



With the support of the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



CAPACITY BUILDING IN HIGHER EDUCATION PROJECT IMPACT IN CENTRAL ASIA (CA)

November 19-20, 2020





Disclaimer

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Central Asia is a region in Asia which stretches from the Caspian Sea in the west to China and Mongolia in the east, and from Afghanistan and Iran in the south to Russia in the north. The region consists of the republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

On November 19-20, 2020, the Regional Cluster Meeting “Capacity Building in Higher Education project impact in Central Asia” (CA) was organized online by the Education, Audio-Visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission (DG EAC) and the National Erasmus+ Offices (NEO) in 5 Central Asian countries.

The aim of the exercise was to determine the impact and sustainability of the results of the Erasmus+ projects in each of the Central Asian countries and at the regional level.

The Meeting was attended by 340 participants. In addition to the above-mentioned organizations, representatives of the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO), European Union Delegation to Uzbekistan, Senior officials of the Ministries of Education and Science of Central Asian countries, National Agencies in the Programme countries, coordinators and participants in CBHE projects from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs) of the Central Asian countries participated in the Meeting.

The programme for the first day included a formal opening session and panel discussions. Ralph Rahders, Head of the Department of Higher Education of EACEA, Sophie Bernaerts, Director of EACEA, Uktam Salomov, First Deputy Minister of Higher and Specialized Secondary Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Miras Daulenov, Vice-Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nurlan Omurov, Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Kyrgyzstan, Ilhom Kamolzode, Head, Department of International Relations, Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan, Jagmyr Djumamuradov, Acting Head, Department of Management, International University of Humanities and Development (Turkmenistan), François Begout, Head of the Cooperation Section, EU Delegation to Uzbekistan welcomed the participants.

Speakers noted the contribution of the Erasmus+ programme to higher education in the region and stressed the importance of the event for intraregional cooperation. Cooperation with Central Asia is an important part of the policy of the European Union, implementing the European Union’s Strategy for Central Asia, which focuses on dialogue with Central Asian countries, the ideas of connectivity, sustainable and comprehensive initiatives. Education plays one of the central roles in supporting the sustainable development of both regions.

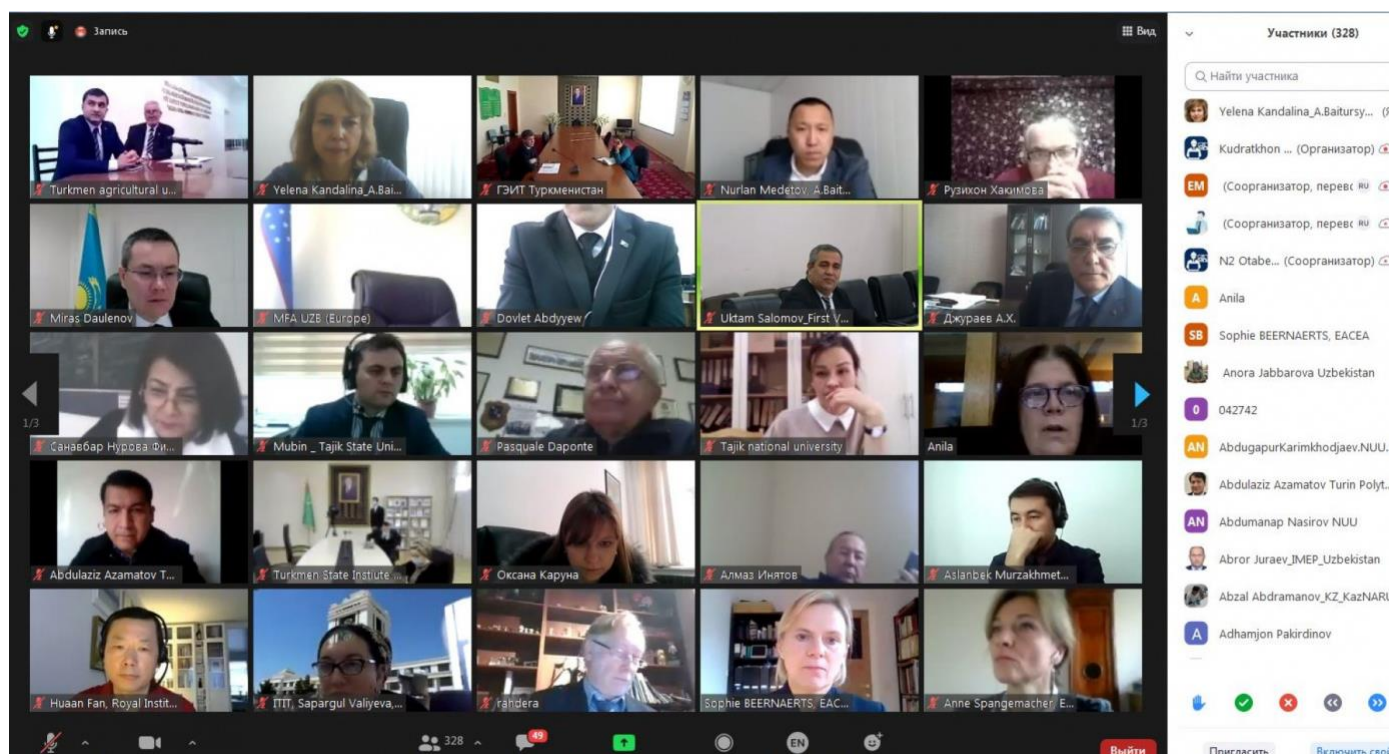
The Regional Cluster Meeting was structured into 5 interactive workshops covering different topics: accessibility, quality and internationalization of the HEIs, CBHE project impact on HE systems, modernisation, curriculum reform and the Bologna Process, regional cooperation, HEI links with society and business in CA.

Panelists discussed the EU response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the framework of E+, challenges and strategies to overcome them in project management and implementation.

The work of the Cluster Meeting resulted in the recommendations to EACEA, Ministries of Education, NEOs, university administrators, project coordinators and teams – these can be consulted in the full report.

Day 1 - November, 19, 2020

Opening



Ralf Rahders, Head of Unit, Erasmus+: Higher Education – International Capacity Building (CBHE), EACEA

I have a pleasure to open the Regional Cluster Meeting for CA. It will allow us to better understand the impact that Capacity building projects have at different areas and on higher education institutions and on the whole educational systems.

During this two-day meeting we will look at challenges and opportunities and try to formulate recommendations for the future. This is the first time that such a regional Cluster Meeting takes place for CA and also the first time that CM is organised fully online. The reason is Corona pandemic.

Sophie Beernaerts, Head of Department Erasmus+, Education Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)

I am happy to be participating in this Regional Cluster Meeting and to be able to welcome everyone. Though due to the pandemic the meeting is organized online this is a good opportunity to see still each other, to hear each other, and to see that over 400 participants have registered.

At this last year of the CBHE action it is a good time to look at it, to look in the mirror. The CBHE action places very important role in the education system as a long-term structural effect on the countries, on the systems in Partner countries. The design of the future actions, the future CBHE action is currently on going. The Action will restart in 2022, and 2021 will be a kind of a gap when we would like to take the step back and reflect together on the new design, receive really the first-hand feedback on the project team impact. EACEA is expecting that during the meeting it would be possible to gather testimonies from the participants on the impact of CBHE action in the reforms that are ongoing in Higher education as well as synergies between CBHE action and ICM.

Uktam Salomov, the First Deputy-Minister of the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education (HSSE) of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Erasmus+ programme is one of key directions of international cooperation involving 65 HEIs of Uzbekistan. The experience of university representatives who have benefited from Erasmus+ projects significantly contributes to the successive transition of HEIs to the credit-modular system of the teaching-learning process in the country. Ministry of HSSE of Uzbekistan strongly supports the activity of the Erasmus+ programme and highly values its contribution in the development of higher education, its flexibility and timely constructive response to all governmental decisions towards further improvement of the system of higher education of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Miras Daulenov, Vice-Minister of Education and science of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The year 2020 is a special year – 25 years since Kazakhstan has been involved in the EU funded Tempus and Erasmus+ programmes. We would like to kindly thank European Union for fruitful cooperation and support in the area of higher education. The CBHE, ICM, Jean Monnet projects have contributed not only to strengthening partnership between Kazakh HEIs and first-rate EU universities, modernization of education content and teaching methodology, but also positively impacted the overall development of higher education system of RK. Doctorate programmes in the frame of Marie Skłodowska-Curie have become an excellent incentive for young researchers in the organization of joint research with EU colleagues, enhancing their professional and research competences. Kazakhstan, being a leader among Central Asian countries for the number of CBHE projects are maximizing their impact at various levels – institutional, national, regional. For instance, the TRUNAK project is contributing to the introduction of autonomy principles in university governance through amendments in the legislative and normative acts. The EDUQAS project has made a contribution to enhancing quality of university management, education and research capacity of Kazakh HEIs through developing partnership ‘university- business-research’, studying and implementing best practices and procedures of EU universities.

Nurlan Omurov, Deputy-Minister of Education and science of the Kyrgyz Republic.

We gratefully acknowledge a big role of the Erasmus+ programme in developing higher education of the Kyrgyz Republic, highly estimate the opportunities provided by the programme to teachers and students, and the impact of the Erasmus+ projects at the various levels in Kyrgyzstan. We thank EACEA for invaluable support provided to Kyrgyz HEIs and in the development of higher education system in Kyrgyzstan.

Ilkhom Kamolzode, Head of department of International cooperation of the Ministry of education and science of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Republic of Tajikistan views cooperation with EACEA as one of the priorities in the area of education and science. The ongoing reforms in the field of education and science of RT are mainly focused to harmonizing the system of the education of RT with the EU standards.

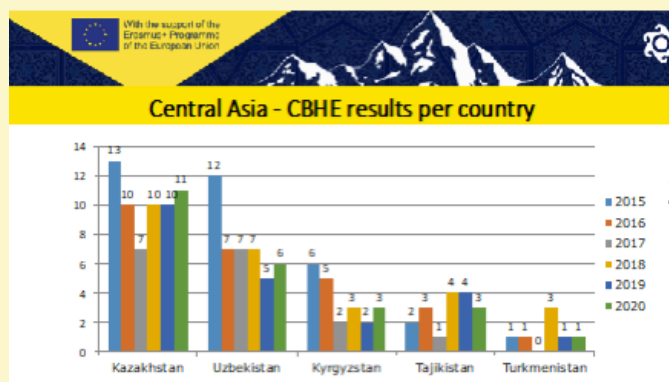
Yagmyr Djumamuradov, acting Head of department of Management, International University of Human Sciences and development.

The Turkmenistan President's Decree on the "Improvement of the Education System in Turkmenistan" (2013) and the "Concept of Transition to 12-year General Secondary Education in Turkmenistan" aim at radical reforms in the education sector. These reforms are reaching a great number of the population. They include costly projects, ranging from introduction of internet access to building new campuses for HEIs that are made possible by the government's access to energy wealth.

The present Cluster meeting dedicated to capacity building in higher education is very important and topical for its theme. Turkmenistan highly appreciates the support provided by European Commission to the modernization of the national higher education system.

Impact of Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education in Central Asia

Anila Troshani, Head of Sector, Erasmus+: Higher Education – International Capacity Building (CBHE), EACEA



Statistically, Erasmus+ CBHE has seen a steady increase in the number of applications from the CA since 2015. A total of 150 Joint and Structural Projects were selected over the period 2015-2020 involving Central Asian universities and non-academic partners, and over 10% of them are coordinated by CA HEIs.

In terms of cooperation, Germany, Spain, Italy, Greece and Poland are the EU countries with

whom CA countries cooperate most frequently. EACEA strongly believes that they have contributed to regional cooperation as the majority of them are multi-country projects. All CA countries are involved in approximately the same number of projects, with a slightly higher involvement of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan – with 61 and 44 respectively selected projects each. Kyrgyzstan has 21 selected projects, Tajikistan 17, and Turkmenistan has 7. They have produced a strong impact at the individual, institutional and system levels.

Regional cooperation in Central Asia, the DEVCO perspective

Nicholas Taylor, Team Leader for Central Asian countries and Mongolia, Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development

Mr. Taylor shared his impressions of the annual Meeting of senior officials with the involvement of CA Ministers of foreign affairs and senior representatives of the EU countries where all ministers of CA countries have underlined the importance of the Erasmus+ programme for the region and expressed their support in its implementation. The speaker also informed about the change of the name of the Department - as of 2021 instead of DEVCO it would be named International Partnerships. Speaker also briefly outlined the policy and framework strategy for the next 7 years. In the global context it means that the colleagues representing European Union in the region, would be actively involved in the dialogue with Governments and representatives of the civil society concerning the content and format of the new programme.

Following the welcome, the Regional Cluster Meeting was structured into 4 interactive workshops to discuss different topics such as CBHE projects supporting quality, accessibility and internationalization of universities in Central Asia, Impact on higher education systems and promoting reforms at national and/or regional level, Impact of national versus regional projects, HEI cooperation with society and business, and employability.

Workshop 1 – Impact of the CBHE projects supporting quality, accessibility and internationalization of universities in Central Asia (98 people).

The CBHE projects implemented with the involvement of CA universities have contributed to enhancing quality, accessibility of higher education and internationalization of HEIs in CA. A specific place in this process have had also International Credit Mobility (ICM) projects. A testimony of their impact is a number and sustainability of the agreements and partnerships aimed at developing innovative and modernized curricula, double degree programmes, joint research, conferences, Summer and Winter schools.

Asiya Turenliyazova, Head of Department, the Nukus branch of the Tashkent University of Information Technologies, Uzbekistan

RUECVET project academic staff have acquired the methodology of defining learning outcomes based on the needs survey among employers enabling the development of new and updating the existing programmes and credit transfer. The project has made a positive impact on improving access to TVET. Recommendations on the transfer and adapting the ECVET tools to the context of the national TVET system have a good potential for enhancing the project impact on the national level and are demanded at the present stage of cardinally reforming the TVET system of Uzbekistan.

RUECVET-

Piloting ECVET to the National VET System of Russia and Uzbekistan (574097-JP-2016) - www.ruecvet.uz

Marina Skiba, Higher Education Reform National Expert, Rector, Finance Academy, Kazakhstan
The **PEOPLE** project made it possible to reorganize the activity of the personnel office, – reorient it from mainly maintaining records to human resource development.

PEOPLE – Promoting Educational Organisation through people
(543657-TEMPUS-JPGR-2013) - www.people-project.net

Mubin Abduvaliev, Head of international relations department, Tajik State University of Commerce, Tajikistan

The **PAWER** project contributed to enhancing internationalization of universities, strengthening self-reliance and responsibility of learners through the development and implementation of a variety of methodological materials (textbooks, guides, video-materials, etc.).

PAWER - Paving the way to interregional mobility and ensuring relevance, quality and equity of access (574099-SP-2016) - www.pawer.univaq.it

Aganiyaz Jumayev, Higher Education Reform National Expert, Vice-rector, State Energy Institute of Turkmenistan, Turkmenistan

In the **LEMEL** project the team developed interdisciplinary programmes at the edge of engineering and economic sciences, enhanced cooperation between HEIs and energy companies, quality and relevance of the content and teaching methodology to the needs of the industrial sector. Active involvement of the team members in the revision and updating of the State programme in the area of using renewable sources of energy has become an important impact of the project through the development of regulatory documents on the national level.

LEMEL - Establishing a blended learning-based bachelor's degree in energy management in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan (511347-TEMPUS-JPSR-2010) - <https://www.fh-mittelstand.de/news/artikel/tempus-projekt-lemel-2058>

Irina Kulitane, International project manager, Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, Latvia

The **HECAFS** project enabled the team to pass through international accreditation of the programme developed, enhance international visibility of the universities, develop cooperation with EU HEIs and enhance interaction "HEI-Business" and involvement of students in the project.

HECAFS - Higher Education for Central Asia Food Systems and Standards (574005-JP-2016) - www.namsb.tj/hecafs/about-hecafs

Yzatbek Berenaliev, Dean of Kyrgyz National University, Kyrgyzstan. Our university was involved in three projects. They made a strong impact on enhancing quality assurance via curriculum development, helped to change the way to teach and learn, as well as on the organization of learning process. Special attention was given to the integration with international education system on the level of program and development of the methodical material within projects (study books, guidelines, etc.).

Workshop 2 - Impact on higher education systems and promoting reforms at national and/or regional level in Central Asia (99 participants).

Almost all speakers emphasized the strengthening of cooperation with employers and their involvement in the educational process, including through the creation of digital tools for interaction between the world of work, universities, graduates - digital platforms and dialogue platforms, development of learning outcomes and the competence model of the graduate, innovative programmes of topical disciplines, new approaches to the training of specialists (for example, in nursing), interest to master's and doctoral programmes among representatives of the economic sector, cooperation through branches of departments, joint management of master's and doctoral dissertations, etc.

The APPLE, ENINEDU, Hiedtec, TAME, TRUNAK, PROINCA, SMARTCITY, IMEP and NURSLING projects in Central Asian universities have had a significant impact on different levels. One of the main effects - enhanced competences of staff, preparation of an institutional and national pool of experts, able to participate in educational reforms at the national and interregional levels on a wide range of issues of relevance to the Central Asian countries: water resources management, cybersecurity, space research, quality assurance, evidence-based medicine, entrepreneurship development, microelectronics, land conservation and restoration, precision farming and many others.

Zaure Rakisheva, Head of Department, al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan

The **APPLE** project has had a great impact both on the strengthening of cooperation between EU universities and Kazakhstan and on interaction between universities and companies in such a new field as the space industry.

APPLE

– Applied Curricula in Space Exploration and Intelligent Robotic Systems (573545-JP-2016) – www.apple.erasmus.plus

Viktor Riklefs, Vice-Rector for Academic Work, Karaganda Medical University, Kazakhstan

The **TRUNAK** project has produced impact at the national level through the development of new regulations in HE aimed at increasing the autonomy of universities, implementation of the principles of academic and managerial freedom of HEIs; The Model of University Autonomy with recommendations at the system-wide and institutional level is used by other universities beyond the consortium level. There are changes in university governance, namely, decentralization, introduction of the principles of horizontal management, developing new competencies and requirements for staff positions in the context of strengthening independence.

TRUNAK – Modernising

university governance in Kazakhstan (586205-SP-2017) - www.trunak.eu

Vilen Molotov-Luchiansky, Rector's advisor, Karaganda medical university, Kazakhstan

Impact of the project is visible in the creation of new areas of nursing education; the project's recommendations are included in the programme and road map for the development and reform of nursing in Kazakhstan. The project's Centre for the Advancement of Nursing promotes cooperation among the medical universities of the Republic of Kazakhstan through the establishment of regional offices. The Centre's electronic platform has become a platform for interaction between nursing practice, nursing education and research. For the first time, departments and faculties had been established in medical universities and training had begun for nurses with higher education. The network established in the **PROINCA** project has made it possible to establish contacts with the International Association of Nurses, thus integrating nursing education into the world's educational space.

Abdugapur Karimkhodjaev, Associate professor, National University of Uzbekistan.

The **NURSLING** project focuses on introducing the idea of a qualification framework in Uzbekistan. The NQF Framework Concept developed, the NQF Coordinating Council formed, and National Qualifications Framework Guidelines presented to the Ministry of Higher and Specialized Secondary Education. Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan on 15 May 2020 «On measures to organize the activities of the National System of Advanced Qualifications, Knowledge and Skills in the Republic of Uzbekistan» adopted. National Skills Development System and the National Qualifications Framework were approved.

NURSLING - National Qualification Frameworks: Guidelines for Development and Recognition of Qualification (561742-SP-2015) - www.ualg.pt

Abror Juraev, Vice-rector for International Cooperation, Bukhara State University, Uzbekistan

The **IMEP** project contributed to the establishment in Uzbekistan of the Agency for Independent Monitoring of the Quality of Education.

IMEP- Internationalisation and Modernisation of Education and Processes in the Higher Education of Uzbekistan (561624-SP-2015) - <https://uwed.uz/en/pages/imep>

Mirlan Chynybaev, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, Kyrgyz State Technical University, Kyrgyzstan. HERE.

The **HiEdTec** project resulted in the development of the draft national concept for adapting the educational system to the digital generation, and the formation of base higher education institutions for the implementation and development of digital education. The Concept has contributed to the development of digitalization programmes of higher education system.

HiEdTec - Modernisation of higher education in Central Asia through new technologies (598092-SP-2018) - www.hiedtec.ecs.uni-ruse.bg

Sholpan Jomartova, professor, al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan

ENINEDU project has produced a Systemic Standard of Cooperation and Guidelines. These are used as a model tool for bringing universities and the corporate sector closer together. The project gave impetus to the creation of the business-competence development Cluster.

ENINEDU – Enhancement of Higher Education and Corporate Sectors Integration in Accordance with New Social Environment (574060-SP-1-2016) - www.eninedu-erasmusplus.kaznu.kz

Workshop 3. Impact of CBHE and international credit mobility projects supporting modernization, curriculum reform and the Bologna Process at universities in Central Asia. (81 participants).

Speakers noted that the CBHE projects had a great impact on the development of educational programmes, both in terms of content and structure, as well as in terms of methodology and direction of training. A new quality is the interdisciplinary nature of the programmes, training in priority sectors such as transport, medicine, construction, ecology, renewable energy, agriculture, veterinary science, animal husbandry, food production and processing, waste management, computational linguistics, tourism and others. Development of programmes was based on the needs of the production sector (through questionnaires, round tables, meetings, business lunches – brunches, etc.). In a number of projects (ECCUM, CLASS, CACTLE and several others) as a result of cooperation with European colleagues, team members developed innovative programmes or significantly - by 50-60%- updated their content. Cooperation with the practical sector has improved (ECCUM, CLASS, IUCLAND, KyrMedu, ModeHed, HECAFS, TUCAHEA).

Claudio Massimo Colombo, Full professor, Rector Delegate of International Affair, University of Molise, Italy

In the **IUCLAND** project a new modular programme «Ecobiosecurity in the agrarian and industrial zone» with a total volume of 52 ECTS has been developed to improve the knowledge of Masters in the field of land use in the agribusiness complex and the industrial zone.

The main suggestions of the representatives of enterprises were also taken into account in the content and teaching methodology of the "Biotechnology" programme. At present the team is confidently using Platonus system which is very helpful in the situation when universities have moved to online teaching.

IUCLAND – International University Cooperation on Land Protection
in European-Asiatic Countries (561841-JP-2015) -
www.iucland.eu

Abror Juraev, Vice-rector for International Cooperation, Bukhara State University, Uzbekistan

Our cooperation achieved through ICM projects has helped to establish new linkages. For example, universities participating in the ICM project subsequently applied for the CBHE project together with Latvian counterparts. Cooperation in the ICM project has helped to establish new cooperation with Polish counterparts for the development of the CBHE project. The experience gained and the trust among the participants contributed to the sustainability of the results.

Ermek Baibagyshov, Acting Rector, Naryn State University, Kyrgyzstan

In the project **KyrMEDU** the team members have mastered distance learning computer programmes, acquired IT competence in the development of E-book in HTML format.

KyrMedu - Advancing
University Education in Biomedical Engineering and Health Management in
Kyrgyzstan (561894- JP- 2015) - www.kyrmedu.org

Yelena Kandalina, Acting Head of International Collaboration and Foreign Students Recruitment Office, A.Baitursynov Kostanay Regional University, Kazakhstan

In the **ECCUM** and **CLASS** projects in the Master's programme in mathematical engineering took into account the proposal of the staff of LLP "Digital" on the need for development, along with universal skills, also Matlab and Comsol Multiphysics software application skills. The mastering of these programmes enabled the graduates to develop a wide range of professional and soft skills demanded by employers. As a result, the company provides permanent places of practice and internships for students and teachers, as well as invite Master graduates to work. The teachers learned to define learning outcomes for each course, apply student-centred methodology, as well as the Task-based method. Students are confidently solving modeling problems.

ECCUM - Establishment of computing centers and curriculum development in mathematical engineering master program (561574-JP-2015) - www.eccum.famnit.upr.si/en

CLASS – Development of the Interdisciplinary Master Program on Computational Linguistics at Central Asian Universities (585845-JP-2017) - www.erasmus-class.eu

Loreta Paulauskaite, Spanish Service for the Internationalisation of the Education, International Contact Point, Spain.

I'd like to tell about the synergy and the complementarity of ICM and CBHE. We've learned that ICM can be the starting point to develop CBHE projects. The students and teachers are like ambassadors of amazing ideas. We can come to the conclusion that only when all these activities within the E+ programme are jointly organized, their impact becomes automatically bigger.

Alisher Yunusov, Docent of Chair of Economic Theory, Ferghana State University, Uzbekistan.

In the project **ModeHed** distance learning has been mastered and used. Online training activities are carried out with the use of «AIS Platonus» system which provides access to educational materials, as well as personal information about current and final performance online. AIS Platonus presents jobs, tests, links to materials, videos, etc. New distance learning programmes have been mastered: Zoom, Webex, Hangouts. The use of the mentioned advanced skills has become highly relevant and necessary in the context of the pandemic.

ModeHed – Modernizing Health Education in Universities
(561857-JP-2015) - <http://modehed.uz/web>

Workshop 4 – CBHE projects fostering regional cooperation in Central Asia. Impact of national versus regional projects (33 participants)

The participants were unanimous in noting the important positive impact of the CBHE projects on the modernization of higher education in Central Asia and the development of regional cooperation in this field. In some countries of the region, they are the only instrument for implementing reforms in the education sector. Some speakers expressed a preference for national projects, considering them to be more attractive to participating universities because they were more conducive to the modernization processes in a particular country. However, partner universities are also interested in and willing to participate in regional CBHE projects, as the countries of Central Asia share a geopolitical location, a common history of higher education, ethno-cultural commonalities and common problems. In this regard, regional projects are more supportive to cooperation at the regional level, to finding common solutions to problems and to bringing countries closer together. During the discussion were presented **HECAFS, TUTORIAL, ProinCA, LMPI**. A separate place in this series belongs to **ChildCA** and **DECIDE** projects which have become relevant not only for the individual country but also for the region in the context of inclusive education.

Ahror Jafarov, Head of the Centre of Computer and Educational Technologies, Technological University of Tajikistan, Tajikistan

As a result of the **PAWER** project, we have established cooperation with several universities in Central Asia, in particular the Osh Technological University (Kyrgyzstan), Shokan Ualikhanov Kokshetau Regional University, Bukhara Institute of Engineering and Technology (Uzbekistan).

PAWER - Paving the way to interregional mobility and ensuring relevance, quality and equity of access (574099-SP-2016) - www.pawer.univaq.it

Umeda Gaforova, Director of Human Research Institute, Khujand State University, Tajikistan

More than twenty projects were implemented at Khujand State University, 14 of which are joint regional projects aimed at reforming and modernizing higher education, introducing the Bologna process, improving curricula, training bachelors, Masters and PhD students in cooperation with EU universities. As a result, close collaboration with Central Asian and European universities has emerged.

Olga Sayfulloeva, Vice rector of International affairs, Khorog State University, HERE, Tajikistan

For twelve years our university has been actively participating in the Calls for ICM and CBHE projects. As of today we are working with three CBHE projects (TRIGGER, UNICAC, HiEdTec). Analyzing ten years of experience in projects, we can note that our university has concluded more than fifty memorandums with international partner universities.

Johanna Heikkila, Senior Advisor, JAMK University of Applied Sciences, Finland

In ProinCA project we had collaborated first in mobility project. We started in 2015 a mobility project. We created partnership between our HEIs, then we had in 2015 a small project on developing an applied Bachelor curricular. In 2016 we continued cooperation with Ministry of Health of Kazakhstan and launched a CBHE project on Nursing.

Aslanbek Murzakhmetov, Senior Lecturer, M.Kh. Dulaty Taraz Regional University, Kazakhstan. In **LMPI** students have gained access to up-to-date information security materials and acquired professional competences in this field. Teachers have developed their skills in several ways: they have mastered the methodology of developing educational programmes according to the needs of employers, methods of developing and implementing open online courses, expanded their knowledge in the field of information security, enriched their teaching-learning methods (problem-based and project-based teamwork skills, developing video-materials, etc.).

LMPI – Licence, Master professionnels pour le développement, l'administration, la gestion, la protection des systèmes et réseaux informatiques dans les entreprises en Moldavie, au Kazakhstan, au Vietnam / Bachelor, Master Professional in the development, administration, management, protection of computer systems and networks in companies in Moldova, Kazakhstan, Vietnam (573901-JP-2016) - www.lmpi-erasmus.net

Nilufar Sadullaeva, Head of department, National university of Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan Our project includes knowledge sharing between universities in Central Asia and maintaining student exchange between Uzbek, Russian and Chinese universities.

Roman Kalmatov, professor, Osh State University, Kyrgyzstan

In the **TUTORIAL** project we opened a master's degree program in public health. There were specific difficulties in obtaining a license. We managed to undergo independent international accreditation. Our university has drawn new agreements for the development of public health with universities in Switzerland and the USA.

TUTORIAL - Strengthening network education, research and innovation in environmental health in Asia (573640-JP-2016) - www.tutorial.ut.ee

Workshop 5 - CBHE projects promoting University & Business cooperation and employability (44 participants).

Speakers stressed that the Erasmus+ projects had been a catalyst for changes in the relationship between the academic and the practical environment, having had a significant impact on the development of cooperation between institutions of higher education and enterprises and business partners, and thus, increased employment opportunities for university graduates. First of all, this was made possible by the interested participation of representatives of enterprises in the formulation of requirements and expectations for the training of future specialists. Almost all speakers noted that an important result of the cooperation had been the creation of innovative and updated educational programmes and the development and implementation of long- and short-term refresher courses both for teachers and for business representatives. As a result, the level of students' training, their professional competence in the chosen specialty, as well as a wide range of universal, soft skills are improved.

Maksud Tairov, teacher, Bukhara State medical institute, Uzbekistan

A successful example of cooperation of business with universities in research format was the **IHOD** project. Bukhara State Medical Institute (Uzbekistan) Masters were given the opportunity to study abroad, and some have been able to continue their studies at a foreign educational institution to obtain a PhD degree. Regular meetings with employers have become a tradition in many universities enabling to attract employers to cooperate and improve employability opportunities of graduates; Potential employers are invited to participate in the training as coaches and project partners.

IHOD - Improving Healthcare Outcomes in Chronic Disease – Enhancing the Curriculum at Masters Level (586094-JP-2017)

Saltanat Mulikova, professor, Karaganda Economic University of Kazpotrbesoyuz, Kazakhstan

I note the change in the relationship of the business environment to the university as a result of the implementation of the **CACTLE** and **COMPLETE** projects. The social partners (IP JSC «Ephesus Karaganda», JSC «Arselormittal», LLP «Eurasian Copper») have intensified the activity on conducting the competitive selection of applicants on the university site (psychological trainings, business games, interviews, decision of cases and exercises). As a result of the **COMPLETE** project job fairs, brunches, counselling organized and over 30 short-term courses for students to improve employability opportunities developed. 200 graduates were employed. The Centre set up in the frame of the projects is oriented to coordinating the development of soft skills in the course of short-term and regular training activities.

CACTLE – Implementing a

Central Asian Centre for Teaching, Learning and Entrepreneurship
(561495-JP-2015) - www.management.cactle.eu

COMPLETE

– Establishment of centres for competence and
employability development (561603-JP-2015) - www.cced-complete.com

Sapargul Valiyeva, Head of department Management and Innovation Technologies, Turkmen institute of Telecommunications and informatics, Turkmenistan

Our participation in Erasmus+ projects helps our university to work closely with employers and successfully employ our graduates in the public and private sectors.

Sholpan Jomartova, professor, al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan Within the framework of the **ENINEDU** project (Enhancement of Higher Education and Corporate Sectors Integration in Accordance with New Social Environment) an online survey of employers is conducted annually. Based on the consolidation of employers' requests, the approach to the organization of the educational process has changed. The teaching methodology emphasizes the development of practical skills through interactive teaching methods. The concept of the traineeship has changed. The traineeship infrastructure has been updated by 60%. The departments began to respond flexibly to employers' requests, allowing short- and long-term internships without being tied to the academic calendar, which increased the employability of students, acquiring practical skills and developing entrepreneurial thinking. As a result of interaction with the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs (NCE) «Atameken» students prepared over 100 business plans.

Shohrat Bashimov, Turkmen State Institute of Finance, Turkmenistan

The **ROAD** project has contributed to the formation of a model of entrepreneurial cooperation in Turkmenistan. It helped to establish Centres in two HEIs to retrain specialists and managers of the new generation and to organize subsequent training and counselling for students of the Presidential Academy of Public Service. Participating teachers have enhanced their academic capacity, modernized curricula using advanced ICT methodologies and pedagogical approaches. In addition to training for public and regional officials, the Centres now offer training and advice to professionals from the economic, financial and banking sectors of the country. The Centres cooperate with the Academy of Civil Servants on the basis of the Cooperation Agreement and the regulations of the Ministry of Education. The trained specialists are actively supporting the ongoing human resources reform in the country and helping to develop the LLL system in Turkmenistan.

ROAD - Regional objectives of administrative development
(574243-JP-2016) – www.roadproject.tecnico.ulisboa.pt.

Jerald Cavanagh, professor, Institute Librarian, Limerick Institute of Technology, Ireland

DIRECT project with the participation of Kazakh universities, "Library Network Support Services: Modernization of Libraries through Staff Development and Library Reform" (Armenia, Moldova, Belarus) Virtual University Libraries have been developed, as well as an inter-library network for member universities. Teachers have studied the Moodle programme and based on it have created digital knowledge portals, which are actively used in the educational process and contribute to the performance of teachers and students, as well as in further training faculties. The areas I think is important regarding University and Employment is the Transferable skills needed for the employer. Students need to be aware of Academic Writing Digital Literacy Intellectual property and rights.

DIRECT - Developing trans-regional information literacy for lifelong learning and the knowledge economy
(574157 - JP-2016) - www.direkt-cbhe.com

Zaure Rakisheva, Head of Department, al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan

The strength of our **APPLE** project (Applied Curricula in Space Exploration and Intelligent Robotic Systems) is its close association with employers, as only four universities in Kazakhstan train specialists of this specialty. We involve employers in the development of educational programmes, and branches of departments in enterprises have been established to increase cooperation with them.

Orazmuhammet Durdyev, Senior lecturer, Turkmen agricultural university named after S.A. Nyyazov, Turkmenistan

The **NICoPA** project resulted in the modernization of programmes in 9 disciplines; the Precision Agricultural Laboratory and Service Centre established. The results of the project have been of interest to the Ministry of Agriculture and a digital land cadastre for Turkmenistan is being created using the results of the project. During the implementation of the project, the participants had the opportunity to cooperate with industry and enterprises in the agricultural sector. On the basis of the results of the survey, they were able to determine the extent to which employees needed to improve their knowledge of computer science and IT technology, and seminars were organized for them at the Faculty of Advanced Studies.

NICOPA – New and Innovative Courses for Precision Agriculture
(597985-JP-1-2018) - www.nicopa.eu/index.php

Jan De Schamphelire, researcher, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium

A big problem with employment possibilities is that in terms of recruitment and promotion there is still quite some darkness. If the procedures for recruiting people are not very transparent and maybe in terms of the policy also from the government we need a policy that allows for more transparency on the labour market.

Session 3. Brainstorming for the future CBHE action

Further, in accordance with the programme, Ms Anne Spangemacher, **Project officer for Central Asia** together with Ms. Anila Troshani, Head of Sector conducted an interactive "Brainstorming session" on the proposed new E+ Action. The following points were suggested for discussion:

- 1. Structure of the new programme for CBHE projects under finalization. The proposed model has two options:
 - Large projects for more experienced consortia with a larger budget.
 - Smaller joint projects with a smaller budget to involve new and smaller universities.*
- 2. Should the Ministry be engaged as an active partner to ensure the sustainability of the CBHE projects or whether other forms of incentives should be used to encourage the Ministry's involvement.*
- 3. Your proposals for the purchase of equipment under the CBHE projects, based on past experience, problems with changing equipment specifications, etc.*
- 4. Action 2 documentation - CBHE projects are quite complex. Your suggestions to improve the procedure for applying for CBHE projects.*

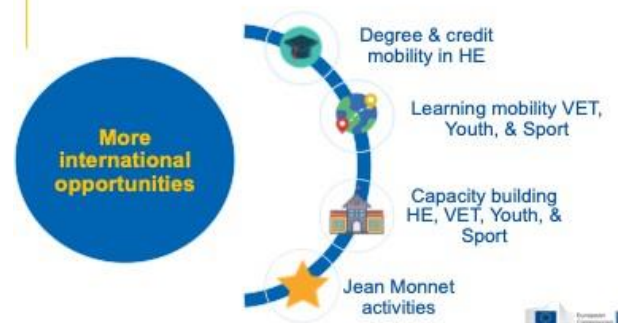
The questions raised gave rise to a lively discussion. There was general agreement that project differentiation by size and budget was generally welcome. The study shows that large universities with experience as project coordinators and consortium members are also willing to apply for and receive small projects with a flexible approach with a maximum duration of 18 months. Speakers shared the view that such a strict distinction - larger budgets and larger projects for universities with experience and a smaller budget and smaller projects for newcomers - would not be efficient and effective.

Speakers expressed support for the idea of dividing projects into large and small projects, as a model with a smaller budget and shorter duration could form the basis for a further, larger project. This would enhance the impact of the project. However, the shift from smaller to larger projects should be accompanied by an increase in the scope of expected results. In case we are focused on small projects, we should be prepared that their impact will also be limited to the university.

Day 2- November 20, 2020 - was opened by Adrian Veale, Desk officer for CA, Directorate-General Education, Youth, Sport and Culture with a presentation **“EU funded regional cooperation in education: a shared commitment for 2021-2027”**.

A. Veale reaffirmed the commitment of the European Commission to the continuation of the E+ programme and its international dimension, an invaluable contribution to the development of international cooperation between the EU and Central Asian countries, including the allocation of funding to support upcoming initiatives - the continuation of three existing priorities and three new initiatives. Focus on global E+ coverage, with

further strengthening of international dimension, as well as continuation of the Programme, mainly aimed at the European region, especially in the area of digital skills. The DG expects the Programme's impact to increase beyond Europe. The long-term focus on greening will also continue as a reaffirmation of Europe's commitment to the world's green economy.



With regard to the new adjusted initiatives, the plan addresses the revised budget package related to COVID, the E+ financing scheme to be launched in 2021, the Digital Education Action Programme (DEAP) and projects of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). While DEAP aims to improve digital skills among learners and educators by introducing new teaching methods and using them as a solid foundation, the EHEA targets the European region with impacts beyond its borders. The new scheme essentially opens up more international possibilities.

As in the past, the degree mobility and ICM, CBHE projects and the Jean Monnet programme would continue, although not all other opportunities would be available to participants from Central Asia. The budget would be allocated under two separate sections (Headings). The budget line for Europe - from Heading 2, and universities in Central Asia, together with universities in other countries of the world - under Heading 6 (Financial Instrument of External Cooperation for Neighbouring Countries - NDICI).

The international dimension would be activated in 2021-2027. Implementation is therefore planned to begin in 2021. It is particularly noteworthy that the selection of projects will be partial and only in 2022 will it be possible to restore the entire procedure. In 2021, there are no plans to select ICM and CBHE projects for funding, only in 2022. Among the innovations covered by the ICM, he noted such aspects as simplification of documentation, increased funds for programme management, a significant increase in the amount for organizational support, a particular emphasis on inclusiveness, to improve access for people with special needs and socially disadvantaged groups.

The previous five-year period (2015 - 2020) had confirmed the success of projects in the field of mobility of students and staff in CA. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan maintained leadership positions during this period. The study showed that many EU universities expressed great interest in cooperating with Kazakhstan, while other universities are advised to establish contacts more actively.

Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree Programme as the flagship programme of the EU has a special role. The Call for Applications would be launched in 2021. The following changes are currently planned:

- Major innovations will address the content of the programme. The programme would no longer be a mobility programme, but would be a collaboration to allow universities in consortium to develop joint programmes.
- Non-European universities are encouraged to join. The new conditions are attractive for Central Asian universities, such as equality of partners, support for curriculum development, and allowing continued use of the EM logo to ensure the sustainability of the programme. Consideration is being given to the possibility of organizing project activities to remove obstacles at the pre-project stage, such as accreditation, etc.

2.2 Discussion on challenges and coping strategies in project management and implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic confinement period.

Ms. Anila Troshani presented the EU's response to the challenges faced in the frame of E+. She invited participants to discuss the challenges and strategies to cope with them in managing and implementing projects during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The coordinators of the Erasmus+ National Offices in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, as well as the coordinators of individual projects in the Central Asian countries, presented information on the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the projects due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as measures to overcome them. The results of a study carried out by the TALENT project team with the participation of Kazakh and European universities on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the activities of the project conducted online during 16 -20 October 2020 were further presented to the participants by Irene Nikandrou, Athens University of Economics and Business.

The following were the project coordinators: Professor V. Molotov-Luchiansky (PROINCA project), A. Juraev (ICM projects), K. Jusupov (DERECKA project), O. Saifulloyeva (Hiedtec project). They shared results, challenges posed by the Corona Crisis and strategies to overcome them.

Concluding remarks

The Cluster meeting on the impact of the CBHE projects in CA region brought together a large number of committed and interested stakeholders and helped to address important institutional and policy aspects. Despite the effect of COVID-19, many teams have mobilized and are successfully continuing to work on the adjusted plans.

The Meeting gave the participants an opportunity to discuss the impact of CBHE projects in such important aspects as modernisation, accessibility and internationalisation, regional cooperation and has shown that all five Central Asian countries are viewing CBHE projects as a starting point for supporting the development of higher education. A number of good-practice examples have demonstrated the impact that CBHE projects have produced at the level of HEIs and of the individuals (academic and administrative staff, students). Though it is not easy to measure, there are Structural projects that have produced impact also at the level of the systems in terms of contribution to legislation on university autonomy, developing NQF, enhancing international partnership and networking, increased employability prospects of graduates.

Thanks to the CBHE and ICM projects, the creative use of the Bologna Instruments, the increase in academic and student mobility and the best experience of European universities HEIs have significantly strengthened international cooperation; The level of integration of Central Asian universities into the European higher education area has also increased.

The participants strongly believe that addressing the challenges that were identified would help to keep moving forward, further enhance the impact of the CBHE action and establish a sound bases for fundamental, innovative changes, which are of great importance not only for the development of higher education institutions, but also for Central Asian countries' higher education systems, thus, for their social and economic progress.

Summary results of discussions on the impact of the projects in 5 workshops.

The discussion showed that the Erasmus+ CBHE and ICM projects in universities in five Central Asian countries had a significant impact on the modernization processes in higher education in the region. Given that the first two sections generally illustrate the diversity of project impacts, the main challenges and recommendations are summarized below.

External challenges:

The achievement of project objectives, in particular, of Structural ones, and their sustainability depends not only on the efforts of project teams, but also on the willingness of national authorities and university administrators to accept and implement the proposed changes.

Lack of support and weak involvement of the ministries of education in project activities. There are frequent staff changes at the Ministry level, lack of mechanism for interaction between universities and ministries in disseminating and using project results at the national level.

Difficulties in implementing interdisciplinary programmes, including those resulting from the projects.

National Qualification Framework not approved in some countries. This makes it difficult to recognize each other's learning achievements at the relevant levels of education and to organize intraregional mobility.

Institutionalization of training centres created as a result of projects remains a problem in most countries.

Lack of a culture of corporate participation/involvement in determining the content of training for future graduates due to the deficit of effective mechanisms and tools to identify needs of enterprises for joint development of curricula.

Recognition of credits acquired in the EU HEIs is an issue (KG, TJ, TM, UZ).

Internal problems:

Weak regional cooperation, lack of synergy and exchange of good practices between Central Asian universities.

Some Structural Projects are implemented as Joint Projects, not going beyond the university level and not exerting sufficient influence at the national level.

Unpreparedness of team members to increase visibility and promote project results through effective strategies of dissemination and utilization of project results. Project results are submitted to the relevant bodies without proper follow-up and promotion.

Confusion of the concepts «project result» and «project impact». As a result, the projects do not focus on the impact of the project and the long-term sustainability of its outcomes.

The academic sector is not well prepared to organize cooperation with enterprises and governmental sectors due to the lack of methodology and mechanisms for networking.

Insufficient attention paid to the development of a QA system and to the integration of the international dimension into the curricula.

There are virtually no projects aimed to improving access to higher education.

Project teams are not always proactive, taking a wait-and-see attitude, awaiting instructions and advice from the EU coordinator.

Turnover of teams at the university level, weak continuity and lack of mechanism for accountability of team members to the university for the quality of project implementation.

CA HEIs are not ready to develop CBHE project proposals.

Lack of project management skills.

Potential for open and distance learning is underutilized due to the lack of infrastructure and insufficient skills of many teachers to use digital technologies.

Recommendations:

EACEA

To encourage active involvement and responsibility of Ministries of Education and other national bodies for the effective use of the results of the Erasmus+ projects it would be helpful to include this aspect in the agenda of the Meeting of Ministers of Education - participants in the Bologna Process with a relevant paragraph in the Communiqué of the Meeting to reflect the use of E+ projects in the Annual report of the Ministries of BFUG.

Continue the productive work begun towards creating a regional/national pool of experts equipped with modern methodologies and capable to participate in educational reforms not only at the national, but also at the interregional level.

Ministries of education and science of CA countries:

Include an official section on the implementation and use of the results of E+ projects in the Annual report of the Ministries of Education in the Partner Countries.

To ensure the use of the results of the CBHE projects, especially those of Structural ones, define the procedure for the participation of official representatives of ministries of education in the projects with periodic reporting at internal events.

Better use the HEREs potential to promote reforms at the national and regional levels.

To ensure the ownership of government representatives over the project results formalize the role and expected outcomes of their participation.

National Erasmus+ Offices:

To enhance project management skills of team members, organize a series of project management workshops. Use distance learning if necessary.

Organize a webinar on enhancing the impact of E+ CBHE projects at various levels.

University leadership:

Projects should be institutionalized at the university level and full support to team members provided on a variety of project implementation issues with periodic reporting at the institutional level.

The project coordinator (manager) at the institutional level plays an important role in providing the achievement of project objectives. The selection should take into account his/her professional and managerial competencies, the ability to implement the role concept of management.

Project coordinators:

Clear definition of the role and expected outcomes of the activity of university administrators in the project would be helpful.

Provide for the transfer of the experience of EU universities in the development of relevant tools (labour market analysis based on questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, etc.) and methodology for interaction with enterprises.

Ensure a systemic approach to the organization of staff development activities to address the lack of skills in areas related to the project theme (the sector/enterprise' needs survey - methodology of development of educational programmes - teaching methods - preparation of educational and methodological complex).

Coordinators and project teams at the institutional level:

To ensure effective interaction and the involvement of officials of ministries and enterprises in the joint implementation of the project identify a project team member responsible for coordinating with them.

Ensure that roles are clearly defined and team members are regularly held accountable for their assigned responsibilities at regular team meetings and events at the university management level.

Step up efforts to disseminate and promote the results of the projects and to bring information to the attention of the national authorities.

Participate more actively in the initiation and preparation of new applications.

In designing project applications include representatives of employers as full members of the consortium. This will facilitate closer integration of business partners and university specialists.

In the Project Dissemination and Exploitation Plan, diversify the communication channels and format, differentiate information according to the target groups.

In the countries where a National Qualifications Framework has not been developed, lobby and promote its development, including through the organization of seminars, conferences, Round Tables, discussion platforms with the involvement of the HEREs.