



TEMPUS Programme

Higher Education Reform Experts Activity Report 2009



European Commission
TEMPUS

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TEMPUS PROGRAMME Higher Education Reform Experts Activity Report 2009

This study has been produced within the framework of the European Union's Tempus programme, which is funded by the EuropeAid Co-operation Office and the Directorate-General for Enlargement.

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Introduction to the Tempus programme

Tempus is the EU's external cooperation programme that supports since 20 years the modernisation of higher education systems in the European Union's neighbouring countries. The partner countries have changed throughout the years; currently the programme covers countries of the Western Balkans, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, Northern Africa and the Middle East¹. Since the beginning, Tempus contributes to the promotion of cooperation between higher education institutions of the European Union and the partner countries, in particular via various capacity building activities. It also promotes the voluntary convergence of higher education systems in these countries with EU developments in higher education, including the Bologna Process. Indeed, the Bologna Process has become a reference point for most of Tempus partner countries by setting in motion a series of reforms to modernise higher education systems and make them more compatible and comparable.

Background

Initially covering Central and Eastern European Countries, the first phase of the programme was launched in 1990 and lasted until 1993. In those years, Tempus sought to contribute to socio-economic reform through cooperation in higher education. At the beginning, the focus was put on higher education systems in countries that later joined the European Union.

The second phase of the programme, Tempus II, covered the period of 1994-2000. During that time, the programme was extended to new eligible countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. National priorities defined by national authorities were introduced.

The third phase of Tempus was implemented from 2000 to 2006. The concept of regional cooperation was introduced during that programme period. In the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, Tempus III was extended to North Africa and the Middle East, with a view to contributing to their socio-economic development. Besides, the programme aimed at promoting inter-cultural understanding as a means to secure sustainable growth, peace and stability in the region and reinforce the intercultural and civil society dimension of the programme.

Since 2007, Tempus has entered in its fourth phase, which will be running until 2013. It puts emphasis on regional and cross-regional cooperation and on the reinforcement of links between higher education and society. The programme currently covers 28 partner countries and territories. The programme is integrated into the European Union's 'Neighbourhood', 'Enlargement' and 'Development' policies, which aim to promote prosperity, stability and security in the targeted regions. Tempus is funded by four specific EU financial instruments: the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI).

Main characteristics of Tempus

Tempus was primarily designed to contribute to the reform and upgrading of partner countries' higher education institutions and systems. Through cooperation at higher education level, the programme also aims at reinforcing civil society, promoting democracy, as well as enhancing mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue between the EU and its partners. It combines a "bottom-up" approach - putting the initiative on higher education institutions - and a "top-bottom" approach in so far as national and regional priorities are established by national authorities for each partner country with a view to maximise the impact of the programme on higher education reform processes.

To achieve its objectives, Tempus IV supports three types of projects.

¹ Tempus partner countries (2010): Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo under UNSCR 1244, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Russia, Serbia, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

- *Joint Projects* are specifically designed for individual higher education institutions and fund multilateral partnerships between EU and partner country institutions. They notably aim at developing, modernising and disseminating new curricula, teaching methods and teaching materials, enhancing quality assurance mechanisms in institutions, modernising the governance and management of higher education institutions, strengthening their role in society and their contribution to the development of lifelong learning and reinforcing the 'knowledge triangle' of 'education-research-innovation'.

- *Structural Measures* directly contribute to the development and reform of higher education systems in partner countries, to enhance their quality and relevance to the world of work and society at large, and promote further convergence with EU developments in the area of higher education. They can focus on issues linked to the reform of governance in higher education institutions (qualification systems, quality assurance mechanisms, autonomy of institutions...), or foster links between higher education, the world of work and other sectors of education. They can include studies and research, the organisation of national, regional and thematic conferences and seminars, the provision of training, policy advice and the dissemination of information.

Both Joint Projects and Structural Measures are funded through calls for proposals. Yearly, approximately 70 projects are funded. The financial support varies from 0.5 to 1.5 million EUR.

- *Accompanying Measures* are funded through Calls for Tender or Framework Contracts. They comprise of dissemination and information activities such as thematic conferences, studies and activities which aim to identify and highlight good practice or consultation of stakeholders, for example. They are also used to fund the National Tempus Offices and the activities of the group of 'Higher Education Reform Experts' in the Tempus partner countries.

Management of Tempus

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) is responsible for both the management and the implementation of Tempus, under powers delegated by the European Commission. EuropeAid Co-Operation Office and Directorate-General for Enlargement allocate funds directly to the Executive Agency to manage the programme and thus have the formal responsibility for supervising its activities. In line with their mandate, Directorate-General for External Relations contributes to the strategic orientations of the programme and Directorate-General for Education and Culture brings in its sectoral expertise and facilitates linkages with the European Union's internal higher education reform policies.

1 – Background

Tempus partner countries face similar challenges in adapting their higher education systems and exposure to European experience and international cooperation is considered beneficial in initiating or deepening structural reforms. It is for this reason that, in 2007, the Commission launched a new initiative within the Tempus programme to support national teams of Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs).

The experts are appointed by the national authorities in Tempus partner countries. Depending on the country, the number of experts differs from 1 (in Turkmenistan) to 13 (in Israel). So far, 100 experts have been proposed by the National Tempus Offices and accepted by the Commission/the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (as from 1st April 2009) in coordination with the local authorities who approved the proposal and the EU Delegations who gave their endorsement.

The main purpose of the HEREs is to provide a pool of expertise to promote the modernisation of higher education systems and Bologna objectives in partner countries. In doing so, they reinforce the international dimension of the Bologna process. All experts are higher education professionals such as heads of higher education institutions or academics. In some countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine), students are also part of the national teams. This offers them the opportunity to become active partners in the process with all other stakeholders and is to be encouraged.

The HEREs' objectives are :

- to contribute to the training of academic staff and university administrations in their country;
- to participate actively in the development of policies and reforms in their country;

National teams of HEREs are the equivalent in partner countries of Bologna experts' teams from EU Member States which exist in the framework of the EU's Lifelong Learning programme.

Based on a peer-to-peer approach, they support and work closely with their national authorities. In terms of operational support, they can rely on their respective National Tempus Offices (NTO). NTOs include a set of activities for the HEREs in their work programme and have a portion of their budget earmarked to support the HEREs' actions. Budgetary programming dedicated to the HEREs' activities is around 6 000 euros per year for each country. Regular meetings between the HEREs and NTOs are held to discuss current activities, the experts' participation in higher education events, to exchange information on higher education issues and to schedule future activities in the work plan managed by the NTO, including its corresponding budget.

UNICA - the Network of the Universities of the capitals in Europe - has been entrusted by the Commission/ the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency to support the HEREs' activities and local initiatives within the framework of a service contract. UNICA sets up information, training and coordination facilities, working closely with the European Commission and the HEREs.

Two main types of activity are performed both at local and international levels by the HEREs. They attend various high level EU meetings (together with the Bologna experts of the EU Member States) as well as regional and national events. All the activities aim mainly at information, training, networking, updating and briefing the HEREs using a "people to people" approach, one of the EU's neighbourhood policy priorities.

2 - Activities at local level

2.1 Training

Various events (conferences, seminars, roundtables, meetings) were organised in partner countries to promote higher education reform, in keeping with the spirit of the Bologna process. At these events, HEREs shared their expertise and experience on higher education challenges, as well as Bologna approaches and tools with relevant local stakeholders (higher education representatives, students, enterprises, etc.). National teams participated in Tempus info days as well.

In Jordan, 4 roundtables were organised in the main public universities to discuss the concrete implementation of Bologna principles.

In Moldova, HEREs trained a group of local experts, representing different universities as professional auditors for internal quality evaluation of study programmes.

In Ukraine, HEREs chaired sessions on the national qualification framework and Bologna after Leuven during the TEMPUS info days.

The Kazakh HEREs' team had also a special session during the Info day. Information leaflets were prepared, published and distributed among universities (available in e-form on the NTO website). In the leaflet, a special section is included – Corner on the Bologna process, and information on selected activities performed by the HEREs.

In Russia, methodological workshops were held. The workshops addressed the following topics: qualifications framework for higher education as a tool to ensure transparency of degrees and qualifications, quality assurance at European universities, enhancing Bologna and Tempus networking and dissemination.

Partner countries on site case-study visits and University "peer review" programme.

Case-study visits performed by EU Bologna experts aim at sharing experience, analysing and assessing the concrete implementation of Bologna tools in partner countries.

The University "peer review" programme, aimed at higher education institutions in partner countries, is complementary to the site case-study visits. An in-depth review of how they are operating is performed and, following the visit, recommendations are sent to the Rector and the Ministry. To fit with the philosophy of the exchange of best practice, these missions are carried out by a mixed group of EU Bologna experts and HEREs. They usually cover various aspects of university governance and curriculum development.

For example, the Head of the French Bologna experts group conducted a case-study visit to Armenia in 2009.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, an EU Bologna expert gave a presentation about ECTS/DS/Bologna-compatible curricula during a visit to a local university. Two peer review programmes also took place to support higher education institutions in finding the best approach to organise the third cycle of studies according to Bologna principles.

In Russia, EU experts delivered training courses for fifty participants from various higher education institutions.

2.2 Counselling activities and support to higher education reforms

HEREs provide higher education institutions with relevant information and expertise when they request advice or assistance; in particular in terms of quality assurance systems, the three-cycle system and recognition issues.

They are also directly involved in reform processes/policy making to modernise the higher education sector in partner countries.

In Lebanon, HEREs have formed a "counselling body" that carries out activities related to supporting reforms derived from the Bologna process.

The whole team of Georgian HEREs is involved in an international project "Capacity enhancement for implementing the Bologna action lines". This project was launched in 2009 in order to strengthen the institutional capacity and legal environment of the Ministry of Education for the full implementation of the Bologna process in Georgia. HEREs participate in all components of the project as local experts.

In Kyrgyzstan, HEREs had a working meeting with members of the Parliament so as to increase their awareness of the Bologna process and to prepare documents to harmonise legislation ready for a move to the two cycle structure.

In Montenegro, HEREs helped the Ministry of education to assess the new higher education system by formulating recommendations and suggestions for its improvement and to implement mobility policies.

It is worth noting that these counselling activities are more effective when HEREs benefit from the open support of the relevant Ministry, which is still not the case in all partner countries. Indeed, involvement of the relevant government bodies is important to fully mobilise local higher education institutions.

2.3 Communication, dissemination and outreach activities

HEREs actively take part in various communication and dissemination activities to promote reforms to modernise higher education systems and to raise public awareness.

Communication and dissemination.

In most of the Tempus countries, HEREs are involved in the content development and drafting of information material, such as the country fiches prepared on the initiative of the Executive Agency. They also participated in career and student fairs to promote information material.

In Armenia, HEREs have their own newsletter. So far, 3 issues have been published.

In former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the national team of Higher Education Reform Experts prepared and distributed information materials such as the ECTS Users' Guide and Bologna Newsletter to the universities; both were prepared and published in Macedonian and Albanian).

In Serbia, in order to familiarise the academic community with the work of the national team, promotional materials (leaflets and brochures) were printed and distributed. A HEREs' team visual identity logo and webpage were also created. All relevant information related to the HEREs' action-plan was published on the website. In addition to regular coordination meetings, usually held in the Serbian Tempus office, members of the team organised electronic communications so as to share important decisions when it was not possible to organise meetings.

In Egypt, a comprehensive report was drafted summing up all activities of higher education reform and the potential of synergy/harmonisation/complementarities with the

Bologna process. This report included a comparative analysis between the Egyptian and European systems.

In Uzbekistan, dissemination seminars were systematically held after international training.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a Bologna guide specifically designed for students was prepared by HEREs.

In Croatia, two local dissemination events were organized at two universities dealing respectively with "Reform of Doctoral Studies" and "Learning Outcomes and the Qualifications Framework".

Outreach activities.

HEREs are the contact body for all stakeholders involved in higher education issues who want to liaise with the authorities. They also interact closely with EU Delegations, NTOs and foreign counterparts. Some HEREs gave interviews with the local media as well.

In Armenia, some HEREs attended a dinner organised by the French Embassy in Yerevan and participated in local TV shows to talk about higher education issues.

In Serbia, the chairman of the National Council for Higher Education and a member of the Accreditation Commission are both members of the national team of higher education reform experts. Their cooperation and exchange of information and experiences in the framework of their HEREs' activities promotes cooperation between the two national bodies they represent.

3 - International activities

Various international activities took place in 2009. Most of them were based on best practice exchanges and training opportunities. The NTOs identified the most suitable HEREs to attend the different events; taking into account their profile, specific competences and the level of the ongoing reform of the higher education system in their country.

3.1 Activities organised by UNICA

Training seminar "Making Mobility Happen", (30-31 March 2009).

This seminar held in Rome aimed at raising awareness of "Learning mobility" and new mobility policies. Participants gained new insights thanks to best practice and group discussion (collaborative learning) and sharing Bologna experts' knowledge about how to design policies in the field of mobility. Specific workshops dealing with mobility and motivation, mobility and recognition of qualifications and mobility and languages experience were held. Several students from Tempus partner countries also participated in the meeting which provided HERES with an excellent opportunity to discuss one of the most pertinent issues of the European Higher Education Area with the main beneficiaries of this policy.

Training seminar "Competences for the Future", (23-24 October 2009).

This seminar held in Warsaw was the opportunity to gather around 30 HEREs and 120 EU Bologna experts, allowing them to further discuss issues related to the topic of employability in the prospect of the Lisbon agenda objectives with representatives from higher education institutions and the world of industry/business. The experts participated in various working groups dealing with work placements, dialogue with stakeholders, university strategies, skilling-up and curriculum development and mobility. Based on a peer-learning approach (initiation of a "buddy" system bringing together experienced experts from the EU Member States and experts from Tempus partner countries in order to exchange ideas and discuss specific issues), this two-day seminar boosted the "community feeling" among the participants, promoted networking and also allowed them to meet with students invited and have discussions with them.

On the fringes of the Warsaw training seminar, a roundtable was organised by the Executive Agency. It was the opportunity to give the floor to the HEREs in order to have their feedback on the seminar as well as their activities and recent developments in the higher education process in their respective countries. In this respect, it showed that many activities carried out in Tempus countries actively involved HEREs who work in close cooperation with their Ministry. It also helped to identify Tempus partners' needs in terms of access to information, EU technical expertise and event content (tailor made expertise and training material). The results of this meeting and the needs expressed have been taken into account by the Executive Agency in proposing activities in 2010.

Virtual community.

Established in 2008, the virtual community, using a peer-to-peer approach, facilitates contacts and exchanges between EU Bologna experts and HEREs. They benefit from a set of specific communication tools to support their activities. Thanks to the virtual community, HEREs can identify and contact relevant EU counterparts and exchange and disseminate information material.

3.2 Regional training seminars

A regional conference (gathering HEREs from the ENPI South region) on university governance, curricula reform and the 3-cycle structure was held in Tunisia in November. Another regional conference on the Bologna process and higher education institutions took place in Central Asia in March (problems and prospects of higher education system reforms) co-organised by the Ministry of Education of Kyrgyzstan and the NTO. This event was attended by HEREs from Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. In the Western Balkans, two regional seminars on higher education reform key issues were organised with representatives of HEREs' teams from countries in the region. A regional network of HEREs was created.

3.3 Networking activities

Alongside the Bologna ministerial conference in Leuven (28 – 29 April 2009), the first Bologna Policy Forum gathered higher education Ministers or their representatives including HEREs of 6 Tempus partner countries who came along with them (Egypt, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco and Tunisia) to develop a strategy specific for the external dimension of the Bologna process. It provided the opportunity to discuss how worldwide cooperation in higher education can be enhanced through the Bologna objectives.

More than 500 higher education stakeholders working in quality assurance (including some HEREs) from 54 countries gathered in Copenhagen for a conference on the theme: "Creativity and Diversity: Challenges for quality assurance beyond 2010" (19 – 21 November 2009). This event was co-organized by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European Students Union (ESU), the European Universities Association (EUA) and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and supported by the European Commission (Lifelong Learning Programme). Through a series of plenary and parallel sessions the event provided a platform for discussion and exchange of experiences and best practice among the main stakeholders in quality assurance. During the event, a wide range of case studies, both from universities and quality assurance agencies were presented as well as the EC's progress report on quality assurance.

In addition, a number of case-study visits based on a tailor-made technical expertise in EU countries have been carried out. HEREs can observe the concrete implementation of the Bologna principles in EU higher education institutions. It fosters exchanges and allows participants to discuss concrete issues. It contributes to the international exposure of the HEREs.

4 – Conclusions

Teams of Higher Education Reform Experts have proved to be an effective instrument in accompanying the education reform process in the Tempus partner countries. In line with the Commission's approach, HEREs are positively involved in activities with multiplier effects e.g. training seminars, 'training the trainers', exchange of best practice activities and the virtual community.

In most of Tempus countries, there is a voluntary convergence of higher education systems with EU developments in higher education, including the Bologna process. The Bologna process has become a reference point by setting in motion a series of reforms to modernise higher education systems and make them more compatible and comparable. HEREs are actively involved in this process. In their respective countries, they are able to draw the attention of the academic community and governments to Bologna issues, coordinate discussion about the modernisation of higher education systems and give guidance and advice to local officials. Indeed, thanks to their skills and expertise, HEREs contribute to the exchange of good practice and dissemination of relevant information. It also enables their country to benefit from an international window by belonging to virtual, trans-national and local networks.

This success has led to an increase in demand for promotional events on Bologna developments in partner countries, which attests to the fact that the Bologna process has become a real model of inspiration. Therefore, national teams are a key element in conveying the Commission policy message in terms of higher education and in helping to bring the higher education systems in Tempus partner countries closer to the European Higher Education Area.

Thanks to these excellent and promising results, the Agency, in coordination with the DGs of the Commission, have decided to consolidate the EU's support to HERE teams in 2010, so as to be able to respond better to the needs expressed during the 2009 roundtable. A reinforced support structure is fully operational for the 2010-2011 period.

In a nutshell, with a limited budget (EUR15 000 to 20 000 per country over the last three years), the HERE teams have delivered multiple and valuable impacts/outcomes serving both the Tempus programme and the European Union cooperation strategy with neighbouring countries.

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