting discussions was produced by the NEO and HEREs, and the main conclusions and recommendations have been disseminated among HE stakeholders.
3. A 2-days TAM on “Continuous education in the sphere of retraining and professional development of pedagogical staff” (12-13 January 2017) was organised in cooperation with the Head Scientific and Methodological Centre under the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education. The Irish expert Dr Terry Maguire, Director of National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in HE, presented the latest European developments in Continuous Professional Development. Following the TAM, a final resolution with a brief description of best practices in organisation of CPD, skills upgrading of pedagogical staff and innovation in HE was developed, including relevant recommendations. The seminar materials were submitted to all stakeholders, including MHSSE. National TV and radio programmes broadcasted brief information about this 2-day TAM seminar and are available on NEO website (<http://erasmusplus.uz/news/Seminar-on.htm>). Furthermore, the TAM related materials were disseminated on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/erasmusplusuz/posts/650457615156917> .

Links to further details

- HERE section of NEO website: <http://erasmusplus.uz/heres/Goals-and-Objectives/index.htm>
- List of HEREs on NEO website: <http://erasmusplus.uz/heres/Team/index.htm>
- HERE publications or articles: <http://erasmusplus.uz/publication/Publications-of-Experts/index.htm>
- HERE event pages: <http://erasmusplus.uz/heres/TAMs/index.htm>
- HERE Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/uzheres/>
- Country page on SPHERE website: <http://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-uzbekistan>



TAM on Continuous education in the sphere of retraining and professional development of pedagogical staff in Tashkent, 12-13 January 2017



Cluster meeting on “Innovative approaches to the modernisation of HE in the context of the Bologna process”, Tashkent, 4 July 2017

HERE National Reports 2017

6.3 EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES

6.3.1 - ARMENIA

11 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Armenia in 2017

The Higher Education sector in Armenia is currently undergoing a reform process. The new Law on Higher Education is still in the stage of public debates and improvement processes through meetings and round table discussions, with the aim of finalizing it for submission to the National Assembly for ratification.

It is worth mentioning that there were quite substantive and continuous student protests (including hunger strikes) regarding the abolition of the right to deferment from the Army during Bachelor degree studies. As a result it was decided that a special committee will be created to review the applications by male students and only those with highest academic achievements and GPA would get the right to postpone their service in the national army.

Another trend of the recent years is the change of legal status. Universities are state non-commercial organizations and are in the process of being changed into foundations. The positive side of this process is the fact that Universities can initiate commercial activities under their new legal status. Less positive is to know that under this new legal status Rectors can remain in the same position for many years without time limitation.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

The HERE

- were directly involved in drafting and editing the new Law on Higher Education;
- have prepared and promoted programme accreditation with the active participation of students aiming to enhance student-centered education;
- facilitated a big number of outgoing training sessions in all the regional universities, HEIs and university branches.
- organized a number of local events for various target groups, including those with participation of international experts;
- provided a series of consultations to different stakeholders in Higher Education, including students, university management, faculty and staff, as well as civil society organizations.
- published articles and small-scale research works;
- organised and facilitated four TAMs with the participation of six European experts.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. Contribution to the Draft Law on Higher Education, in particular the introduction of the “Short-cycle degree” in the new Law.
2. Alignment of Government economic policies with Higher Education Institution's strategies through development of Key Performance Indicators and Performance based agreements;
3. Translation and publication of the ECTS guide.

Links to further details

- HERE section of NEO website <https://erasmusplus.am/here-activities/>
- List of HEREs on NEO website <https://erasmusplus.am/here/>
- HERE publications or articles <https://erasmusplus.am/here-publications/>
- HERE Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/%D4%B2%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%B1%D6%80%D5%A1%D5%A3%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B5%D5%B6-%D5%AF%D6%80%D5%A9%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%A9%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%B6-%D5%A2%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%A5%D6%83%D5%B8%D5%AD%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B4%D5%B6%D5%A5%D6%80%D5%AB-%D6%83%D5%B8%D6%80%D5%B1%D5%A1%D5%A3%D5%A5%D5%BF%D5%B6%D5%A5%D6%80%D5%AB-%D5%AD%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B4%D5%A2-HERE-ARMENIA-189036651154918/>
- Country page on SPHERE website <http://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-armenia>



Discussion on the new draft law on Higher Education at the Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts, 1/11/2017.



Erasmus+ Information Day: Introduction to Jean Monnet Activities – HERE giving a presentation of Armenian Practices, Yerevan, 8/11/2017.

6.3.2 - AZERBAIJAN

10 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Azerbaijan in 2017

In October 2013 the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan approved the "Strategy for the Development of Education in Azerbaijan by 2025". This comprehensive document covers all goals, objectives and mechanisms of education system reforms at the different levels of education in Azerbaijan. The Strategy was created in compliance with a holistic and open approach to the education and its development.

The most important goals of the Strategy are:

- Creating content for a competency-based and personality-oriented education;
- Develop highly influential educators to ensure the effective acquisition of the educational content through innovative learning methods and technologies that take into account the individual characteristics of learners;
- Formation of a public policy administration system with responsible, transparent and effective regulation mechanisms based on state-business partnership;
- Creation of a modern education infrastructure that ensures lifelong learning;
- Create a new mechanism for sustainable and multi-sources funding of education.

In order to achieve the education goals, specific strategic policies, activities and measures are defined separately for each level of the education system. Since the approval of the Strategy in October 2013, a number of activities have been realized. The main legislative adoption was in 2016, when the action plan was designed. Many activities from the Action Plan on the Implementation of National Strategy for the Development of Education were realized in 2017 and are being continued in 2018.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

The Ministry of Education is actively collaborating with the HERE team. For instance, the recent Twinning project at the Ministry of Education under the title: "Support to the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan for further adherence of the higher education system to the European Higher Education Area" (Twinning ref. AZ/14/ENP/OT/31) has included all HERE team members in their workshops, roundtable discussions and trainings. The experts were able to share their experience and contribute to the Ministry of Education's initiative to promote HE reforms in the country.

Furthermore several members of the HERE team contributed with the experience acquired through international HERE activities to the following internal working groups of the Ministry of the Education:

- Reformation of teaching process at the university
- Development of Higher Education textbooks
- Disabled students access to higher education
- Vocational Education and HE

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. Support and contribution to Technical Assistance Mission on "Increasing the area of Quality Assurance in higher education institutions of Azerbaijan" at Azerbaijan Tourism University in Baku, Azerbaijan. One HERE team member has contributed to the event, providing the vision of the Ministry of Education combined with her experience as expert, chairing the discussion sessions at the TAM on building quality assurance

capacities at institutional and national levels and development of quality assurance units of Higher Education Institutions.

2. Follow-up event of study visit on “Research based teaching: Universities, Entrepreneurship and the Knowledge Triangle”. A HERE team member shared with colleagues the possibilities for research based teaching at university level and the involvement of the business community and research institutes for creating a successful Knowledge Triangle.

3. Follow-up event of HERE seminar on “Students in focus: Student as partners in higher education governance and quality assurance”. HERE members discussed and shared their experience from the event focusing on possibilities of local improvements of student involvement in higher education.

Links to further details

- HERE section of NEO website http://erasmusplus.org.az/?page_id=971
- List of HEREs on NEO website http://erasmusplus.org.az/?page_id=978
- Country page on SPHERE website <http://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-azerbaijan>



TAM on “Increasing the area of Quality Assurance in higher education institutions of Azerbaijan” at Azerbaijan Tourism University in Baku, Azerbaijan, 14-15/2/2017



TAM on “Joint Degrees and Joint Programmes” at Khazar University in Baku, Azerbaijan. 10-11/11/2017. TAM expert (Centre for Int. Mobility in Finland and HERE (leading adviser at HE unit of Ministry of Education in Azerbaijan)

6.3.3 - BELARUS

10 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Belarus in 2017

The existing model of higher education of Belarus is undergoing system changes deriving from the national needs and the participation of Belarus in the EHEA. The targets of the reform are: higher education degree structure, new educational standards, credit system, Diploma Supplement and NQF for higher education. The respective proposals to amend the Education Code, the core legal act of Belarus in the field of education, were sent to the Ministry of Education. The Education Code has now been submitted to the Government.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

In 2017 the HEREs provided trainings to HEIs stakeholders by presenting various aspects of reforming the national higher education system, sharing best practices and international experience, learned at seminars and study visits at local seminars, conferences and lectures. The HERE initiated seminars for students and staff and made presentation on topics of their expertise during TAM seminars.

- Igor Titovich, Helena Zhivitskaya, Elena Betenya are members of the National working group on EHEA tools implementation.
- Igor Titovich and Elena Betenya are Belarus delegates to BFUG Advisory Group «AG 2 – Support for the Belarus Roadmap».
- Helena Zhivitskaya is a member of BFUG working group «WG 2 – Implementation – Fostering implementation of agreed key commitments».
- Sergey Kasperovich is a member of the National working group on NQF for higher education development.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. Amendments to the Education Code within the relevant reform framework.
2. Participation of HEREs in activities of the BFUG Advisory Group "AG 2 – Support for the Belarus Roadmap".
3. A series of seminars on higher education reform initiated and held by Siarhei Piashkun for the administrative staff of Polotsk State University, Vitebsk State University named after P.M. Masherov, Brest State Technical University:
 - 14.03.17 – Bologna process and key tools (Polotsk State University)
 - 07.04.17 – Academic performance and internal quality assurance system (Vitebsk State University named after P.M. Masherov)
 - 30.05.17 – International academic mobility: understanding the concept (Polotsk State University)
 - 28.09.17 – Current training trends and internal quality assurance system (Brest State Technical University)
 - 24.10.17 – Shift from QA system towards quality culture at university (Polotsk State University and Vitebsk State University named after P.M. Masherov) – as a follow-up activity of the study visit in Edinburgh, 5-6 October 2017
 - 29.11.17 – Quality assurance system of international credit mobility (Polotsk State University) – as a follow-up activity of the study visit in Edinburgh, 5-6 October 2017.

Links to further details

- List of HEREs on NEO website <http://erasmus-plus.belarus.unibel.by/ru/main.aspx?guid=3621>
- HERE publications or articles <http://erasmus-plus.belarus.unibel.by/ru/main.aspx?guid=3641>
- HERE event pages <http://erasmus-plus.belarus.unibel.by/ru/main.aspx?guid=3631>



*HERE Study Visit on "Quality culture in practice: Scotland and the University of Edinburgh"
5-6 October 2017, Scotland, UK. Belorussian HERE member discussing in a working group.*

6.3.4 - GEORGIA

10 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Georgia in 2017

The quality of teaching and research as well as of the higher education quality assurance (QA) remains one of the most important challenges of Georgian higher education system for more than a decade. In 2017 some significant steps have been made towards meeting the international standards and the internationalization of QA processes in Georgia: new authorisation and programme accreditation standards based on international documents/regulations, experience and recommendations have been introduced and piloted. Together with the new standards, the whole process of assessment has been modified and the key component of involving international experts in each visiting team has been launched.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

All HEREs, according to their position (rectors, vice-rectors, heads of QA offices, lecturers & researchers and a student) have been actively involved in QA reforms at all stages and from different perspectives. Several of the Georgian HEREs are acting as authorization and accreditation experts, several as accreditation council members and active participants of standard revision groups. The HEREs are also providing a significant support to the ongoing reforms through:

- Translating the key international documents (i.e. regulations and handbooks for HEIs and QA experts) into Georgian;
- Conducting surveys on Higher Education current topics;
- Disseminating information on new trends and developments through round tables and seminars.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. The survey report

“The Role of Universities in Regional Development” was developed by the four HEREs and the NEO team. The research focuses on the role of universities as contributors to the development (economic, social and cultural) of separate regions and the country as a whole. The cases of two regional universities in Adjara and Imereti regions were studied, based on in-depth interviews with the key stakeholders: local authorities, central government, donor organizations and universities itself. The recommendations on the involvement of universities in regional development are made from different perspectives for all key stakeholders.

An executive summary of the research project report is available at:

<http://erasmusplus.org.ge/files/publications/Role%20of%20Universities%20in%20Regional%20Development.pdf> . The full text of the survey report is available only in Georgian:

<http://erasmusplus.org.ge/files/publications>

2. HEREs as Quality Assurance experts

At the initial stage of the ongoing higher education reforms in Georgia, the HEREs have been supporting the development of new authorisation and accreditation standards. The QA development process has been driven forward by the HEREs thanks to their expertise and experience acquired through participation in international forums and meetings, their knowledge of international regulations, their background of working in different positions at higher education institutions and through the surveys they have conducted. Following the introduction of the new standards, a new pool of accreditation and authorization experts has been set up. Considering their expertise in this field, local experts for piloting authorization visits have been selected among the HEREs.

3. Translations

In 2017 Georgia HERE team continued providing translations of key documents (i.e. guidebooks and regulations) for the higher education reform process in the country. Several important documents have been translated in 2017; e-versions of the documents are available on the NEO website <http://erasmusplus.org.ge/ge/publications> and hard copies of IQM-HE handbook have been distributed to public authorities, HEIs and QA experts:

- IQM-HE Handbook for Internal Quality Management in Competence-based Higher Education - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8EsOg5UNGftaVdKdlBhVjNZbjQ/view>
- European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes – <http://erasmusplus.org.ge/files/publications/>
- ISCED-F 2013 - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8EsOg5UNGftNnBwOXdaUC1pd0k/view>
- ISCED-F 2013 Detailed Field Description - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8EsOg5UNGftOTIZY284M2lrUWc/view>

Links to further details

- HERE section of NEO website, including list of HEREs - <http://erasmusplus.org.ge/en/experts>
- HERE publications or articles - <http://erasmusplus.org.ge/en/publications>
- HERE event pages - <http://erasmusplus.org.ge/en/Home> (combined website for NEO & HERE)
- HERE Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/National-Erasmus-Office-Georgia-1401668916764629/> (combined FaceBook page for NEO & HERE)
- Country page on SPHERE website: <https://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-georgia>



NEO Georgia hosting coordination meeting of the HERE team for the yearly planning of activities, 20 January, 2017.



Round table discussion on "Research based education" organised by NEO and HERE teams in the framework of Tbilisi, International Science Festival at Tbilisi State University, 27/9/2017.

6.3.5 - MOLDOVA

7 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in MOLDOVA in 2017

In 2017 the Moldovan Government conducted a structural reform under which all the ministries were reorganised. The number of Ministries in Moldova was reduced from 16 to 9. In this context, the Ministry of Education has been renamed "Ministry of Education, Culture and Research". The new Ministry is the result of a merger between 4 former ministerial structures in the field of Education, Research, Culture, Youth and Sport.

The 2014 Education Code and the Education Development Strategy for 2014-2020 provides a basis for new policies in the education sector.

The education system of Moldova up to 2020 envisages the access for all citizens to high quality education relevant to society and economy in terms of economic efficiency.

- Strategic direction 1: Increasing access and levels of participation in lifelong education and vocational training;
- Strategic direction 2: Ensuring the relevance of studies for life, active citizenship and success in the career;
- Strategic direction 7: Ensuring social cohesion for a quality education' offer.

In 2016 and 2017, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education started to develop a series of activities concerning the evaluation of study programmes in Higher Education following the Government's approval on 18 May 2016. The procedure is based on an external quality evaluation methodology for the accreditation of study programmes and of vocational technical education. The National Agency announced the following procedures:

- external quality evaluation authorising the temporary functioning of higher education programmes following the request by HE institutions;
- in the spring session, higher education programmes from the Bachelor level of the general study programmes started to be evaluated externally for accreditation.

Another topic is the progress regarding the National Qualifications Framework. In 2017, a new draft of the regulation on the approval of the National Qualification Framework has been presented to public debate as requested by the Association agenda between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union.

The extension of university autonomy is progressing. The 2014 Code of Education provided the model of dual university governance, the University Senate and the Strategic Development Council, which includes external members. Strategic Development Councils have been set up in all Moldovan higher education institutions throughout the year 2017.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

The Moldovan HEREs team contributed to the reform processes in higher education trying to align it with the European integration goals of the academic community. The HEREs proposed the topic and provided their expertise for two TAMs in response to the necessity to enhance the universities' capacity in HR development, and to fill the gap of knowledge and experience in the enlargement of university autonomy.

- Human Resources Management at Higher Education Institutions,
- Financial management and funding methods in the context of financial autonomy.

Both events were met with great interest among academics and representatives from higher education authorities (Ministry of Education, Culture and Research; National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education; Rectors' Council).

Those HEREs who have participated in international events have shared their experiences at the national level and within their institutions. These activities have contributed to the implementation of good practices

in student-centred learning, social engagement, quality assurance, implementation of legislation, fostering of the knowledge triangle and innovation in Moldovan universities.

The student representative in the HERE team played an active role by helping to increase the students' engagement in policy reform and to strengthen the capacities of Moldovan student associations.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. During 2016-2017, the evaluation of the study programmes in higher education was relaunched in Moldova by the newly created National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education. In this regard, the study elaborated by the HERE representative from the Ministry of Education on the Quality Assurance in Higher Education allowed to assess the results of the external evaluations and to submit recommendations for improving the quality of bachelor degree programs.
2. The TAMs organised during 2017 have had an important impact for improving the management of higher education institutions and for increasing the quality of academic staff, which is the priority of the national higher education system. The exchange of best European practices on financial management of higher education institutions, which was the topic of the second TAM, contributed to a better understanding of financial mechanisms in higher education and to support the further development of university autonomy in Moldova.
3. Different national events were organised with the aim to deepen the higher education reform with the involvement of students. A series of debates were organised dedicated to university financing and its effects on students. As a result a study has been elaborated on higher education fees from the students' perspective.

Links to further details

- HERE section of NEO website:

<http://www.erasmusplus.md/ro/article/heres-reteaua-de-experti-invatamanul-superior>

- List of HEREs on NEO website:

<http://www.erasmusplus.md/ro/article/heres-reteaua-de-experti-invatamanul-superior>

- HERE publications or articles: <http://www.erasmusplus.md/ro/publications>

- HERE event pages: <http://www.erasmusplus.md/ro/evenimente>

- Country page on SPHERE website: <https://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-moldova>



Moldovan HEREs and NEO coordinator participating at the HERE Annual Conference in Brussels, 11-12/2017.



Two EU experts conducting a TAM on "HEIs: Financial management and funding methods", Technical University of Moldova, Chişinău.

6.3.6- UKRAINE

15 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Ukraine in 2017

The Law of Education of Ukraine, adopted in September 2017, is compatible with the Bologna Process in general and includes the following key provisions: widening University Autonomy; further implementation of the National Qualification Framework; new approaches to National QA system development.

Ukrainian Universities are given the right to choose one of several legal statuses introduced in the Law: state-funded education institution; non-commercial education institution and commercial education institution that will widen University Autonomy.

The National Qualification Framework has been revised and the Law determinates the equivalence between educational levels and the levels in the National Qualification Framework. At present it includes 11 levels of qualifications (0-10), for Higher Education 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10 levels: short cycle, Junior Bachelor – Bachelor – Master – PhD – postdoctoral cycle, Doctor of Science. Descriptions of the National Qualification Framework correspond to EQF LLL and QA EHEA. Additionally Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks are introduced by the new Law. An important provision is the establishment of an obligatory correlation between NQF and Education Standards and, consequently, learning outcomes of study programmes.

The National Qualifications Agency for maintaining NQF implementation as well as Qualifications Centres for Learning Outcomes and Qualifications Recognition in line with the Lisbon and Bologna processes should be established according to the Law. Additionally, the Doctor of Art degree in the framework of the 3rd cycle of Higher Education for artistic qualifications along with PhD degree for other qualifications is introduced in the Law.

An important point for higher education modernisation was the legal recognition of formal, non-formal and informal education as vehicles for lifelong learning.

The Law of Education 2017 includes the formation of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NQAA), which is composed of 23 persons appointed by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine based on the decision of a Selection Commission. At present the Selection Commission includes representatives from EUA, ENQA, EURASHE and ESU. The revised QA system will enhance Academic Integrity as well as Institutional Accreditation as a voluntary procedure by the HEI.

In the framework of the Law, the State provides additional funds for advanced training of State HEIs academic staff, which cannot be less than 2 % of the academic staff' salary fund.

The Ministry grants accreditation to study programmes according to the new procedure established by the Law on Education. Some key amendments to the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" (2014) will be adopted according to the new Law of Education (2017). The new Law 2017 introduced the institute of the Education Ombudsman to ensure that the right to equal access to education will be applied.

The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted the Mid-Term Plan of Ukraine Government Activity for 2017-2020 and determined Higher Education Quality as a priority of the reforming in Education area.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

- Advising and consulting Minister and Deputy Ministers as well as representatives of the Ministry of Education and Sciences of Ukraine on higher education reform issues.
- Participating in national working group on development of the Law of Ukraine on Education in line with the European integration processes and the European Higher Education Area.

- Participating in national working group on development of the Draft Law of Ukraine on Amendments to the Law of Higher Education to enhance QA approaches, University autonomy and management, higher education funding.
- Developing recommendations for Higher Education reform (QA, QF, learning outcomes, standards, etc.) based on the findings of Cluster meetings with Tempus & Erasmus+ structural projects, where HEREs are project curators.
- Preparing publications and interviews on higher education reforms for dissemination.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. The Law of Ukraine on Education was developed with the participation of the HEREs and was adopted by the Parliament. The quality assurance development system has been improved.
2. Cluster events on QA and NQF to provide support of successful national implementation of the best practice in QA system development.
3. Consultations for developers of Higher Education Standards and expertise of drafts of the Higher Education Standards in line with ESG and the Law on Higher Education.

Links to further details

- HERE section of NEO website

<http://erasmusplus.org.ua/en/erasmus/ka3-support-to-policy-reforms.html>

- List of HEREs on NEO website

<http://erasmusplus.org.ua/en/erasmus/ka3-support-to-policy-reforms/national-here-team/178-national-team-of-higher-education-reform-experts-here.html>

- HERE publications or articles

<http://erasmusplus.org.ua/en/useful-information/resources/category/3-materialy-natsionalnoi-komandy-ekspertiv-shchodo-zaprovadzhennia-instrumentiv-bolonskoho-protsesu.html>

- HERE event pages

<http://erasmusplus.org.ua/erasmus/ka3-pidtrymka-reform/natsionalna-komanda-ekspertiv-here.html>

- HERE Facebook page

https://www.facebook.com/pg/NEOinUkraine/posts/?ref=page_internal

- Country page on SPHERE website

<http://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-ukraine>



Academic Leadership Club – HERE event for discussion on key issues for HE reform; NEO / Institute of Higher Education, Kyiv, 6/12/2017.



Seminar “HE standards development: Methodology and Guidance”. Scientific and Methodical Commissions were established for developing HE standards in line with the Law on HE; Institution of Higher Education, NAESU, Kyiv, 19-26 April 2016.

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6.4 RUSSIAN FEDERATION

6.4.1 - Russian Federation

15 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in the Russian Federation in 2017

No major reforms in higher education took place in 2017, but work on enhancing quality of training students in the system of higher education was undertaken on a continuous basis. Mechanisms for linking occupational standards (benchmark requirement to graduates as viewed by employers) to Higher Education standards and curricula have been updated and all curricula are endorsed by employers' sector skills councils that are affiliated to the National Qualifications Council established by the Russian Federation's President. Efforts to enhance quality of education continued. To this end the Ministry of Education and Science prepared recommendations relating to internal quality assurance at universities that are based on the ESG principles.

A new report on the implementation of the Bologna process has been prepared that has allowed critical overviewing and examining the situation in Higher Education.

A new trend has been the expansion of the network of the so-called flagship universities that were launched in 2016. The overall number of such universities is 33. They are a new type of regional universities that set the tone in Higher Education development at the regional level and are to contribute to regional development by training highly qualified specialists for the regional labour market.

A couple of federal projects have been implemented in 2017, namely "Higher Education Institutions as centres for creating innovations" and "Up-to-date digital learning environment". Under the first project over 40 university centres for innovation-based technological and social development have been established in 30 regions of the Russian Federation.

Decisions have been taken to make higher education in Russia attractive to foreign students. In May a priority programme "Development of the export capacity of Russia's higher education" to enhance the operation of university international departments. Under this project, the number of full-time foreign students and foreign students participating in Russian higher education is to grow considerably.

To address the development of education in agricultural occupations further funding was provided to Higher Education Institutions of this type.

In June 2017 a grant programme for universities was launched to support on-line education and to contribute to establishing a resource of on-line courses.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

The HEREs team influenced the above developments by joining the regional development meetings and through participation in the work of Academic Methodological Associations that are in close cooperation with the Department of State Policy in Higher Education. The latter is directly involved in taking policy decisions. The HEREs have been involved in public discussions on drafts of federal programmes, in giving recommendations on internal quality assurance at universities that are based on the ESG principles. Certain publications by the HEREs dealt with the above mentioned developments.

At the institutional level, the HEREs have been active in enhancing the internal quality assurance mechanisms and in streamlining work of institutional international departments.

All of them contributed to the preparation of the Bologna report by providing data, checking the statistics and editing the drafts.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

- Enhanced communication between HEREs and the local university communities on issues relating to higher education modernisation, European processes and internationalisation. Achievements were

reached through formal channels like meetings, seminars, conferences, events of own universities and events of third parties as well as informal channels like personal meetings.

- HEREs were actively involved in developing and implementing institutional policies and practices as there is a growing recognition of the HEREs by university administrations as experts in Higher Education development and modernisation. Student centred approaches in teaching and learning were enhanced. In many Higher Education Institutions, decisions have been taken on streamlining students' project and independent work.
- HEREs contribute in the decisions making process of academic methodological associations, which are entities established by the Ministry of Education to provide guidance to Higher Education Institutions on methodological issues and to develop sample curricula. The HEREs have in particular provided advice concerning requirements to designing and delivering Higher Education curricula.

Links to further details

- HERE section of NEO website

<http://www.erasmusplusinrussia.ru/index.php/ru/info-eng/58-higher-education-reform-experts>

- List of HEREs on NEO website

<http://www.erasmusplusinrussia.ru/index.php/ru/info-eng/58-higher-education-reform-experts>

- Country page on SPHERE website

<http://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-russia>



*The Russian
HERE team and
3 NEO
members*



*Work in progress: HERE
team members during
a meeting at the NEO
office, Moscow, 2017*

HERE National Reports 2017

6.5 SOUTH-MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

6.5.1 - ALGERIA

9 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Algeria in 2017

The ongoing Higher Education reform started in 2004 with the launching of a quality framework (RNAQES). The LMD system has witnessed a number of changes that have been made compulsory through ministerial decrees and notes on evaluations, the launching of MA and doctoral schemes and new techniques in tutoring.

During the first six months of 2017, Algerian universities have been involved in a self-evaluation procedure in order to establish new action-plans. Each higher education establishment had to carry out a self-evaluation at a micro level (faculties, departments, research centres). Another focus of the Ministry of Education was the training of newly recruited teachers.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

The HEREs who attended the regional TAM on Qualification Framework in Jordan did draft a proposal of a CBHE project in this regard which will be submitted for the next call. The Ministry was informed by the HEREs in order to review the proposal and include the Ministry of VET with the Ministry of National Education.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. Technical Assistance Mission on the employability of new graduates
2. Debates upon the Quality Assurance and the active role of students
3. Publications of 5 articles :
 - Employability and the concept of entrepreneurship,
 - Autonomy of University: Algeria's case,
 - A National Qualification Framework for Higher Education,
 - Implementing Quality Assurance: context and challenges,
 - How to succeed in learning and training students?

Links to further details

- HERE section of NEO website

<http://erasmusplus.dz/index.php/fr/heres/a-propos/>

- HERE event pages

<http://erasmusplus.dz/index.php/fr/activites-nationales/>

<http://erasmusplus.dz/index.php/fr/activites-internationales/>

- HERE publications or articles

<http://erasmusplus.dz/index.php/fr/publications/>

- Country page on SPHERE website

<http://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-algeria>



The Algerian HERE team at the regional TAM on Establishing Qualification Frameworks in Amman, Jordan, 24-24/5/2017.

6.5.2 - EGYPT

15 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Egypt in 2017

In 2017, the Egyptian Higher Education System went through the following changes:

1. A new law is in the making to allow universities to create companies and private entities for the exploitation of research / innovation outputs of Universities. The law has passed the first reading in the parliament and shall be issued in 2018. It is expected that this law will enhance the financial autonomy of large universities in Egypt.
2. A presidential declaration in 2017 which states “We will not allow any new private university to be created, unless it is twinned with one of the best 50 universities in the world”, have triggered private universities promoters to enhance their quality and the internationalisation of their programmes.
3. A new law is under development allowing foreign universities to create branch campuses in Egypt.
4. The Medical Education sector has gone through a major reform which resulted in reducing the number of years of study to 5 instead of 6 years to obtain a Bachelor of Science Degree in Medicine.
5. In the Engineering Sector discussions are underway to reduce the number of years of study to 4 instead of 5 years in order to obtain a Bachelor degree in Engineering.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

Some of the senior HEREs are members in the medical and engineering committees at the Supreme Council of Universities in Egypt. They participated in the consultancy and coordination meetings for the drafting and finalising of the above mentioned new laws. A number of the HEREs members are also appointed in the presidential council. Some of them were the driver for the change of the number of study years in medical and engineering sections (Mohamed Reda Bassiouny, Tamer Elnady, Youhansen Eid). As to the law allowing universities to establish private entities, Amr Adly and Ahmed Elhewy were involved in drafting and finalising this law.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

- Contribution to the development of the medical and engineering sections, as well as to the private entities laws.
- Participation in Technical Assistance Missions (TAMs) and Information Days.
- Participation in the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Education Annual Conference.
- Drafting of Impact Study Report on TEMPUS Projects.

Links to further details

- HERE section of NEO website <http://erasmusplus-egypt.eu/index.php/en/heres/introdaction>
- List of HEREs on NEO website <http://erasmusplus-egypt.eu/index.php/en/heres/introdaction>
- HERE event pages
<http://erasmusplus-egypt.eu/index.php/en/heres/tam/events/event-1>
<http://erasmusplus-egypt.eu/index.php/en/heres/tam/events/event-2>
<http://erasmusplus-egypt.eu/index.php/en/heres/tam/events/event-3>
- HERE Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/HEREsEgypt/>



TAM on Accreditation of Continuous Professional Development in Health Care, Centre of International Excellence, Helwan University, 18/9/2017



TAM on University Fundraising, Faculty of Engineering, Cairo University, 23/10/2017

6.5.3 - ISRAEL

7 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Israel in 2017

2017 is the first year of implementation of the Council for Higher Education's national multi-year policy plan for the Higher Education Sector. Consequently, many large-scale initiatives, including subjects as Internationalisation, Digital Learning and Teaching and Academia-Industry Cooperation, were initiated, professional working groups and steering committees were established and first budgetary incentives were set. This allowed the HEIs to develop their strategies and programmes accordingly and develop their research and academic activities. The main achievements so far have been the Council for Higher Education's first steps to implement the policy on Internationalisation. A Call for Proposals open to all public-funded HEIs to develop institutional strategies and infrastructure for hosting international students was conducted and funds to 24 HEIs were distributed.

The Council for Higher Education continued to promote digital learning in 2017, following an initiative launched the previous year, to financially support the production of MOOCs offered either on the international platform, edX (under the banner IsraelX), or on the national platform, Campus. Two Calls for Proposals were issued in the beginning of 2017, which will result in the production of over 40 digital courses. Another flagship project of the CHE in the coming 5 years is the promotion of data science and data-driven research. A first initiative in this domain consists of grants allocated by the Israel Science Foundation that will support cutting-edge research projects on human health and disease, while building data infrastructures and a culture of collaboration across research and clinical settings.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

In 2017 the Israeli HERE team continued to supporting internationalisation developments in the HEIs, especially in the framework of a Forum meeting with the Council for Higher Education Deputy Director General for Strategy and Internationalisation and the successful TAM on Internationalization of HEIs: Development of Institutional Internationalisation Strategy that took place in June 2017. In addition, the HEREs stimulated a cross-sectoral discussion on Teaching for Skills in the framework of a TAM that put a cornerstone for future HERE activities in the field of Employability. Especially in the field of Internationalisation, but also in the other subjects, the HEREs have addressed over the last years, the expert visits have been the main framework for support to the national authorities. The main contribution constituted to facilitate a discussion on policy reform and introducing leading EU expertise and practical recommendations. This framework has stimulated new thoughts and approaches and a more professional decision-making process.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. TAM on Internationalization: Development of Institutional Internationalization Strategy TAM. This two-day conference combined a TAM with a project Cluster Meeting and thus created synergies between the Erasmus+ actions and impacted the local discourse on Internationalisation in HEIs. The event included a very fruitful presentation and workshop with the expert and impacted HEI's international policies and investment in capacity building and sustainable cooperation in this field. The presentation and the workshop contributed to the better understanding of the trends and challenges of institutional internationalization strategy's and the importance of a clear definition of aims and goals for this development. This also assisted in the structuring of our HEREs' Roadmap to Internationalisation.
2. Ongoing promotion of national policy in Internationalisation in Higher Education: The HERE team has

focused efforts in the promotion of internationalisation in Israeli HE. In this regard, the team has met with policy makers at The Council for Higher Education (CHE) to advise and take part in the molding of a new policy and agenda within this authority. HERE members' input was substantial to the development of a new budgeting model to encourage internationalisation. Moreover, the overall activities that HERE members participated in and led on have invoked the strategic involvement of HEIs across the country and have set the stage for national regulatory steps.

3. TAM "Providing Skills to Increase Employability of Humanities and Social Sciences Graduates: First event in the field of employability. This event gave new focus of the HEREs on subjects regarding Industry-Academia relations. Ms. Dalia Narkis (Managing Director East Mediterranean Countries, Manpower group) took part in the event's opening panel presenting current data on new skills and occupations in the future market and relevant input on the preparation processes needed in the Israeli as well as the global workforce. Ms. Shelly Sussman Director of Learning and development at JDC-Tevet gave academia representatives a peak into methodologies of lifelong learning and skill attainment. This event gave important emphasis to the contribution of Humanities and Social Sciences Graduates to the labour market and the conditions in which they successfully integrate and contribute to the economy and society.

Links to further details

HERE section of NEO website: <http://www.erasmusplus.org.il/here>

List of HEREs on NEO website: <http://www.erasmusplus.org.il/the-experts-2015-2017>

Country page on SPHERE website: <http://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-israel>

HEREs presentations: <http://www.erasmusplus.org.il/here-presentations>

HERE event pages:

[http://www.erasmusplus.org.il/conference-on-internationalizing-higher-education-institutions-](http://www.erasmusplus.org.il/conference-on-internationalizing-higher-education-institutions)

<http://www.erasmusplus.org.il/conference-on-providing-skills-to-increase-employability-of-humanities-and-social-sciences-graduates-->



3 HERE team members at Annual HERE conference - EU and its Neighbours: Higher Education Policy and Cooperation, Brussels, 12.12.2017



HERE presenting during TAM on "Providing Skills to Increase Employability of Humanities and Social Sciences Graduates", 18.12.2017

6.5.4 - JORDAN

10 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Jordan in 2017

Compared to the past years, in 2017 the higher education system in Jordan has focused on the vocational and applied disciplines, the relevance of graduates to the job market, employability, internationalization and to the guidelines for admission in order to attract more students in vocational specialties.

A national strategy for human resources development, including higher education, was established and adopted by the government for the period 2016-2025. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has developed an action plan to implement the national strategy components focusing on the above issues. A national committee was formed by the Cabinet to develop a National Qualifications Framework. This committee was chaired by the President of the Higher Education Accreditation Commission and included members from relevant Ministries and other organizations. A national qualification framework has been approved by the cabinet.

The Ministry and higher education institutions have been encouraging the process of external accreditation, including e-learning and smart education.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

The team of Higher Education Reform Experts was actively involved in the higher education reform process in Jordan. Most of the presentations delivered by members of the HERE team were in areas of relevance to the reform topics. Examples include a presentation by the HERE Chairman on the HERE activities in Jordan and a presentation by the student HERE on the “experience of a Jordanian Student in International Mobility” delivered during the Erasmus+ Information day, which was attended by more than 250 persons. Other examples include the presentation “Higher Education: Where To?” given by the HERE chairman at the Arab Thought Forum, which was attended by Members of Parliament and other decision makers. Other HEREs gave presentations on “Students' mobilities: requirements, regulations, management and sharing best practices” and “Enhancing the attractiveness of Jordanian HEIs based on the EU experience” to support internationalization of higher education.

Several HEREs are members of national committees which were formed by the relevant Ministers: the committees on “recognition of degrees obtained from other countries”, “research and international collaboration”, “development of e-learning in Jordanian higher education” and “national strategy of early childhood”.

Jordan hosted four Technical Assistance Missions (TAMs), which were all related to the reform process, out of which the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research hosted two.

The HEREs also contribute to the reform process through their normal professional functions at their institutions by implementing best practices they have learnt while attending TAMs, seminars and international events. The HEREs also trained external stakeholders from the community, as regular citizens attended the HEREs seminars and activities conducted in different regions in Jordan.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. The HERE team conducted 10 seminars, workshops and round table discussions covering universities located all over Jordan. The activities focused on several higher education reform aspects. A training workshop was conducted at the University of Jordan by one of the HEREs on “New trends in teaching methods and student-centred learning approaches at university levels”. This workshop provided some best practices from European universities regarding the methods related to student-centred learning. Furthermore, it highlighted the linkage between learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment at university level. Another workshop on "Students' participation in HE policy reform" was delivered

investigating the students' participation with regards to governance and quality assurance in the higher education system as well as in private and public universities. It also reflected on the situation of student participation in the institution/system regarding achievements and challenges and the potential for enhancement. Another seminar focusing on students was on “the role of university students in ensuring internal quality and achieving external accreditation requirements”. Both were delivered jointly by a HERE and the HERE student. Round table discussions on “Students' mobilities: requirements, regulations, management and sharing best practices” took place with the participation of more than 80 students. Another seminar on “Flipped learning” as an integration of the digital pedagogical innovation in higher education” was delivered by a HERE at 5 different universities. Two other seminars were on “National Qualifications Framework, the Diploma Supplement and Degree Profile” and “Research Based Teaching”.

The above seminars and workshops were attended by many staff members including Presidents, Vice-Presidents, Deans, Heads of Department, Directors of HR, Heads of QA offices, Directors of Admission and Recognition, Heads of Registration Departments, International Relations Directors and professors in addition to large numbers of students.

2. The third issue of the HERE newsletter was prepared by the HERE student, which included information on all Technical Assistance Missions implemented in Jordan during the period 2015-2017, including a description of the main outcomes of the events.

3. Six HEREs were involved in the implementation of four technical assistance missions; including the first regional TAM. Topics of the TAMs were as follows: “Diploma Supplement and Degree Profile – the EU Experience”, “Innovative ways of bridging universities-industry partnership in the smart learning & knowledge based society”, “New trends in teaching methods at university level” and the regional TAM on “National Qualifications Framework”. The TAMs were organized jointly by public and private HEIs in northern, middle and southern Jordan and were attended by a total of 294 participants. The regional TAM was opened by the Jordanian Minister of Higher Education with the participants including the EU Delegation, University of Jordan President and Vice President, heads of quality assurance and accreditation units, academic and administrative staff from all Jordanian universities, NEOs, HEREs and policy makers from 8 Arab countries, namely Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia.

Links to further details

- <http://mohe.gov.jo/en/Pages/default.aspx>
- <http://erasmus-plus.org.jo/en/HERE-Team/HE-Reform-Experts>
- <http://erasmus-plus.org.jo/en/HERE-Team/Local-Activities-Seminars>
- <http://erasmus-plus.org.jo/en/HERE-Team/TAMs>



Regional TAM on National Qualifications Framework, University of Jordan, 23 May 2017

6.5.5 - LEBANON

6 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Lebanon in 2017

The Lebanese higher education sector consists of one public institution called the Lebanese University (LU) which hosts 37% of the country's student population and of 48 private institutions out of which 36 are full universities. By Constitution, the sector is free and independent.

The Lebanese University, which is fully autonomous and overburdened by the country's political divisions, has been trying hard to modernise and reform. The main development at LU in 2017 is the opening of new branches in 3 different remote areas increasing the number of sections and branches to 56 spread all over the country complicating more the governance of this highly centralised institution. Following the same general trend of the country, the LU has started a new era of external evaluation with the help of the French HCERES Agency. Many of the people involved in this exercise have been trained in EU funded projects on QA. The private higher education sector, which is governed by the new law of 2014, is continuing to invest in the areas of Internal QA structures, accreditation by international bodies and agencies, response to the Syrian refugees issue and of international cooperation and networking.

The Ministry has further advanced in the implementation of the 2014 law on HE. The two laws on the creation of a Lebanese QA Agency and the restructure of the Directorate General of HE are still pending ratification by the Parliament. The Director General of HE is pushing further its newly adopted policy of setting up task forces for the HE different issues that need to be developed. The main development in 2017 is the issuing of decrees related to the creation of 50 academic programme committees, the Committee for recognition of degrees and diplomas, the procedures and mechanisms for licensing new programmes including guides and forms and the Committee for the evaluation of the medical programmes. A decree on the organisation of the non-traditional learning is being discussed in the framework of a Tempus project ADIP in which many HEREs are actively involved.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

The HEREs continued to be part of the different committees and task forces created by the Ministry to follow up issues related to the implementation of the Ministry's reform agenda. Three HEREs participated in the organisation of different actions in the field of QA carried out by the Directorate General of HE and the University Agency of Francophonie AUF. These include the national workshop held at University Saint Joseph on 7 December 2017 to which all Lebanese universities were invited.

The HEREs continued to provide free services to different institutions to help establishing internal quality assurance processes. Some HEREs represented the Directorate General of HE in a number of seminars, events or activities implemented by international projects.

In the Academic Programme Committees established by the Ministry, the Director General of HE has benefited considerably from the experiences of the HEREs in QA in setting up procedures, criteria and indicators for the evaluation of the new programmes submitted by the Lebanese institutions.

One HERE has been designated by the Director General of HE to take care of the IT elements regarding all QA workshops and events organised by the Ministry.

As a follow-up of the roundtable organised on 9 November 2017 on "Rethinking Lebanese higher education reform agenda: towards strategic needs and priorities", the HEREs have worked out an important list of recommendations that can help reviewing and redefining the Lebanese strategy for HE and its new priorities.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. Charter on Civic Engagement: The HEREs team gathered 62 experts nominated by 17 HEIs and 3 NGOs to take part in the seminar about "Civic Engagement in Lebanese HE". This seminar, organised with a Technical Assistance Mission, took place on February 16, 2017 at Rafiq Hariri University. The audience

included vice-rectors for civic engagement and community services, deans and staff active in the field, the Director General of HE, 2 representatives of the EU Delegation and the President of the hosting institution. The results of a survey conducted prior to the event were presented in addition to 8 cases submitted by leading Lebanese universities active in the field of civic engagement. As a preparation for the seminar, the team had produced a reader in 3 languages (EN, FR, AR) in which a Charter for Civic Engagement was proposed. A roadmap for the adoption of the Charter was defined. The University of Saint Joseph has adopted the Charter in its proposed form and few other universities expressed their willingness to follow suit. A recent suggestion put forward by the President of the Academic University College for Non-violence & Human Rights (AUNOHR) consists of inviting all Lebanese higher education institutions to a national declaration of the Charter. This will be discussed with the Minister of Education and Higher Education.

2. **National Consultation:** In 2016, the HEREs conducted a national consultation on issues related to the Lebanese HE sector. Three types of stakeholders were targeted by this comprehensive survey: Higher Education and Research Institutions, sectoral representatives and individual experts. More than 130 questions were asked in EN and FR covering almost every single area of the HE reform agenda. The results of the survey were presented in November 2017 at the roundtable that was organised by HEREs on the theme “Rethinking Lebanese HE”. The results were discussed by different stakeholders and will be used to push forward the revision of the Lebanese national strategy for HE.
3. **Strategic recommendations:** Following two local actions organised by HEREs, the first on “Rethinking Lebanese higher education reform agenda: towards strategic needs and priorities” held on 9 November 2017; and the second on “Programme design to address employability” held on 29 November 2017, two lists of strategic recommendations have resulted from these events and were submitted to the Ministry for guidance in future actions plans.

Links to further details

- HERE section of NEO website: <http://erasmusplus-lebanon.org/content/26>
- HERE publications or articles: <http://erasmusplus-lebanon.org/content/837>
(open page of each event to see related readers and concept notes)
- HERE event pages: <http://erasmusplus-lebanon.org/events>
- HERE Facebook page: No separate Facebook page for HERE. Related information are posted on the NEO Facebook page at [ErasmusPlusLebanon](https://www.facebook.com/ErasmusPlusLebanon)
- Country page on SPHERE website: <http://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-lebanon>



HERE event on Programme design to address employability, Ministry of Education, Beirut, 29/11/2017



The Here team Lebanon

6.5.6 - PALESTINE

8 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Palestine in 2017

- A Higher Council for Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) was established representing TVET institutions in the public and private sector in Palestine. The nominated Director of the TVET council was the HEREs member Dr. Anwar Zakaria Hmeidat. The council is represented by the Ministry of Education in charge of TVET. The council is now in the process of establishing the National Training Centre for TVET.
- The HERE team member Dr. Safa Nasser Eddin, ex-Minister of telecommunication and expert in ICT, has played a significant role in creating the new the Digital Education policy. Based on the new policy, in specific disciplines a certain percentage of courses will be taught electronically.
- Integrative Education: a final draft for integrated education has been prepared by a HEREs member who is the assistant Deputy of the Minister of HE in Palestine. It aims at merging the academic courses with practical training to equip students with the needed skills for the labour market. To achieve this, the Ministry will enhance its partnerships with the public and private sectors to provide the students with training programmes that will facilitate their access to the labour market. Three of the HEREs members and the NEO took part in the planning meetings.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

- In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the National Erasmus+ Office organized a workshop entitled “Developing the Accreditation and Diploma Equivalence Systems in Palestine” where a HERE member presented the role of the HEREs and the outputs of the Tempus project Reconow in the development of the equivalence system in Palestine. Following the workshop, a diploma supplement template has been approved for the first time in Palestine and is now in use in a certain number of HEIs.
<http://www.erasmusplus.ps/page-697-en.html>
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B89uTuoW7rrGRUxqYWdQTFYyZW8>
- Three HEREs members took part in the planning meetings for the Integrative Education at the MoHE. The draft was formulated by a HEREs member who is the assistant Deputy of the Minister of HE in Palestine.
- Two HEREs’ members that are part of the Higher Education Council promoted and enhanced the progress and modernization agenda of the higher education at local and national levels.
- The HERE played a concrete role in the implementation of the Bologna Process by facilitating accreditation by using the ECTS system for the first time in Palestine.
- HERE team members initiated and led the formation of the NQF in Palestine based on international HERE activity they had followed.
- In cooperation with the NEO, the HEREs Team organized a Workshop on “University- Enterprise Cooperation: Dual & Cooperative Education models” at The National Institute for Educational Training
<http://www.erasmusplus.ps/page-750-en.html>

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. Developing the Accreditation and Diploma Equivalences System workshop, 11 January 2017, which was a follow-up to the HERE 2016 Annual Conference. A draft description template for the diploma Supplement in Palestine was submitted to the MoHE, the template was approved and the system was adopted by An Najah University.
: <http://www.erasmusplus.ps/page-672-en.html>

2. Identifying the National Priorities and Policies of higher education in Palestine through a workshop that was led by three HERE members and the NEO Director on 10 May 2017. The Palestinian universities discussed the priorities of higher education and its policies in light of the proposals of the Palestinian universities and put them up for adoption.
: <https://www.facebook.com/ErasmusPlusPalestine/posts/1871525293087232>
3. University- Enterprise Cooperation: Dual & Cooperative Education models workshop, 18 December 2017. This workshop was organised as a follow-up to the Milan study-visit on "Research based teaching/ Universities Entrepreneurship and the Knowledge Triangle"
: <http://www.erasmusplus.ps/page-750-en.html>

Links to further details

- HERE section of NEO website: <http://erasmusplus.ps/page-579-en.html>
- List of HEREs on NEO website: <http://www.erasmusplus.ps/page-692-en.html>
- HERE publications or articles: <https://www.birzeit.edu/en/faculty-staff/ahmed-abu-hanieh>
- HERE event pages:
 - Local events: <http://www.erasmusplus.ps/page-693-en.html>
 - International activities: <http://www.erasmusplus.ps/page-694-en.html>
- TAM: <http://www.erasmusplus.ps/page-580-en.html>
- Country page on SPHERE website: <http://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-palestine>



*Regional TAM
"National
Qualifications
Frameworks
based on EU
Experience",
University of
Jordan, 23-24
May 2017*



*HERE's
Workshop
"Identifying the
National
Priorities and
Policies of HE in
Palestine",
National
Institute for
Educational
Training, Al-
Bireh, 10 May
2017*

6.5.7 - SYRIA

3 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Syria in 2017

The main challenge the Higher Education sector in Syria is facing is to have to work in crisis conditions. The war in Syria has ended its 7th year and most of the higher education institutions continue to function. In 2017 half a dozen of Syrian Higher Education Institutions have signed MOUs and agreements with other international Higher Education Institutions, especially from EU countries. New features have been introduced in 2017 on student's acceptance and post graduate studies that will give more flexibility and increased possibilities for credit transfer applicable to Syrian students. This will facilitate the return of those who left the country due to the war when the latter will be ended.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

Given the EU sanctions, the Syrian HERE team could not communicate officially with the Ministry of Higher Education. Consequently in 2017, the contributions of the HERE team were focused on the Syrian HEIs. The HERE team participated in HE seminars, roundtables, workshops and local activities.

The most important event was the first TAM in 2017 Higher Education Quality Standards from a European Perspective. More than 35 HEI experts from Syria gathered to discuss the use of Bologna tools to support the reform of Syrian HE. Some Syrian HEIs started to make changes in their systems to be more compatible with Bologna process and the EU HE systems. The HERE organized a follow-up events to this TAM at the Faculty of Civil Engineering in Aleppo to help the university staff understand more about the tools and their usage to develop HEI studies.

Another follow-up event from a HERE study visit was organised end of 2017 on the utilisation of ICT tools and technology to enhance Higher Education studies. HERE members introduced new tools available on the market for improving the communication between lecturers and students.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

1. The first TAM for Syria was held in Lebanon on the development of Syrian Higher Education Institutions using Bologna Process and tools.
2. HEREs participation in Erasmus+ National Information Days inside and outside the country.
3. The follow up events from the international events that the HEREs attended in Syrian HEIs.

Links to further details

Given that the grant agreement will not be renewed for NEO Syria and for Syrian HEREs for the time being, the NEO HERE website and Facebook pages are no longer active.



HERE team meeting with NEO, National Erasmus+ Office Syria, March 2017



Participants in the first Syrian TAM about Bologna Process, USEK – Zahleh, Lebanon, March 2017



Participation of Syrian HERE in the first Regional TAM at the University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan, May 2017

6.5.8 - TUNISIA

10 HERE team members

Key developments in higher education in Tunisia in 2017

The major development in the Tunisian higher education during the year 2017 was the announcement of the results of the Reform Plan, whose preparation started as early as 2012.

Contribution of the HERE team to higher education development

During five years of work with many periods of breaks, the Tunisian Higher Education Reform Plan resulted in the consultation of the major stakeholders of the higher education system. Throughout this period, the HEREs contributed to the consultation process and the drafting of reports along with their contribution to the meetings in the Ministry of Higher Education. More importantly, the HEREs contribution to the Reform Plan in 2017 was significant as all of them either chaired the national committees established by the Ministry of Higher Education and provided reports to the Minister or chaired the reform committees at the level of their universities.

Professors Omrane, Lamloumi and Aouni, for example, chaired the national reforms committees. The rest of the HEREs were members of the national reform committees and chaired committees at the level of their universities.

Mr Ammar Mlaoueh played an active role in the preparatory stage of the reform plan and the stage of consultation as he is a key figure in the implementation of the three cycle system in Tunisia.

Main achievements of the HERE team in 2017

- 1- TAM on developing a national mobility project
- 2- TAM on the innovation of university programmes
- 3- TAM on active learning
- 4- TAM on Lifelong Learning
- 5- Support in the creation of a video on Erasmus+ to be used for dissemination:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aODZg_93tvg

Links to further details

- HERE section of NEO website
<http://www.erasmusplus.tn/en/articles/higher-education-reform-experts>
- List of HEREs on NEO website
<https://www.erasmusplus.tn/en/article/0018-tunisian-heres-team-2015-2017>
- HERE event pages
<https://www.erasmusplus.tn/en/article/0019-national-activities>
- HERE publications or articles:
https://www.voutube.com/channel/UCKC_DV8U7iooLod8vJ6iHw



*HEREs Coordination Meeting, NEO Office, 6 December 2017,
Cité des Sciences de Tunis*



*HEREs chairman presenting during TAM on Lifelong Learning,
Centre Culturel Ali Jida, Gafsa, 19/12/2017*



Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

Erasmus+ : Higher Education - International Capacity Building

Brussels, 18 March 2014

ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

THE HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM EXPERTS

TERMS OF REFERENCE HERES⁵

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.

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https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/key-action-3-support-for-policy-reform/higher-education-reform-experts-heres_en

General questions about the programme:

EACEA-EPLUS-CBHE@ec.europa.eu