



**MINUTES
of the kick-off meeting
ERASMUS + Project
Advocacy Establishment for Students through Ombudsman Position (AESOP)**

Project number: 561640-EPP-1-2015-1-AZ-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP

The kick-off meeting was organized at Akaki Tsereteli State University, Kutaisi, Georgia on December 5-7, 2016. The purpose of the meeting was to get acquainted with the partners and project plan; select project management team, Project Coordination Board, Country leader and Quality control Team; to develop a common understanding of the objectives, tasks and results, discuss in detail activities proposed in the Project, to plan activities and exact dates of the meetings foreseen within the Project, to clarify project management, administrative and financial issues.

December 5, 2016

Part I

The Rector of Akaki Tsereteli State University George Gvartadze, the Director of Development from Khazar University Raziya Isaeva and the Head of ATSU Foreign Affairs and Development Office and Coordinator of the Project David Gegetchkori welcomed all the participants and wished productive and successful work. Raziya Isaeva additionally expressed her satisfaction that the Project was saved, coordinator was found and wished successful implementation of the project activities. David Gegetchkori reported that representatives from Nakhchivan State University, Warsaw University, Minho University and Middlesex University will not be able to attend the Kick-off meeting.

Part II

Short presentation of all partners, their institution/organization took place in the following order:

Akaki Tsereteli State University (ATSU), Georgia

Qafqaz University (), Azerbaijan

Nakhchivan University (), Azerbaijan

Khazar University (), Azerbaijan

Ganja State University (), Azerbaijan

Caucasus University (), Georgia

Kyiv National Economic University (), Ukraine

Georgian American University (GAU), Georgia

L'Aquila University (), Italy

Poltava University of Economics and Trade (PUET), Ukraine

University of Jyväskylä (), Finland

Austrian Ombudsman (), Austria



During the presentation participants were informed of the death of the Rector of Kiev National Economic University. All the Partners honored the Rector with a minute of silence.

Part III

Martha Lawry, Assistant to the Founder, Khazar University presented the Project. The overview on goals and objectives, work packages and schedule was done.

Part IV

Presentations made by EU partners were delivered. Representatives from EU institutions in brief presented the best practices in the field and shared experience of the EU country in implementation of Ombudsman Position

Presentations were made by Josef Leidenfrost -Austrian Student Ombudsman; Alessandra Imperatori – University of L’Aquila; Angus Nurse - Middlesex University London (via skype call), Tiina Makela – University of Jyvaskyla



December 6, 2016

Presentations by Program Countries on current situation in the field were made by Rima Mammadova-Khazar University, David Gegetchkori – Akaki Tsereteli State University and Maria Lysenko –Poltava University.

Khazar University: Students with problems do not know where to go and the ones who speak out about conflicts and issues are faced with bureaucratic systems that lack sufficient human resources to adequately investigate student complaints and administrative/academic needs.

Akaki Tsereteli State University: Students rights are Students have been given modern services at ATSU and generally few and minor challenges arise, but there are still gaps in Student Services in the area of student advocacy. Students support and development services (SSDS) established in the frame of a previous Tempus project does not include measures to protect students' rights or raise their awareness of roles and responsibilities while dealing with their own administrative issues.

Poltava University: There is lack in the resources to deal with problems and academic issues arising during the study period. There is a need in an ombudsman office established on university level.

Presentation was made by Lika Glonti, Coordinator of the National Erasmus+ Office (NEO) Georgia on main issues regarding successful implementation of the project. Discussed topics included Partnership Agreements, Visa requirements, Project registration procedures and peculiarities, Cost reimbursement modalities, contact persons for administrative and financial issues, Financial Accountability issues, rules for usage of disclaimers, logos and etc., monitoring procedures.

The focus of the second day of the meeting was the project WPs, tasks, activities, responsibilities and deadlines foreseen in the framework of the project. What follows is the overview of the activities and the agreed deadlines and responsibilities:

AESOP Review-work plan: roles of each institution, presentation on WP descriptions and roles
Rima Mammadova (Khazar University)

WP1 Needs Assessment of Regional Partner Universities

Lead organization: Khazar University

In accordance with the activities foreseen in the WP1 Project Coordination Board, Country Leader and Quality Control team were selected.

Project Coordination Board: coordinator from each university is a member of the Board

Country leaders: Akaki Tsereteli State University, Khazar University and Kyiv National Economic University are chosen as country leaders

Quality control team: The members of the team are European partners with participation of the project Coordinator – Akaki Tsereteli State University. The coordinator of the team is L'Aquila University (Italy) who expressed their readiness to be a coordinator as they have experience with Quality issues and can provide good support on Quality Control. Due to the fact that 3 European Universities were not at the meeting, a decision to contact them and ask to vote for or against L'Aquila University as the Coordinator was made.

Communication strategy was discussed. A question of one platform was raised. From two advised versions (Dropbox and Google drive) Google drive was chosen. It was considered as a) the most convenient way to



share, edit and follow the changes in the materials uploaded. B) more common and available for all the partners.

Proposal to consider Moodle as one of the platform was made by Khazar University. Possibilities of its usage will be checked by Khazar University and discussed with the IT Department.

Work plan will be prepared. Khazar University will share draft of the plan with Akaki Tsereteli State University.

1.2 Needs assessment - December 19, 2016 - January 31, 2017

Decision to prepare a questionnaire, conduct a survey among students and staff is made.

A questionnaire on google forms will be prepared by Khazar University to collect data from randomly selected at least 100 and not more than 200 students from each university as well as for 10-20 staff members. The questionnaire will be in English. Quality control team will study the questions and give their recommendations. A database of current situation will be created.

1.3 needs assessment report- February 1-28, 2017

Each partner university separately will prepare a report that will give opportunity to Identify current situation and problems. Written suggestions and recommendations for Ombudsman offices will be done.

WP2 Identify best practices and prepare guidelines and Training materials

Lead organization: Akaki Tsereteli State University

2.1 Conducting workshop at Khazar University for regional partners (March 15-18, 2017)

3 participants from each regional partner university will participate in a 4-day-workshop instead of 5 days proposed by the initial version of the project budget.

Needs assessment results will be discussed that will enable partners to come to consensus on what areas should be focused on in observing EU practices and to make plans for EU university visits. Results of the workshop will be sent to EU partners to get preliminary recommendations on best practices.

2.2 Identification of best practices and preparation of Guidelines and Training Materials (April and May, 2017)

Travel to Universities of Warsaw, L'Aquila and Minho will take place. Duration of the travel is 5 days; number of the participants is 4 persons from each regional partner university.

Due to the fact of absence of representatives of Warsaw and Minho Universities additional consultations with have to be done in order to make sure the Universities are ready to host regional Universities. The issue will be decided by email.

2.3 Report on best practices in student advocacy in EU universities (June 2017)

Each regional partner will prepare report on

-best practices as a result of observations

-ideas which practices and principals can be applied directly and which will need to be adapted in order to suit the countries and cultures where they will be implemented

2.4 Preparation of recommendations for policy makers (July-September 2017)



Recommendations for policymakers and university administration in regional partner countries based on best practices (all consortium) will be prepared. It will be done for each country individually and country leaders will be responsible for the finalization of the recommendation provided.

EU partners will be available for consultation and feedback. Taking into account July Holidays in Finland and August for the majority of the rest of the countries, publication will take place at the beginning of September 2017.

2.5 Preparation of training course for ombudsmen (September - October 2017)

Training course for regional partner universities will be created (all consortium members)

Training plans in native languages will be prepared that will be used during training of staff members after the establishment of Ombudsman offices. (one for each regional partner and country leaders are responsible for monitoring)

Consultation and recommendations from quality control team.

2.6 Training course materials for students (October 2017)

Prepare guidelines for training students and staff on rights, roles and responsibilities related to student advocacy and using ombudsman offices in regional partner universities. Non-EU universities will create training plans (one for each country; Country Leaders are responsible for monitoring) in their native languages for use during training of all university members after ombudsman offices are established. All EU members will be available for consultation and to make recommendations.

WP3 Quality control, evaluation and monitoring

Lead organization: Quality Control team and ATSU

3.1 Quality control, evaluation and monitoring (December 2016- November 2018)

Quality control, evaluation and monitoring of all activities of the project will take place. The activities will be carried out by the Quality Control Team in cooperation with Country Leaders and the Project Coordination Board.

WP4 Establish ombudsman offices and train ombudsman in non-EU partner universities

Lead organization: Caucasus University (Georgia)

4.1 Facilitate acceptance of guidelines on university level in each partner university (November 1, 2017)

- Need to write a procedure as part of the guidelines to show how the ombudsman should be found/selected (based on best practices)

4.2 Establish ombudsman offices in regional partner universities (January 2018)

Establishment of ombudsman offices in regional Universities will take place in January 2018. Taking into account tender procedures the preparation will start in December 2017

4.3 Hold training for ombudsmen (Feb 2018)

- trainings will be carried out according to the training materials developed in activity 2.5
- training will be conducted by each regional partner university
- Guidelines (prepared in 2.6) are not single-use; they are for the lifetime of the ombudsman office



WP5 Pilot training for university members in new student advocacy procedures

Lead organization: Khazar University

5.1 Pilot training (March-April 2018)

Pilot training program in student advocacy will be conducted for faculty, administration and students of Khazar University in accordance with the training materials developed in activity 2.6)

5.2 Prepare report on pilot training program results (May 2018)

The report will be prepared by Khazar University

5.3 Workshop to discuss training results and make necessary changes (June –July 2018)

The workshop will be held at Khazar University, trainings results will be discussed and necessary changes will be made before full training takes place in each University in the region.

WP 6 Training program for university members

Lead organization: Poltava University of Economics and Trade

6.1 training programs in each university (mid-September 2018)

- Each regional partner university will run a training program in student advocacy for students and staff working in collaboration with the new ombuds in accordance with the training materials developed in activity 2.6

6.2 report on training program results (October 2018)

the reports on the results of trainings will be prepare by each regional partner university
feedback and recommendation from EU partners on results of trainings will be given

The issue of the duration of the project arise. This issue will be discussed by David Gegetchkori and representative of European Commission Carolina Garbaliauskaite in January.

6.3 Hold survey in regional partner universities to measure impact of ombudsman offices (November-December 2018)

Random survey among students, administrators and staff of the Universities will take place to measure the impact of ombudsman offices and changes in attitudes toward student advocacy.

Identify focus group (repeat the survey with the same people as the first time or with the same level group) to do interviews to get qualitative data as well. Testimonials and feedback on services.

Reports will be prepared and sent to EU partners for feedback.

WP 7 Dissemination activities

Lead organizations: ATSU and Khazar University

7.1. Design and launch project website

The issues regarding the project website will be will checked by Raziya Isaeva with moodle platform and IT staff.

Main information will be prepared in English, but summary of other information in all partner languages

7.2 Publish all guidelines and training materials



The Project web site will be updated, guidelines and training materials will be published

7.3 Raise awareness among students in regional partner universities about ombuds offices by holding seminars for students through student organizations

Seminars will be conducted to raise awareness among students in regional partner universities about ombudsman offices

Consortium will continue to discuss what kind of activities should be done for dissemination (discussion on forum)

7.4 maintain project website

WP 8 Sustainability

Lead organization: Akaki Tsereteli State University

8.1 sustainability activities

Project website

Ombudsman offices

Sustainability report

Agreements among regional partners will be signed to continue cooperation

Joining international network (ENOHE) or creating own regional network

WP9 Project management activities

Lead organization: Akaki Tsereteli State University

9.1 Project Management (Project coordinator, Project Coordination Board (PCB) and Country leaders)

-Virtual Project Coordination Board (PCB) meeting after completion of WP 1, at or before activity 2.1 workshop will be held by Skype. The meeting will be tested a couple weeks before the real meeting

-Virtual PCB and Country Leaders (CL) meeting between activities 2.3 and 2.4 (year 1, month 7)

-Face-to-face PCB meeting in Baku before activity 4.1 (year 1, month 12) in October 2017

-Virtual PCB and CL meeting at end of workpackage 4 March 2018

-Face-to-face PCB meeting in Baku at end of workpackage 5 (year 2, month 10)- June 2018

-Virtual PCB and CL meeting after end of workpackage 6 (year 3, month 6)

-Virtual PCB meeting at start of workpackage 8 (year 3, month 9)

Final meeting will be held in Kutaisi for the final conference (spring 2019)

The last presentation of the second day of the meeting was delivered by David Gegetchkori, regarding the financial issues of the project and the submission of the reports. It was agreed that partner institutions will send the scanned versions of the documents (boarding passes, invoices, etc.) regarding their visit to Kutaisi for the kick-off meeting to Akaki Tsereteli State University to Mr. Gegetchkori.

First financial report is due Feb 1, 2017.

