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### PRESS- RELEASE

On January 19, 2022, with the participation of the project coordinators and working groups, as well as representatives of the quality working groups of all participating universities, an online session was held with an independent international expert of higher education, Professor of the Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Nazokat Kasymova. She announced the results and recommendations based on the external evaluation and other questions on Quality Assurance.

Professor Nazokat Kasymova presented "Summary report on the independent external evaluation of the mid-term phase of the project for the period from March 2020 to September 2021."

Observation and analysis were carried out using a specific evaluation score: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The design, implementation and results of the project were evaluated.

The project evaluation was carried out to examine the institutional analysis to achieve the project results and to inform about the current development measures:

- progress;
- achieved results;
- allocation of funds.

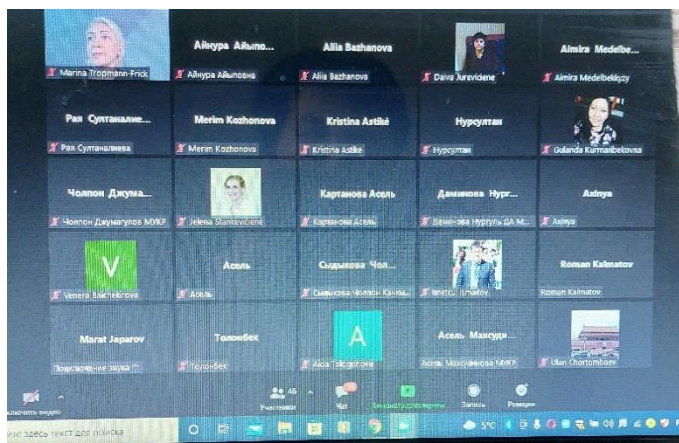
This mid-term assessment was made on the basis of the documentation. It is noted that work is being done, but it is not fully documented. These are the main documents, the project application, the logistic matrix, the work plan of the project, the reports of each university, the minutes of the meeting, the summer school program. Based on the analysis between project results and indicators, the focus was on the risks. Based on these risks, certain recommendations were made.



The key terms of the external expertise:

- Inputs or resources. The financial, human, and material resources to be used for the development intervention.
- Activities or processes. Actions to be taken or work to be performed through which inputs will be used to produce specific outputs.
- Outputs. The products, capital goods and services which result from the activities.

- Use of outputs. The expected use of the outputs by the recipient, esp. the target groups/HEIs.
- Outcome. The expected achievement of the objectives to which the development intervention is intended to directly contribute.
- Impact. The expected achievement of the goals to which the development intervention is intended to indirectly contribute.



The objectives of the project were set clear and detailed.:

- Key stakeholders at the end of the project should receive some training through workshops, trainings and webinars.
- Innovative teaching methods should be mastered by all partners. It was assumed that the curricula should be modernized, and must necessarily include the ECTS method.
- Online resources should also be designed in the context of curricula.
- Cooperation between universities of Kyrgyzstan and European partners.

Specific project objectives and indicators.

Specific project objective 1: Modernization of existing doctoral programs and development of new programs that meet the standards of the European Higher Education System.

Indicator: the number of PhD programmes in the target HEIs modernized on complain with EU standards.

Specific project objective 2: Enhancing research competences of academic staff and building innovative research expertise in Kyrgyzstan.

Indicator: Research competences of academic staff of the target HEIs increased towards innovative research expertise.

Specific project objective 3: Improvement of administration of the PhD programmes.

Indicator: Management of the PhD programmes of the target HEIs is improved.

Specific project objective 4: Promotion of the PhD culture among academia, stakeholders and wider society in Kyrgyzstan.

Indicator: PhD programmes (research and innovative culture) promoted among academic staff, stakeholders and wider society in the country.

The first indicator is marked: Each university has its own tasks, so there is no question here that one university is better than another. Someone focuses more on achieving the first and second tasks, other universities are focused on other tasks. Therefore, the roles of each university were spelled out in the application. To present, there are a certain number of developed and modernized programs. European partners shared their experience. The programs were developed based on the competencies that European universities could provide, through a comparison of the situation and this is a good continuity approach.

According to the analysis the great advantage of the project is the variety of specializations in the project. This shows that the methodology can be used by universities with different directions. This is a

big plus, but at the same time it is a big challenge. It is not an easy process of administering such a project, it is difficult to achieve certain results.

Program accreditations will be covered in the next report, after additional material is received on the program accreditation process in Kyrgyzstan.

Electronic resources. The Moodle platform works quite well.

Information sessions were organized online.

English language courses were held at all universities. Participation is good.

The summer school was organized at a good level. A total of 53 specialists took part.

The equipment procurement process was delayed. But this is a normal practice due to internal procedures.

As for the indicator on mobility, difficulties remain due to the pandemic. It is proposed to strengthen internal mobility. In this part, it is necessary to redistribute resources to organize mobility among local universities.

The logistic matrix of the project is going well. The project management is good. It can be seen that experienced and flexible administration.

For a complete assessment of the work of quality assurance teams, in addition, their reports are needed.

As a result, the progress of the project is insufficient. Not enough information. It should be worked on.

Risks and assumptions:

1. Lack of funds in the partner universities to motivate staff in PhD programmes and keep young specialists in the HEIs.
2. Weak collaboration with other universities and networking.
3. Non-involvement of enterprises/ research and analytical centers into PhD curricula/ modules development.
4. Local resources in some cases may not be sufficient to ensure EU standards.
5. Lack of cooperation with employers to organize research conferences and colloquiums.
6. Lack of follow-ups to disseminate PhD programmes values and approaches widely among stakeholders and public.

Recommendations:

1. Need to activate online communication and discussions between the partner universities (online courses, platforms for students and faculty staff).
2. Conduct a qualitative assessment among PhD students to receive their feedback and comments.
3. Need to strengthen student innovations and motivation for the PhD programme to ensure the number of students enrolled.
4. A focus should be done on PhD student innovative projects and employment.
5. Additional resources for PhD students.
6. It is necessary to intensify the dissemination of information / products of the project among potential doctoral students.
7. Need to activate focus on ECTS component to integrate it more into curricula package.
8. The need for student research publications as a result of the project.
9. Sustainability of the project in the context of the university.

## Conclusions:

1. Modernization of the PhD program within the framework of national policies and standards.
2. New PhD program competencies are developed by partner universities.
3. The level of cooperation and networking between project partners is improving.
4. The project provides good opportunities for cooperation between local universities.
5. European partners review the PhD program and comment on methods for modules and courses.
6. Syllabuses for the PhD program include a ECTS component.
7. Universities in Europe provided best practices on the Quality Assurance Management system.
8. The project demonstrates cooperation between different areas, which allows the PhD program to be developed to high standards.
9. The project encourages the development of the b-learning platform, which will be useful in post-COVID conditions.
10. Active participation of research councils / unions of European partners in the implementation of the project.