

Unofficial translation

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Tashkent

From: Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education (MHSSE) of the Republic of Uzbekistan

To: Rectors of HEIs of the Republic of Uzbekistan and coordinators of Tempus /Erasmus+ projects

In order to effectively implement the Tempus and Erasmus+ projects funded by the European Union, as well as to support the local ownership and to strengthen the role of project teams, the recommendations of the attached minutes should be followed.

Particularly, it is necessary to emphasize the need for a consistent revision of the project work plan in accordance with the "Programme for the Comprehensive Development of the Higher Education System for the period of 2017-2021", as well as the relevant Decrees of the Cabinet of Ministers on further modernisation of the national higher education system.

This document has been prepared as a result of the meeting in the Ministry of HSSE, which was organised with aim of discussion related to evaluation of project activities, and reporting procedure, as well as payment arrangements of grant funds managed by European universities–coordinators.

Deputy Minister, (signature)

U. Begimkulov

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MINUTES

Meeting in the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education (MHSSE)

Date: 25 July 2017, 15.00-16.10

Participants: Inomjon Madjidov – Minister of HSSE; Uzokboy Begimkulov – Deputy Minister of HSSE; Sarvar Buzrukkhonov – Head of Finance and Accounting Department of the MHSSE; Yakubjon Irgashev – Head of International Relations Department of the MHSSE; Aziza Abdurakhmanova – Coordinator of the National Erasmus+ Office in Uzbekistan

Agenda:

1. Financing of Uzbekistan HEIs in the framework of Erasmus+ projects and development of recommendations based on existing practice of on-going projects on payment arrangements of grant funds
2. Governance and coordination of projects by the MHSSE
3. Evaluation and dissemination of results/best practice of completed Tempus/ Erasmus+ projects

Currently, as of July 2017, in total 55 HEIs of Uzbekistan including 23 capital HEIs and 32 HEIs from 11 country regions and Karakalpakstan are involved in on-going projects of two directions of the Erasmus+ programme (CBHE and ICM), as well as 2 approaching to the end Tempus IV projects.

The reason for the meeting was the results of government audit of grant sources and its usage in two completed Tempus projects which was carried out in May 2017 at the Tashkent Financial Institute (TFI) and the Tashkent State University of Economics (TSUE). The government audit was undertaken by the Main Control and Revision Office of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the basis of the order of the Sector for Monitoring the Targeted Use of Humanitarian Aid and Technical Assistance of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The information on the audit results indicated the need of submission of reports, including final activity report along with action plan for applying the project results in accordance with the requirements provided in the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan No 251 dated of 15.11.2005.

It is the European University which has the role of Coordinator-Grantholder in all projects involving Uzbekistan HEIs. The European Coordinator is legally and financially responsible for spending grant funds envisaged for all participating universities and organisations from the European Union and other partner countries.

In addition to the mandate that is signed by Rector/Head of each HEI /organisation at the application process, after the announcement of the selection results and the start of funds distribution by the European Coordinator, a bilateral Partnership Agreement is also signed with each member of the project consortium. The agreement presents detailed information of participation and financing modalities for each HEI/organisation. The European Coordinator distributes grant funds to participating universities /organisations in accordance with the provisions of the Partnership Agreement.

During the meeting common practice of financing the Tempus and Erasmus+ projects was discussed in accordance with the project budget headings: the costs of mobility (travel costs and costs of stay in European universities), purchase of equipment and textbooks, staff costs for specific contributions to achievement of the project objectives.

It is required that on quarterly basis the project coordinators provide brief reports on the project implementation to the NCU (National Coordinating Unit of the European Union's Technical Assistance Programmes in Uzbekistan under the Cabinet of Ministers of Republic of Uzbekistan) which is responsible for subsequent submission of consolidated report to the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan covering all the EU technical assistance programmes and projects.

The following decisions have been made as a result of the discussions:

1. All on-going Tempus/Erasmus+ projects should ensure timely reaction/consideration of the current governmental decisions on further improvement of higher education by informing the European partners and review of project work plans in order to support the implementation of relevant Decrees of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan
2. In accordance with the clauses 10-11 of the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On the National Coordinating Unit of the European Union's Technical Assistance Programs in Uzbekistan" No 347 dated 29.08.1995, the MHSSE and involved HEIs of Uzbekistan should provide the NCU with interim reports on the implementation of on-going Erasmus+ projects, as well as should ensure timely submission of final reports on completed Tempus IV projects.
It should be taken into account that non-submission (as well as delayed and incomplete submission) of reports to the NCU entails suspension of NCU's assistance in processing of purchased equipment coming to Uzbekistan and visa applications for European partners within Erasmus+ projects.
3. The project coordinators of local HEIs should ensure the timely submission of reports on a monthly basis to the International Relations Department of the MHSSE on the implementation and spending level of technical assistance funds in accordance with the adopted reporting template form.
4. In pursuance of the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No 251 dated 15.11.2005, all Tempus/Erasmus+ projects and HEIs' administration should ensure the timely submission of final reports to the relevant organisations.
5. According to the generally accepted practice of implementing Tempus /Erasmus+ projects, the budget envisaged for the Uzbekistan HEIs is administrated by the European university coordinator, which provides electronic tickets, support in booking and payment for accommodation/meals of training mobility participants from Uzbekistan HEIs. These specific conditions should be discussed at the stage of project application development before submission, since the European coordinator should foresee human resources and compliance with the financial policy of their university. The majority of projects are applying this approach which has been discussed and approved by the Executive Agency in Brussels (EACEA). The European Coordinator directly pays to the company which supplies equipment planned to contribute to achievement of project objectives and delivers it from Europe. Preference should be given to the purchase of modern laboratory equipment, rather than computers and office equipment. According to the adopted procedure, customs clearance of purchased project equipment is carried out with the assistance of the NCU.
6. Based on the existing practice, which was approved by the EACEA for the local HEIs, transfer of project grant funds to individual bank accounts of local coordinators/project participants in the ASAKA bank or the National Bank of Foreign Economic Activity of Uzbekistan are allowed according to the letter /Rector's resolution of the participating university. This payment procedure of grant funds must be negotiated and included in a separate paragraph in the

bilateral Partnership Agreement. There is another example of current practice on preliminary agreed reimbursement of flight tickets and cost of stay on the spot upon arrival at the European university, which should also be stipulated in the Partnership Agreement at the beginning of the project implementation.

It should be noted the importance of providing the full package of necessary documents for consideration of a special commission in the ASAKA bank or the National Bank of Foreign Economic Activity of Uzbekistan. Individual foreign currency account for receiving grant funds can be opened only in these two banks.

7. The European coordinators should be informed that it is possible to transfer staff costs for project participants through individual accounts in the ASAKA Bank or the National Bank of Foreign Economic Activity of Uzbekistan.
8. The Deputy Minister of HSSE of the Republic of Uzbekistan Uzokboy Begimkulov, who is responsible for organisation of the system on improving the qualifications of teaching and administrative staff of HEIs, as well as the participation of all incoming European partners of Tempus /Erasmus+ projects in training courses, has been assigned for coordination of Tempus/ Erasmus+ projects' activities. Under his leadership the National Team of Higher Education Reform Experts will interact with the working groups on the implementation of specific tasks of the Programme of Higher Education Development, including on-going preparation activities for introduction of Diploma Supplement. The team's work plan and analysis of reports on the results of training seminars will be regularly discussed in joint meeting in the MHSSE.
9. Currently, MHSSE is involved in 9 out of 20 on-going Tempus /Erasmus+ projects. Taking into account the importance of regularly review of project implementation and necessary adjustments needed considering current governmental decisions on higher education, it is necessary to appoint a contact person within the MHSSE for each on-going project (the list is attached).
10. In order to disseminate best practice and further introduction of project results, each completed and approaching to the end Tempus /Erasmus+ project should prepare detailed information (with publications) for the consideration of the Rector's Council. The package of materials should be forwarded to the Rector's Council through the National Erasmus+ Office.
11. Current minutes to be translated into English and brought to the attention of the European coordinators and the local coordinators/the project team members in HEIs of the country.

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Uzbekistan

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