

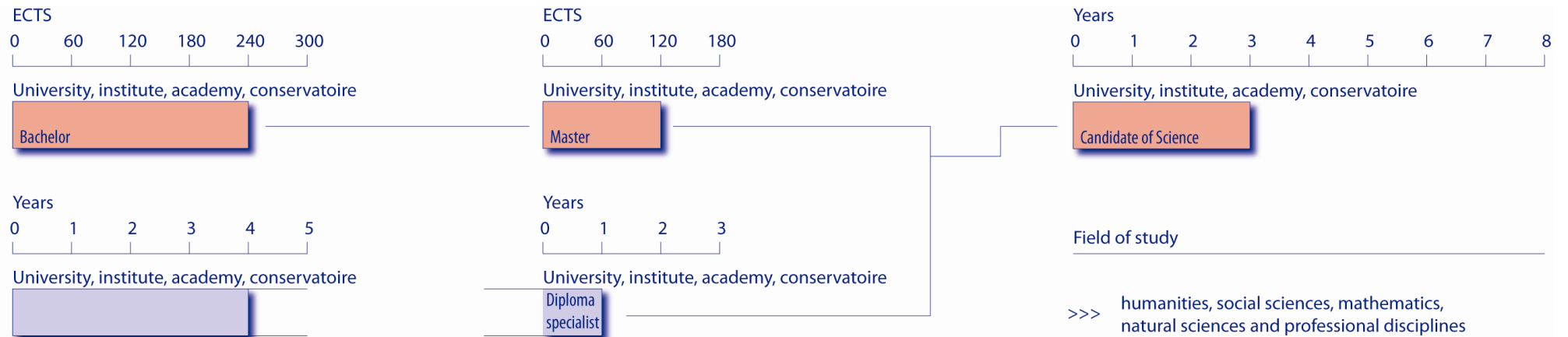


HIGHER EDUCATION IN ARMENIA



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The higher education system in Armenia



- Most common length of a Bologna cycle
- Other length of a Bologna cycle
- Programme outside the typical Bologna model
- Professional programme

ECTS
Credits according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

		regulated at national level	decided at institutional level
ALL	programmes have admission requirements	▼	▲
SOME		▽	△

Source: "Focus on Higher Education in Europe 2010 - The impact of the Bologna Process" (Eurydice, 2010).

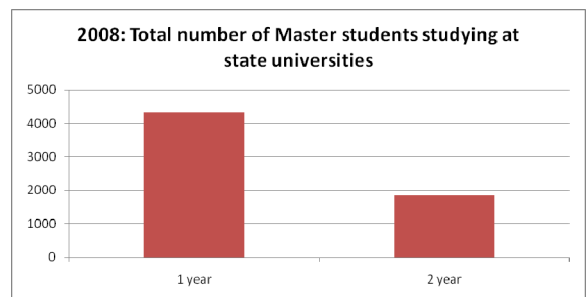
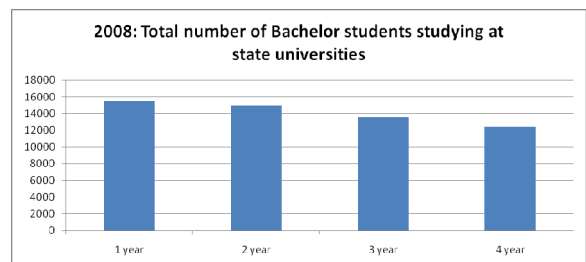
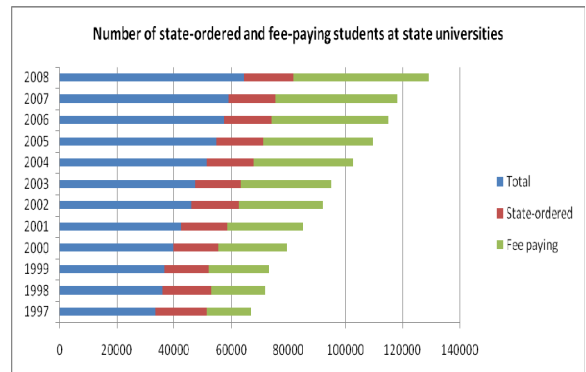
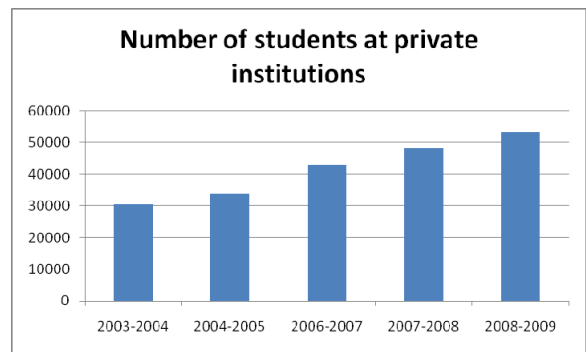
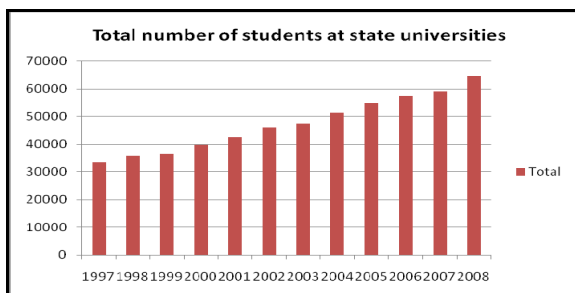
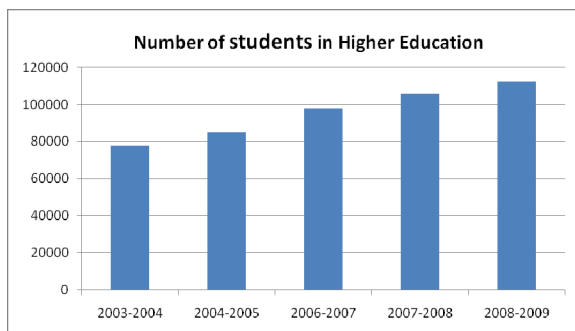
- *Academy* (education), the activity of which is aimed at the development of education, science, technology and culture in an individual sphere; it conducts programmes preparing and re-training qualified specialists in an individual field, as well as postgraduate academic programmes.
- *Conservatory*: higher education institution preparing specialists in the field of music, providing qualification development and postgraduate academic programmes.

The higher education system in Armenia is overloaded by the number of higher education institutions, both state and private.

State higher education institutions operate under the responsibility of several ministries but most of them are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Science. In total there are 26 state higher education institutions, of which 16 with their 14 branches belong to the system of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES); 4 HEIs founded by interstate agreements and state participation, and funded by the MES; 2 HEIs in the system of the Ministry of Defense; one higher education institution in the system of each of the following Ministry/Bodies: Police, Ministry of Emergency Situations, Civil Service Council, Mother See of Holy Etchimiadzin.

The number of private Universities currently is counted to be 67.

Some figures on students' involvement in Higher Education.



2. Distribution of responsibilities

The main external stakeholder that claims significant formal power and influence in the Armenian higher education sector is the Ministry of Education and Science which is the authorised state body for education and responsible for developing and implementing state policy/strategy and for legislation in higher education. The Ministry is also a source of funding and exercises an oversight and auditing function.

Higher education in Soviet Armenia was highly centralised and strictly controlled by the

government. Nowadays, it is still a highly regulated sphere. However, the general tendency is to confine the state to general supervisory functions. At present, higher education institutions are autonomous in determining the main spheres of activity, adopting budgets and supervising their execution, introducing new majors and upgrading existing ones, adopting curricula and teaching methods. Rectors and deans are now elected by the academic community of each institution rather than being appointed by the Ministry as was the practice under the Soviet regime.

Higher education institutions and the state seem to share governance of the system, but responsibilities seem tangled and sometimes unclear. The Government issues a state seats order for enrolment by specialty and by institutions as well as appropriate funding.

Higher education institutions can establish quotas for free and paying tuition. The division is based on the total quotas for academic admissions allocated by the Government providing unpaid education for at least 10% of admission figure for each major.

The Ministry defines state educational standards, issues licenses and state credentials; draws up the list of the specialties provided; develops the state order for colleges and universities; approves the admission rules for state and private accredited vocational and higher education institutions and supervises their implementation; conducts state accreditation according to the institutions and their specialties (with no regard to the organisational-juridical and ownership forms of the institutions).

The State Licensing and Accreditation Service is the only intermediate body established by the Ministry and operating in the area of the central accreditation system.

The National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA), established on December 28, 2008, is an independent foundation for promoting quality at higher education level.

The Council of Rectors of State Higher Education Institutions and the Council of Rectors of Private Higher Education Institutions are advisory bodies to the Ministry.

3. Governing bodies of the Higher Education Institutions

The governing structures of higher education institutions are defined in the charters of the institutions. Their governing bodies are the Council of the Institution, the Academic Council and the Rector. The Council of the Institution is a corporate governing body which is created in

accordance with the charter of an institution and responsible for the overall management and organisation of the institution. Composition and membership of the Council are defined in accordance with the regulations issued by the government. The Academic Council is defined in accordance with the charter of an institution and deals mainly with academic and scientific issues. The power and operational regulations of the Academic Council are also defined by the charter. Day-to-day management of an institution is under the responsibility of its Rector, who is selected by the Council of the Institution in an open competition/voting process defined in the charter and in Armenian legislation. The results of the election must be approved by the government.

According to the Law, higher education institutions are answerable for their activities to students, the community and the state. Compliance of their activities with the goals assigned by their charters and legislation is controlled by the Ministry of Education. However, it should be noted that up to date there are no explicitly established regulations and procedures for the accountability of higher education institutions.

4. Financing

State institutions receive state financing, which cover partially their expenses. Another part comes from fee-paying students.

Higher education institutions are almost autonomous financially. After the annual budget projections of the institutions are drawn up, by the end of each calendar year, they are discussed and agreed by the Council of the Institution and then forwarded to the Ministry. Institutions have the freedom to allocate and spend as required within the funds generated from non-state sources.

In practice, higher education institutions receive annual funding from the state which is largely determined by a formula. Traditionally the formula is input oriented. Criteria like the number of students enrolled are used as the main input data. Public funds for teaching activities are provided to HEIs as a lump sum (block grant) for the whole set of university activities, except research. HEIs are therefore, within very broad and general limits, free to distribute these funds internally at their own discretion, as long as the funds are used for the purposes for which they have been provided. Institutions also have the freedom to retain and spend freely all sums earned from non-government sources, to carry forward underspending and to absorb any overspending from future funds within reasonable limits.

Although teaching activities (especially in graduate programmes) and some fundamental

research activities are linked, the funding formula in Armenia does not include research elements. Thus, state appropriations only enable them to carry out teaching and related activities but not research.

Tuition fee levels for both domestic and international students can be set freely by the institutions and money is retained without affecting the budget allocation from the government. Today, non-state revenues prevail in the income structure of both state and private higher education institutions (over 72% and 93% correspondingly) and, probably, will continue to rise in the future. At the same time, the financial management system of higher institutions in Armenia does not comply with the requirements of the market economy.

Nowadays, private higher education institutions do not get any state financing which gives some advantages to state institutions and restricts the private institution's competitiveness.

5. Students' contributions and financial support

Fees

Since the 2006/2007 academic year full or partial student grants have been awarded to first-year students of state HEIs, based on the criteria set by the admission requirements of the Republic of Armenia. Through the next years of studies tuition fees may be covered in the form of a grant, which is merit-based. Tuition fees are paid by all students in private institutions regardless of their social or financial status. To relieve somewhat the burden of low-income families in financing their childrens' HE a tuition fee compensation system is operated by state HEIs (private institutions usually do not have a discount system). The Law on Education mandates that state universities provide partial or full compensation of tuition fees to at least 10% of tuition paying students, taking into account their social status and need, as well as academic achievements. Discounts are also made on the basis of disabled status. The amount to be discounted depends on the category type and varies from 20 up to 80%.

Armenia does not have yet a student loan system.

6. Licensing, quality assurance and accreditation of institutions and/or programmes

The National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA) is an independent foundation for promoting quality education at higher education level, established on December 28, 2008. ANQA is founded and subsidised by the Armenian government and is projected to be financed

through entrepreneurial initiatives. It is governed by a board of stakeholders and is independent of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and institutions at higher education level.

The objectives of the newly established Centre are to:

- Accredite the quality of programmes and provide that decision to the Ministry of Education and Science for state accreditation;
- Conduct academic audits of HEIs, evaluate and accredit HEIs, provide those decisions to the MES for state accreditation of HEIs;
- Evaluate the quality assurance systems of HEIs and make recommendations, etc.

7. Admission

The Law on Education and the Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education envisaged some significant changes in the admission and selection procedures by introducing unified secondary school final examinations, which are held at "knowledge assessment centres" set up to replace centralised admission exams. It is expected that this system will ensure relatively fair and more transparent selection conditions.

8. Organisation of the academic year

The academic year is usually composed of two semesters, beginning in September and ending in May. There are mid-term exams scheduled in October and March of the respective semesters and a final exam at the end of each semester.

The formal weekly workload (contact hours) that students are expected to carry out depends on the type of programmes and differs considerably from institution to institution within the country, but common practices are as follows: for Bachelor programmes - 28-32 hours per week (sometimes up to 36), for Master programmes - 16-18 hours and for postgraduate (Doctorate) programmes - 4-8 hours.

Starting from 2008 all educational programmes in Armenia have been based on the ECTS. Two universities started to issue Diploma Supplement to both Bachelor and Master degree programme students.

9. Curriculum content

The curriculum is defined at institutional level based on state standards. There are both compulsory and core subjects. Compulsory subjects comprise the following disciplines:

Armenian, Foreign Languages, Armenian History, and Civil Defence.

As for access to the third cycle (*aspirantura*) the procedure includes the following exams: a foreign language exam through international tests, a computer test and a core subject. Upon the completion of *aspirantura* one receives the Degree of Candidate of Sciences (*Gitutyunneri Teknatsu*). However, in the State Engineering University of Armenia upon the completion of the Doctorate programmes students are awarded the degree qualification Researcher in Engineering. Upon completion of the *Teknatsu* Degree, a graduate may choose to continue studies in *Doctorantura*, leading to the Degree of Doctor of Sciences (*Gitutyunneri doktor*), which consists solely of individual research.

10. Assessment, progression, certification and degree

Assessment is based on a mid-term exam and an exam at the end of the semester, upon which the final mark is defined. The criterion for students to progress to the next semester/year of studies is the availability of at least a satisfactory final mark (8 out of 20). On completion of their studies students receive Bachelor/Master Degrees in different fields (e.g. a Bachelor degree in Economics, a Master degree in Political Science). The access procedure to the second cycle of studies is based mainly on the marks earned during Bachelor studies and the necessary documentation to be provided to the Committee.

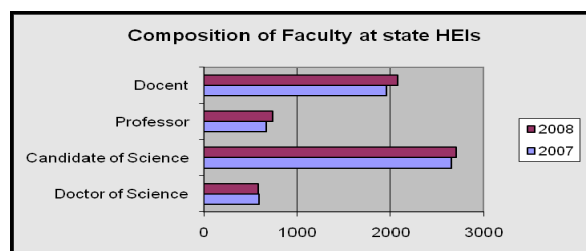
There is no defined path for the recognition and accreditation of prior experiential learning.

11. Academic staff

Staff, according to legislation, is divided into the following categories: Professors, Docents, Candidates of Sciences and Doctors of Sciences.

Staff is selected by open competition.

In addition, contract procedures exist at institutions giving working opportunities from one to five years. After the contract expiry date an additional contract can be signed with a staff member of from 1 to 5 years duration.



12. Research activities

After independence, S&T in Armenian HEIs was weakened considerably, and contact with colleagues from the former Soviet republics was interrupted. Universities, for the most part, have become teaching institutions with minor research capacities; teaching and research have been artificially separated. This is why the National Academy of Science is favoured and provides better research conditions than universities. The various research institutes coming under the NAS receive direct funding from the government, while higher education institutions receive their funding through the MES.

In Armenia, the central government continues to play an important role in financing research and development. Nevertheless, the state's contribution is not enough to cover all the necessities of the system and international funding organisations play an appreciable role. It is important to note that there is little participation by business and the private sector in funding this kind of activity. At present, approximately 1% of GDP goes to research funding.

R&D within state HEIs is funded only through research projects (a project-based financing scheme) and rarely through programme-based financing, i.e. there is no institutional or base funding for HEIs. There is also minor funding for research training of postgraduate students (PhD programme), but this support is not intended for creating and maintaining the research infrastructure concerned. HEIs are lacking in modern technological infrastructure and strongly need an internal information network and a computerised library system with access to international data banks.

Special mechanisms for the assessment of research activities within the university system have not been established, there is no specified accounting system for measuring academic research workload in order to determine the amount and types of research activities in which the teaching staff is involved.

13. University-enterprise cooperation

Cooperation between HEIs, research institutes and private businesses or state enterprises in Armenia is still rare. The situation is due to the lack of a legal system regulating such cooperation activities and also the lack of specialists in HEIs (including fundraising specialists) trained to build these contacts. It is also linked to the lack of industrial demand for the services that research institutes can offer. Nevertheless, competition is driving domestic industry to innovate and apply new technologies, to develop new products or

upgrade their quality to meet the requirements of customers or gain new market positions. Therefore, some enterprises are starting to collaborate with universities or to buy in the services of individual researchers on a part-time basis. Some others are building up an in-house research capacity or turning to emerging players that offer knowledge-intensive services.

14. International cooperation

There is no explicit policy adopted to enhance student mobility from or to Armenia. There are

very limited possibilities to encourage student mobility.

Inter-University cooperation is driven mainly through international programmes and donors such as Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, the World Bank, the DAAD, the Open Society Institute – Armenian Assistance, the British Council, etc.

II. Current challenges and needs

1. Trends and challenges

Higher education in Armenia is not fully ready for the radical structural, programmatic, organisational changes necessary for an effective and full implementation of reform. Substantial information and methodical support, and specific legislative amendments as well as revision and updating of the referred Strategy on Higher Education Reforms are needed.

In particular, attention should be given to:

- Insufficient state financing of higher education;
- A sharp drop in the university research financing and outdated and unclear mode of selection practices;
- The need to improve the integration of the overall education system;
- Corruption;
- An organisational culture based on administrative prescriptions and total control;
- The inflexible approach to the education process.
- The need for a formal approach towards educational reforms.
- The deficiency of accountability and transparency in decision-making processes;
- The marginal participation of students in the management of institutions;
- Superficial structural changes;
- The lack of incentives for quality

enhancement among academic staff and traditional orientation towards getting directives from “uppers”;

- The low level of university autonomy and infringement of academic freedoms;
- The lack of understanding among students of their own role in the education process and the absence of independent student bodies;

Therefore the policy objectives at national level are the following:

- Developing a quality assurance mechanism;
- Promoting a system of credits (such as the ECTS);
- Establishing a National Qualification Framework;
- Developing the internal and external mechanisms for quality assurance;
- Promoting Armenian involvement in the ENIC and NARIC networks and implementing the Lisbon Convention’s provisions;
- Developing a student loan system;
- Establishing a competitive fund for innovative practices and research;
- Reforming the financing mechanisms for higher education;
- Establishing links between the HE sector and the labour market;
- Setting up career centres at universities, etc.

2. The Bologna Process

The Bologna cycle structure

Level of implementation of a three-cycle structure compliant with the Bologna Process	Extensive but gradual introduction/on going adaptations or extensions		
Student workload/duration for the most common Bologna programmes			
Bachelor programmes	240 ECTS (4 years)	Master programmes	120 ECTS (2 years)
Bachelor/master cycle structure models most commonly implemented	240 + 120 ECTS credits (4+2 academic year)		

European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)

Legislation on ECTS	Legislation governing the arrangements for implementing ECTS has been introduced.
Level of implementation of ECTS	75 % or less institutions and/or 75 % or less programmes use ECTS for both transfer and accumulation purposes. Various references are used to define the credits.

Diploma Supplement (DS)

Implementation of the Diploma Supplement	Partial and gradual introduction	
Diploma Supplement issued	Automatically and free of charge	In the language of instruction and/or English

National Qualification framework (NQF)

Stage towards establishing a National Qualification Framework		Not yet started formally.
		<u>Step 1</u> : Decision taken. Process just started.
	X	<u>Step 2</u> : The purpose of the NQF has been agreed and the process is under way including discussions and consultations. Various committees have been established
		<u>Step 3</u> : The NQF has been adopted formally and the implementation has started.
		<u>Step 4</u> : Redesigning the study programmes is on-going and the process is close to completion.
		<u>Step 5</u> : Overall process fully completed including self-certified compatibility with the Framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

National Quality Assurance System

National body for Quality Assurance		
Name	National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation	
Year of establishment	2008	
Status	Independent national agency	
Principal "object" of the evaluations	Institutions plus programmes	
Body responsible for	Both public and private higher education institutions	
Main outcome of the review	X	A decision granting the reviewed institution/programme permission to operate/teach at certain levels/undertake research, etc.
	X	Advice on how the reviewed institution/programme can improve quality in specific areas

Recognition of qualifications

Ratification of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	yes	in 2004
Adoption of national laws/regulations required to implement the Lisbon Recognition Convention	no	in process
Institution responsible for recognising foreign qualifications for the purpose of academic study in the country	National information centre for academic recognition and mobility	
Institution responsible for recognising foreign qualifications for the purpose of work in the country	In most cases the National information centre for academic recognition and mobility is in charge	

III. Participation in EU programmes

1. Tempus

Armenia has participated in the Tempus programme since 1995.

1. Statistics

Number of projects in which one or several institutions in the country have been involved (as coordinator, contractor or partner)

	TEMPUS I and II	TEMPUS III	TEMPUS IV		
	1990-1999	2000-2006	2008	2009	2010
Joint European Projects	3	11	4	2	2
Compact Projects	6	0	0	0	0
Structural & Complementary Measures (Tempus III) Structural Measures (Tempus IV)	0	4	0	1	2
Total	9	15	4	3	4

Higher education institutions with highest TEMPUS participation until 2006 TEMPUS III (2006)

Institutions	Total	Number of projects	
		JEP	SCM
STATE ENGINEERING UNIVERSITY OF ARMENIA (SEUA, YEREVAN)	11	9	2
YEREVAN STATE UNIVERSITY	8	7	1
YEREVAN STATE UNIVERSITY OF ARCHITECTURE AND CONSTRUCTION	3	2	1
ARMENIAN STATE AGRARIAN UNIVERSITY (YEREVAN)	3	3	0
ARMENIAN STATE UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS (YEREVAN)	2	2	0
YEREVAN STATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY AFTER M. HERATSI (YEREVAN)	2	2	0

2. Impact of the Tempus Programme

In the light of the Bologna Process and with Tempus support, Armenian universities have succeeded in improving their administrative and organisational structures and study programmes. Universities had an opportunity

to join the international academic community approaching the European Higher Education Area.

They increased their capacities by creating working teams, establishing new contacts and changing their approach, focusing on the

younger generation of academics. In particular, essential changes took place in development of social studies. Under three Tempus projects a system for training in social work and social policy and administration was developed and Bachelor and Master degrees have been developed at the Yerevan State University. As an outcome of those activities a Department of Sociology was transformed into Department of Social Sciences in 2006. A system of distance training started up, involving some regional education institutions.

Occupational therapy came into being as a new subject and methodology for those who work in medicine, psychology and social work. A new specialty including a whole package of 17 modules based on the ECTS has been successfully implemented. It was the largest Tempus III project in Armenia with the involvement of three local ministries and other EU and Georgian partners. Over three years with a one year extension (2003-2007) a Bachelor degree course was embedded at the Armenian State Pedagogical Institute in 2005.

The Master course in Real Estate Economics and Management developed at the Yerevan State University of Architecture and Construction (YSUAC) traces its roots to seven Armenians who studied at the Royal Technical University (KTH, Sweden) several years ago. When they came back they worked partially in private organisations and the YSUAC, but they soon appeared as a young prominent group of scholar-practitioners equipped with modern educational standards.

In the sphere of University governance two ECTS projects have been implemented.

The Yerevan State University of Architecture and Construction has developed an ECTS strategy and the necessary materials for university staff. It designed a concept for new pedagogical activities based on ECTS approaches and methods.

The State Engineering University of Armenia together with the Yerevan State University developed an ECTS-compatible national credit framework including a legislation/regulatory and organisational/methodical basis. An ECTS Information Package, a format for the Diploma Supplement and an implementation plan for the ECTS have been introduced by teams from both universities.

Two projects covering quality assurance methodology, its development and implementation have been introduced: quality assurance in engineering at the State Engineering University of Armenia and an internal quality assurance system at two universities – the Yerevan State University and

the State Engineering University of Armenia.

They provided an opportunity to develop a framework for QA procedures and to disseminate the methods, techniques and principles of QA. Two international conferences enabled Armenian universities to discuss and exchange practices. Permanent units, the QA centres, have been established at both universities responsible for QA development and implementation.

A project focusing on developing environment-driven strategic planning had a great impact on the internal administration system of the State Engineering University of Armenia (SEUA). It included an evaluation of the current one and training of administration/decision makers to participate in the process and enact strategic change.

A Decision Support Centre (DSC) was established and equipped with the necessary computer hardware and software to facilitate quantitative data processing and analysis for the purposes of environmental assessment and SWOT analysis. The DSC is also used as the technical base (facility) for training programmes. An external environmental assessment was performed for the SEUA based on an analysis of the trends and changes in the political, economic, social and technological (PEST) domains concerned. Based on the results of this analysis the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) determined a set of 20 main external opportunities and 16 threats in the key performance areas of the SEUA.

In parallel, an internal environmental assessment was carried out by evaluating the SEUA's current organisational performance, organisational design and resource base. A list of 17 strengths and 22 weaknesses was determined. This environmental assessment of the University was supplemented by a cross-impact analysis aimed at measuring the effect of the most significant SWOTs on Key Performance Indicators at institutional level.

Tempus also provided an opportunity for Armenian universities to start long-lasting cooperation and strengthen their strategy for the mobility of academic staff and students. There are some good examples of continuing cooperation in establishing inter-university agreements or inviting colleagues from the EU as visiting lecturers (for example, cooperation between Lund University and the State Engineering University of Armenia since 2001). Tempus III and IV also created opportunities for cooperation on a local level. This is the case at two large universities, the Yerevan State University and the State Engineering University of Armenia.

2. Erasmus Mundus

Erasmus Mundus (2009-2013) is a cooperation and mobility programme in the field of higher education with a strong international focus. It operates through three actions:

Action 1 – Erasmus Mundus Joint Programmes (Master Courses and Joint Doctorates)

Erasmus Mundus Joint Programmes are operated by consortia of higher education institutions (HEIs) from the EU and (since 2009) elsewhere in the world. They provide an integrated course and joint or multiple diplomas following study or research at two or more HEIs. Master Courses and Joint Doctorates are selected each year following a Call for Proposals. There are currently 123 Master and 24 Doctorate programmes offering EU-funded scholarships or fellowships to students and scholars from all over the world.

Action 2 – Erasmus Mundus Partnerships (former External Cooperation Window)

Erasmus Mundus Partnerships bring together HEIs from Europe on the one hand and from a particular region in the world on the other. Together the partnerships manage mobility flows between the two regions for a range of academic levels – bachelors, masters, doctorate, post-doctorate – and for academic staff. The programme is focused on geographical "lots" of countries or regions covered by the EU's financial instruments for cooperation. These lots include most Tempus countries. New partnerships are selected each year through Calls for Proposals.

Action 3 – Erasmus Mundus Attractiveness projects

This Action of the Programme funds projects to enhance the attractiveness, profile, image and visibility of European higher education worldwide. HEIs (and other key players in the HE sector) may apply.

More information: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus

Number of students/staff participating in the programme

Erasmus Mundus – Joint Programmes (Action 1)

	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Students	-	3	6	3	6	13	6
Scholars	-	-	-	1	2	1	N/A

Nationals of the country participated in the programme for the first time in 2005 (students) and in 2006 (scholars).

Erasmus Mundus – Partnerships (External Cooperation Window, Action 2)

Year of Grant Allocation	2007	2008	2009
Undergraduate	13	10	11
Master	12	9	7
Doctorate	8	6	7
Post-Doctorate	3	4	4
Staff	5	5	5
Total	41	34	34

Institutions participating in the programme up to and including 2010

Institutions	Action 1 Joint Programmes	Action 2 Partnerships	Action 3 Attractiveness projects
ARMENIAN STATE AGRARIAN UNIVERSITY		X	X
ENGINEERING ACADEMY OF ARMENIA		X	
GAVAR STATE UNIVERSITY		X	
GUIMRI STATE PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE - GYUMRU PETAKAN MANKAVARZHAKAN INSTITUT		X	
RESEARCH SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTE OF ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF ENERGETIC		X	
YEREVAN STATE UNIVERSITY		X	
ARMENIAN STATE UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS		X	

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For further information:

- **Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)**

Unit P10 - Tempus and Bilateral Cooperation with Industrialised Countries

Postal address: Tempus Programme

Avenue du Bourget 1 (BOUR 02/017) B-1140 Brussels, Belgium

Contact: EACEA-Tempus-Info@ec.europa.eu

Web site: <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/>

- **National Tempus Office Armenia**

Postal address: 82 Sarmen St., Yerevan 0019, Armenia

Tel/fax: + 374 10 580963, GSM: + 374 91216258

Contact: sctemp@arminco.com; info@tempus.am

Web site: www.tempus.am

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¹ Armen Budaghyan, Samvel Karabekyan (Yerevan State Univ; HERE-Armenia); Lana Karlova, Ruzan Pluzyan (NTO Armenia); Nvard Manasyan (Quality Assurance Centre, Yerevan State Linguistic Univ., HERE-Armenia); Alexander Hakobyan (HERE-Armenia, Yerevan State Univ.).