EF.NGO/32/04
3 June 2004

ENGLISH only

12th Economic Forum "New challenges for building up institutional and human capacity for economic development and cooperation", Prague 31 May - 4 June 2004

Working C3: Supporting academic education and research through cooperation and exchanges

Tempus in Uzbekistan: benefits of long-term cooperation with EU universities

Education reform in Uzbekistan

The radical reform process in education sector of the Republic of Uzbekistan started in Uzbekistan in 1997 by adoption of new laws “On Education” and “The National Programme for Personnel Training” (NPPT). The importance of the reform of the education system should be considered in the context of the demography of Uzbekistan: according to a UNICEF Monitoring Report for 2003 out of a total population of 26 million people, 11 million are less than 17 years of age. This is 42% of the population.

The NPPT provides a long-term strategy for strengthening education and developing a continuing education system in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The programme is to be implemented in three stages:

First stage (1997-2001): a new legal, personnel, scientific-methodological and financial basis for reforming and developing the education system has been created; the implementation of the NPPT has become an integral part of the activities of all public, scientific, industrial and non-governmental structures; the new system of continuous education, including new types of secondary specialized education (professional colleges and academic lyceums) and two-level higher education has become fully operational etc.

Second stage (2001-2005) is aimed at full-scale implementation of NPPT and is based on monitoring the results of the previous years; it was particularly oriented to overall improvement of education quality and an upgrading of pedagogical staff.

Third stage (2005-onwards): improvement and further development of the programme.

The fostering of international cooperation has been defined as one of the tools to achieve the programme objectives.

Tempus in Uzbekistan

Tempus is a European Community programme designed to stimulate cooperation with Eastern European and Central Asian countries, the Western Balkan countries and the Mediterranean countries in the field of higher education. The programme is based on an understanding that universities are of particular importance for the social and economic transition process, as well as for cultural development; they are also pools of expertise and human resources and provide for the training of new generation of leaders.

Since the start of the programme in 1994 the European Commission has allocated a total of 11.1 million Euro to Tempus in Uzbekistan.

During the period of programme implementation, 27 out of 63 Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in Uzbekistan have participated in the programme and 43 projects have been financed in the fields of: University Management, Applied Sciences and Technologies, Economics, Humanities and Social Sciences, Management and Business, Education and Teacher Training and Institution Building.

The national priorities, which have been jointly determined by the European Commission and the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education were used to help the programme to respond to actual needs of local universities and national strategy in HE.

Tempus is considered to be the largest international programme for higher education reform in Uzbekistan by providing the foundation for long-term interuniversity cooperation.

Since the beginning of the programme about 80 European universities from 13 EU Member States have cooperated with the HEIs in Uzbekistan. This cooperation has been implemented through 13 one-year preparatory projects, 11 two-year projects and 19 three–year projects. The total maximum amount of grant for a three-year project is €500 000, for a two-year project - €300 000. This substantial period of joint activities has given considerable results and has resulted in committed and sustainable partnerships.

Curriculum Development projects are particularly important for Uzbekistan as there are clear links with the implementation of NPPT and in particular the introduction of a two-level HE system. For example, inputs of development of economics related subjects could be seen by the outputs of 7 projects related to Agricultural Economics, Social Economics, Business and Management.

Tempus projects have also included the upgrading of higher education facilities by equipping computer and training laboratories, resource centres and updating library sources.

Several Tempus projects were implemented in the field of University Management, including library management and the introduction of an information management system. The international relations offices established in 7 HEIs throughout the country helped the local universities to start and then extend their international cooperation.

Mobility

Tempus projects have created opportunities for many people, senior and junior, university staff and students, academics and administrators, ministry officials and the representatives of non-academic partners organizations, to visit EU universities for considerable periods, allowing them to upgrade their knowledge, skills and to foster the joint development of curricula and new teaching materials. It was possible also for the European partners to come to Uzbekistan with advanced methodology, knowledge and standards.

Development of Human Capital

A number of bilateral exchange links have been established within Tempus projects with growing numbers of staff learning about international projects, their management and application procedures. There are now many people on the teaching and administrative staff with relevant communication and language skills, who capable to design and manage projects. Also a number of language training and IT courses were organized for project participants.

Previously all responsibilities for the management, coordination and monitoring of project activities were the prerogative of the European partners. Nowadays three Tempus projects are coordinated by local university staff, which strengthens their role in project implementation and ehnaces project ownership. It should be stressed that Tempus has had an impact on radical changes in project development and has enabled local partners to undertake the appropriate needs analysis, to plan relevant activities based on specific needs against a realistic background.

Involvement of universities in the regions

Thanks to Tempus the regional universities started a process of internationalization and established cooperation not only with the EU partners, but with the profile universities throughout the country. For example all agrarian universities have been involved with Tempus projects in the field of curricula development in Agricultural Economics, Environmental Science and Water Resource Management. The regional universities in Samarkand and Karshi worked together on the introduction of IT in teacher training. Two resource centres established by a Tempus project in both universities in 2000 are providing services for teaching staff and students.

Cooperation within Central Asian region and beyond

Tempus makes a considerable input to strengthening regional cooperation: there are 4 on-going regional projects in the field of Energy, Water Management, Tourism, Social Economics with involvement of partner universities and non-academic organizations from Russian Federation, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

Sustainable partnership

Tempus is an equitable and mutually beneficial partnership programme and has proved to be the first step towards future international cooperation. In most cases the Tempus projects have been followed-up by a new project, bilateral agreements or other forms of donor support. For example the Tempus project on information management system in the National University of Uzbekistan has been followed up by grants from NATO and the Soros Foundation. Moreover during the project implementation the university administration demonstrated its support by making an additional investment of USD 35 000 to install a glass fibre network.

European partners have appreciated the cooperation with local universities and are looking for other sources and opportunities to continue their cooperation. There are still sustainable partnership existing, after two or three years of joint activities. The partners continue to support student and teacher exchanges, scientific cooperation, the production of joint publications and provide invitations to conferences.

Dissemination of best practice

There are many positive outputs from Tempus projects, that can be evaluated, further developed and disseminated among other HEIs both within the country and in partner universities in Central Asia. For example, a one-year Energy Management training course has been developed at the Tashkent State Technical University that has attracted great interest local industrial enterprises, whose employees have been successfully trained by Uzbek universities. Now this project team is involved in an on-going Tempus project aimed at the creation of a University Network in the field of energy in cooperation with partners from the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

It should be noted that dissemination activities can be implemented in the framework of the recently introduced new instrument of Tempus cooperation – Structural and Complementary Measures.

Tempus input

Tempus projects in Uzbekistan have had an impact on:

- curriculum development and training, development of Master's and Bachelor's programmes, and on the overall introduction of two-level HE system
- modernization and development of teaching materials
- restructuring of university management
- providing universities, teachers and students with the skills and qualifications needed for the transition period
- strengthening links with industry and society
- the establishment of sustainable academic partnership

During 10-years of activities of the Tempus programme in Uzbekistan, it has provided considerable and tangible support in process of internationalization of the higher education system and therefore it has greatly assisted the overall education reform process in the country.

Aziza Abdurakhmanova
National Tempus Office (NTO)
Europa House, Uzbekistan
aziza@europahouse.uz
http://www.tempus.europahouse.uz