

**“NATIONAL CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE”  
FOUNDATION**



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT  
ON INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF  
EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY**

**Yerevan – 2021**

## INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of European University (hereinafter referred to as EU or the University) is carried out based on the application submitted by the University. The process of institutional accreditation is organized and coordinated by «National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance» Foundation (hereinafter ANQA).

ANQA is guided by regulation on «State Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Academic Programmes in RA» set by RA Government Decree №978-N (dated June 30, 2011) and by Decree №959-N on “Approval of RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation” (dated June 30, 2011).

The expert examination was carried out by the independent expert panel formed in accordance with the requirements set by «National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance» foundation in regulation on “Formation of the Expert Panel”. The Panel is formed of 4 local experts and 1 international expert.

Institutional accreditation is aimed not only at external evaluation of quality assurance but also at continuous improvement of the quality of management and academic programmes at the institution. Hence, two issues were put forward to the local and international experts:

- 1) to conduct an expert examination of institutional capacity in accordance with the RA standards for state accreditation;
- 2) to carry out an expert evaluation aimed at quality improvement from the perspective of compliance with international developments and integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

This report comprises the observations of the expert evaluation of EU institutional capacity in accordance with the RA accreditation criteria for higher education and the peer-review observations of the international expert from the perspective of EU's integration into the EHEA.

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## SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

### EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

The expert examination of EU institutional capacities was carried out by the independent expert panel<sup>1</sup> formed in accordance with the requirements of “Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel at National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation”. The evaluation was conducted according to 10 institutional accreditation criteria set by the RA Government Decree №959-N, dated June 30, 2011.

While carrying out the evaluation, the expert panel considered that the mission of the EU is: “Ensure a strong combination of three peaks of EU symbol (education, science, services to the public), their interconnected activities and equal development, for which they should:

- provide quality and continuing education through the combination of Armenian and European best practices, and training specialists for a range of social spheres;
- establish strong partnership relations with local and international vocational education institutions for EU internationalization, gaining and exchanging experience, co-operation, including research and mobility;
- strengthen relations with the business environment dealing with issues of organizing internships, graduation paper topics and employment.”

In 2017 European University underwent an institutional accreditation process, as a result of which in 2018 the University was granted conditional institutional accreditation for a period of 2 years. EU has developed an action plan on the elimination of shortcomings based on the observations in the expert report. The University periodically submitted to ANQA a 6-month mid-term performance analysis of the action plan to address the identified issues and improve processes. In 2019 ANQA conducted a mid-term monitoring of the action plan on the elimination of shortcomings.

As a result of reviewing the documents and the site visit, the impression was obtained that European University seriously considered the issues identified during the previous accreditation, and during the last two or three years has carried out noticeable and effective work in terms of improving its processes. EU attaches much importance to the regulation of these processes in order to give definite and more targeted impulses to previous developments of inertial nature. Considering that this period of reforms was not long enough, especially since almost the entire course of 2020 was unfavourable for the ordinary course of the education system, and many planned processes were

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<sup>1</sup>APPENDIX 1: CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

underperformed, delayed or postponed, the expert panel took into account in its observations and evaluation the EU development trends.

After the previous accreditation, European University has carried out substantial work on improving the Academic programmes. The programmes have been redeveloped and reformulated in accordance with local and international quality assurance standards and requirements, and their quality assurance mechanism and practical component have been improved. Academic programmes in “Informatics” and “Information Technology” specialties significantly stand out from other programmes due to the standards presented by “Synopsis” and “VivaCell” companies and the fact that their specialists are teaching at these faculties. The rest of the academic programmes diverge at different Chairs in terms of quality. The course programmes were developed using outcome-oriented approach. Monitoring of academic programmes has been initiated at the University. The large number of courses, which increases the student workload in auditoriums and reduces the time for individual work, hinders the achievement of the learning outcomes set in academic programmes, which presupposes the acquisition of research skills. In general, research does not yet play a significant role in the structure and content of the academic programmes. The degree of reflection of labour market requirements in the academic programmes diverges for a range of programmes. Labour market requirements are incorporated mainly as a result of observations of external part-time lecturers practicing in a relevant field. Judging by the syllabi, it can be stated that, for example, in the academic programmes of IT, Economics and Management, these requirements are reflected to a greater extent and more objectively than, for example, in the academic programmes of International Relations. The issue of academic honesty and integrity is not yet given due attention because of the drawback of the research component in academic programmes. While declaring branch development a strategic goal, EU has not yet been able to match the quality of the academic programmes in branches with those being implemented in Yerevan. Benchmarking of the academic programmes, as well as the emphasis on foreign language courses, have increased mobility opportunities for students; however, some factors, such as lack of mobility openings in curricula, and failing to coordinate mobility using comprehensive and top-down approach still hinders the University from sufficient outbound mobility rates. On the other hand, the existence of academic programmes in foreign languages and their growth tendency enhance the reputation of the University and increase the opportunities for inbound mobility.

To ensure the learning outcomes of the academic programmes at European University, the lecturers at Yerevan headquarters in particular mainly have proper professional training and are motivated. They are engaged in developing the academic programmes, and are able to develop their course programmes using outcome-oriented approach and based on general requirements of the academic programmes. The proper

level of foreign language competency among lecturers allows them to improve their scientific, teaching and methodological performance (using foreign literature when writing monographs, articles, textbooks, and manuals), apply for international mobility programs, and attract international research grants. The rejuvenation policy among the teaching staff also contributes to the abovementioned statements. The normative basis for lecturer selection and assessment policy, and the available position descriptions allow increasing the objectivity of the processes of enrolling and retaining highly qualified lecturers. On the other hand, low salaries and insufficient steps undertaken by the University to diversify its financial revenue do not yet ensure the appealingness of EU, and the enrolment of more competent and highly qualified specialists in the fields of education and practice. The steps towards boosting professional development among lecturers remain unregulated and are not goal-oriented. It is essential to integrate a comprehensive training program that would emphasize both foreign language competences and research skills, research-based teaching skills, and student-centered teaching approaches and methods with innovative perspectives. Reducing lecturer workload and integrating research results into the workload will facilitate the process of enhancing research component in academic programmes. Equal development among the teaching staff of the branches, including improvement of the tools for ensuring the quality of teaching, should become a priority for the University.

To implement the academic programmes, the headquarters and branches of European University are mainly provided with the necessary premises, furniture and equipment, the maintenance and improvement of which is properly carried out if feasible. Proper attention is paid to creating a healthy and safe environment. Although the resource base for the academic programmes is provided and updated, as a rule, this provision and replenishment are not based on in-depth studies of the needs for academic programmes (for example, student-centered teaching, discussions, debates are stated in the academic programmes, while classroom furnishing remains teacher-centered). Academic programmes in IT are a model example of creating and updating a resource base considering the needs identified. Despite recent raise, salaries still remain low, because they highly depend on student fees and the decrease in the number of applicants. Some of the University's efforts to diversify its revenues are noticeable, but they are mere random steps, and not manifestations of a comprehensive goal-oriented policy. Despite certain tendencies of progress of the library, the inadequate state and pace of replenishment by modern academic literature derive from the weaknesses of the academic programmes (weakness of the research component) and the low level of some capacities of the lecturers.

After the previous conditional accreditation, European University has reconsidered and redefined its mission, aiming to training practical specialists for the

labour market. The University has adopted this mission taking into account the current list of its academic programmes. EU strategic goals, objectives and actions are broadly in line with its mission, which is in line with the National Qualifications Framework. However, the research ambitions of the University are not tangibly formulated in its strategic development plan. On the other hand, if the goals of the University were conditioned by specific aspects of its activities, it would stand out from other universities offering similar academic programmes, thus assuming more clearly defined and directed development vectors. In this regard, EU can incorporate in its mission and goals the special conditions or specific vectors of development in Shirak, Lori, Tavush and Syunik Marzes (Provinces) of RA, taking into account that the University has branches in those Marzes. The culture of introducing the line of identifying the needs of external and dominantly internal stakeholders, as well as clarifying on their positions, into the strategic planning is newly yet successfully implemented in the University. Introducing a reporting system of analytical nature, rather than factual and descriptive, with clear quantitative and qualitative indicators for assessing the effectiveness of strategic goals, objectives and actions, will enable the University to accurately assess its activities.

Since the previous accreditation, visible improvements have been made in the academic programmes and other processes at European University. However, based on the documents observed and particularly according to the impression of the expert panel received during the site visit, this circumstance results from adopting a more demanding and responsible attitude by the new rector and several key administrative officials, but not from systemic reforms in terms of governance and administration. Although EU has developed academic programme descriptions in line with the National Qualifications Framework and Dublin descriptors, and has reviewed the academic programmes using an outcome-oriented approach, it has not yet succeeded (exclusive of individual cases) in transitioning to outcome-oriented and research-based learning and teaching. If lack of material and financial resources (e.g. in terms of adequately paying teachers to provide quality education according to these standards) or the weak state of the research infrastructure play a significant part in this, then lack of comprehensive policy for revenue diversification and resource development, or lack of planning it does not inspire hope that EU will have a breakthrough in this regard, at least in the medium term prospects (though, there are some development trends). Existing human resources and professional potential are not directed to applied research, which is a sign of weakness or absence of key elements of complete quality management (continuing improvement and self-assessment of the capacities of those responsible for all segments of management; detecting as many signals as possible; decision-making based on complete data; conducting activities based on the principle of PDCA cycle; sustainable reporting system, etc.). This fact, as well as the abundance of problems inherited from the pre-accreditation

period, made the management and administration of the University more operative and situational in nature, not allowing to carry out effective and tangible work to reach especially the two peaks of EU mission (science and services to the public). The passive and formal role of the University Board of Trustees regarding this issue is imperative.

The quality assurance system in EU actually started operating in 2019, which was reflected in completion of normative basis in the quality policy, transformation of certain elements (structure and content of academic programmes) of that policy, and implementation in some other processes. The quality culture at European University has originated, there are some tendencies that testify to the process of its establishment. Quality assurance processes will be accelerated with proper administration to ensure the implementation of the Quality Assurance Manual. On the other hand, the efficiency of this administration is still in question until the proper quantity and quality of human resources involved in quality assurance are evident. It is not just a matter of coordinating quality assurance processes in EU, which is the function of one employee, who also coordinates public relations and has a substantial teaching workload. The problem is also that those responsible for quality assurance in the educational subdivisions are in fact the heads of the Chairs that already have many other functions, and the differences in their capacities can determine the degree of quality assurance for a range of different academic programmes. The Quality Assurance Department has not yet managed to address the issues related to quality management in the administrative subdivisions.

The foundations of the internal quality assurance system for external evaluation processes are indefinite. In particular, the self-evaluation is dominantly informational but not analytical, and does not provide a sufficient basis for identifying how the University perceives, analyses and evaluates its internal processes, especially those related to quality assurance.

In the academic year 2019-2020, the number of students at European University equalled 1630. In recent years, the University has ensured a steady increase in the number of students (average 12-13% in total). The number of students in part-time education system has particularly increased. EU needs to increase the number of students mainly due to the fact that EU strongly depends on student tuition fees (93-94% of revenues). Admission of students at all educational levels and their transfer to next year of studies is regulated by clear state and internal regulations. The college affiliated to the University ensures regular admission of graduates from general education programmes adapted to the requirements of the EU academic programmes. The Department of International Students carries out tangible work in the field of recruiting foreign students, integrating them and solving the problems they might face. The fact that more than half of the lecturers teach in English allows EU to attract foreign students significantly higher than the national average number of international student enrolment rate. The problems



raised by the students are addressed rapidly and efficiently. Surveys, interviews, social networks and the suggestion box are the most regulated tools for identifying student needs. The students participate in the decision-making process regarding student-related problems – with 25% representation at Faculty Councils and the Academic Council of the University; the Head of the Student Council is a member of the Rectorate. The students do not have a representative on the Board of Trustees of the University. Consultations are provided for students on courses, internships, graduation papers, and master's theses. The research component of the courses, in terms of content and organization, mainly does not contribute to research-based learning. The new activity of the Career Center is promising in terms of expanding career opportunities for students.

Although the science is considered one of the pillars of its mission, European University has not yet defined its research priorities, directions and has not identified its opportunities. In August 2019, EU validated the concept document for developing scientific and research activities, and what is noteworthy, assessed the current state of research, however, the concept document has not yet been actually applied. The specialties in the academic programmes at the University are mainly applied, and related to the state priorities, economy and labour market, so it is possible to support the solution of a range of problems with applied research projects (state, international and private), and the University has the necessary human resources for that. But as stated above and discussed in more detail below, the University has solemn shortcomings in organizing research activities. These shortcomings are manifested in almost no research infrastructure present (*Synopsis* programme and the Laboratory of the Chair of Management are unique cases), weakness in research coordination and organization functions, lack of research priorities stated and the fact that they are not incorporated in the academic programmes (e.g. graduation papers and master's theses can be conducted through research projects). The research activities of the lecturers are encouraged by multi-factor assessment requirements defined by their selection and assessment procedure, with the possibility of being published free of charge in the University scientific journal. Lack of diversified remuneration mechanisms based on research results, and the extremely low level of funding for lecturers' participation in prestigious international conferences are evidences of the low results of the University's research performance. In the last 5 years, the average number of publications of EU lecturers in the peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings (RA, CIS countries, foreign countries) equals 56, half of which was published in "European University" journal of the University. It is noteworthy that none of these journals has an impact factor.

There is a system of internal accountability at European University, however, firstly, the descriptive nature of the reports, the mere recording of facts, without proper analysis and assessments, do not ensure the main function of accountability – identifying

problems and outlining solutions. Secondly, these reports are not posted on EU website, which does not allow external stakeholders and the general public to be informed about the university performance. The EU website contains brief descriptions of the Academic programmes, guidelines and regulations on organizing the education process, links to the e-library, news and other information resources, yet some important components of the academic programmes, such as career opportunities, teaching and learning approaches, course programmes and descriptions, information about the branches are missing, which reduces the level of public accountability of the university. The University does not provide adequate resources to carry out PR and marketing processes. Although EU has started to provide training courses for secondary school principals, conduct master classes in a range of fields, organize conferences, nevertheless, the use of research findings does not provide tangible knowledge on solving the problems of the society and economy.

Over the last three years, European University has carried out profound work towards the expansion, development and internationalization of external relations, providing the normative basis for the implementation of these functions, as well as boosting external relations and integrating into the framework of international institutional cooperation. Enhancing some bilateral relations of the University, as well as its membership in the European Association of Higher Education Institutions (EURASHE) have already lead to the first positive outcomes in terms of mobility and benchmarking of academic programmes and other processes. The recent active efforts of the University within the framework of ERASMUS + Key Action 2 show the active commitment of EU staff in terms of implementing the function of internationalization. However, the problem of functional coordination of the staff involved in the internationalization process (the Department of International Cooperation is actually headed by the Head of the Career Department; lack of data on the staff of the Department), and lack of human resources hinders international cooperation of the University. The efficient operation of the Department of International Students greatly contributes to the enrolment of international students.

#### **Strengths of the Institution:**

1. Review of strategic planning and management mechanisms, and introduction of more effective tools for EU process management;
2. accessibility of management, administrative and teaching support staffs for students, and prompt responsiveness in addressing their problems;
3. existence of a cooperative environment, as well as morally and psychologically healthy atmosphere;
4. rejuvenation of administrative and teaching support staffs, and provision of specialists with foreign language competency;

5. current outcome-oriented academic programmes in accordance with the NQF and in line with other similar academic programmes;
6. the effectiveness of recruitment mechanisms for local and foreign students, and the continuing increase in the number of students in recent years;
7. high specific weight of inquisitive and motivated students;
8. involvement of employers and a significant number of teachers from the practical field in order to organize the educational process;
9. supply of resources necessary for the implementation of educational processes and high contentment rate among stakeholders;
10. expanding the scope of cooperation with local and international organizations;
11. availability of documentation basis for the quality assurance system and introduction of principles of the PDCA cycle for the implementation of EU processes.

**Weaknesses of the Institution:**

1. the imperfection of qualitative indicators and assessment mechanisms for evaluating the strategic plan;
2. existence of functional disproportions in the management system;
3. absence of long-term financial planning mechanisms;
4. indistinct development directions in the branches and their disproportionate development;
5. high student workload, which leads to a decrease in the volume of independent work;
6. weakness of the research component in the academic programmes, and insufficient level of the research work carried out by the teaching staff that is incorporated in the educational process;
7. low involvement of lecturers and students in research activities;
8. weakness of the research management system in the University, insufficient substantiation of research directions, and lack of relation to the educational process;
9. absence of mechanisms for diversification of financial sources;
10. non-analytical nature of the reports of the EU Units;
11. the imperfection of the mechanisms for establishing and ensuring public relations, and for transfer of knowledge to the public;
12. the imperfection of the quality assurance and management system in the EU branches.

## **Recommendations:**

### **Mission and Purposes**

- 1.** Clarify the EU mission based on the specifics of the Institution, as well as research and perception of state priorities;
- 2.** to increase the weight of research targeting in the Strategic Plan of the University, outlining the research priorities of the University and defining appropriate relevant and measurable actions;
- 3.** improve and strengthen the active participation of external and internal stakeholders in the process of defining and implementing the goals of the AP;
- 4.** improve accountability for the achievement of strategic goals and indicators, making them measurable and realistic.

### **Governance and Administration**

- 5.** Reform the data collection system and conduct decision-making mostly on the basis of data analysis, strengthen the components of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions in the data collection and analysis system;
- 6.** implement the medium-term and short-term planning of the administrative, scientific and educational subdivisions by the logic of the opening in the strategic programme, defining measurable indicators for evaluating the result;
- 7.** clarify and strengthen the role of the Board of Trustees in defining the development directions of EU, building the development chain, setting tasks for the University and supervising their implementation, as well as activating, effectively using the international networking connections and opportunities of the European members of the Board;
- 8.** to place the subdivision performing the quality assurance function under the subordination of the Board of Trustees;
- 9.** clarify the scope of jurisdiction and functions of the subdivisions of public relations, internationalization, career development, and graduate liaison;
- 10.** introduce mechanisms for revealing and disseminating best practices in the University;

### **Academic Programmes**

- 11.** Review the topics and outcomes in the course descriptions, as well as the study load in the Academic programmes for part-time education;
- 12.** improve the Academic programmes by eliminating overlapping outcomes in Bachelor's and Master's degrees;
- 13.** improve the assignments in the Academic programmes, contributing to the development of practical skills among students;

- 14.* review teaching, learning and assessment methods, emphasizing the assessment of practical skills;
- 15.* regularly collect data on the implementation of results in students' course papers, graduation papers, master's theses, and internship reports;
- 16.* introduce mechanisms for identifying content issues through class observations;
- 17.* develop Academic programmes for the branches based on local specifics and priority areas, promoting the training of competitive professionals.

### **Students**

- 18.* Activate the activities of the Career Center by involving more students in the events and courses organized by the Center;
- 19.* improve the mechanisms of students' involvement in research activities, promoting the development of analytical and creative thinking among them;
- 20.* find effective mechanisms to identify and address students' academic needs, and improve data collection and analysis mechanisms;
- 21.* improve the activities of the Student Council in terms of engaging more students, protecting student rights and identifying student needs.

### **Faculty and Staff**

- 22.* enrich the multi-factor system of teacher selection and assessment with criteria that presuppose the scientific and pedagogical abilities of output nature, especially emphasizing the ability to introduce a research component in teaching;
- 23.* develop and implement a comprehensive program for professional development of lecturers, emphasizing the acquisition of research skills;
- 24.* introduce a differentiated remuneration system for lecturers, emphasizing the components of mobility, research and introduction of best teaching practices;
- 25.* establish mechanisms for self-evaluation and peer evaluation among teachers;
- 26.* review the content of student satisfaction surveys by reformulating the questions according to the purpose of identifying problems;
- 27.* establish requirements for professional knowledge, skills and competencies of lecturers (focusing on interdisciplinary specialties) in the academic programmes;

### **Research and Development**

- 28.* Develop and implement a clear policy and action plan for improving research activities with qualitative and quantitative indicators;
- 29.* develop and implement medium-term and short-term plans for improving research activities, that are based on the goals and concept set out in the strategic plan;

- 30.** take initiative for active participation in external research programs;
- 31.** develop and implement new structural categories for the topicality of students' research topics and introduction of their results;
- 32.** develop and implement mechanisms for interconnection of research and educational process;
- 33.** develop mechanisms to encourage lecturers to publish their works in international scientific journals, contributing to the internationalization of science.

### **Infrastructure and Resources**

- 34.** Develop and implement the policy of planning, managing and monitoring the activities at European University in accordance with the funds;
- 35.** improve the mechanisms for distribution of funds for the implementation of the educational goals at EU, ensure distribution of the budget among the branches of the University;
- 36.** provide mechanisms for needs assessment based on in-depth study of academic programmes and resource efficiency assessment based on it;
- 37.** organize fundraising and marketing skills development events for the teaching and other staffs to diversify budget revenues, reduce dependence on fees, and attract additional investment, as well as find new partners to attract resources, and disseminate the best practice for AP allocations in EU (Synopsis) by applying it on other programmes;
- 38.** increase the input of modern academic literature, provide access to scientific databases, and introduce automation and generation systems for management processes at the University;
- 39.** take measures to establish health services and conditions for students with special needs at the headquarters and branches, and provide a dormitory for international students.

### **Societal Responsibility**

- 40.** Urgently update the official website and upload the submitted information to the website;
- 41.** establish the function of activities in terms of public relations on a professional basis, which can contribute to improving the quality of public relations, as well as to increasing the University's reputation and competitiveness as a whole;
- 42.** study the local and international practices of transferring knowledge and values to the public and introduce clear mechanisms with the prospect of visible results;
- 43.** involve the University in local and international programs of applied significance, which have a research component;
- 44.** add information and advertising materials in foreign languages on the EU website.

### **External Relations and Internationalization**

- 45.** Expand cooperation with educational institutions located in the EHEA area and implementing similar programmes, boost awareness among internal stakeholders and their engagement in international programs;
- 46.** improve and recruit human resources at the Department of Supplementary Education and Career Development in EU;
- 47.** improve ESP English among students, and increase opportunities for teaching other foreign languages; make the foreign language trainings more comprehensive for the teaching and administrative staffs, as well as for the students;
- 48.** provide writing skills for grants to students, teaching and administrative staffs; apply for other grants to attract new investments.

### **Internal Quality Assurance System**

- 49.** Improve the mechanisms of data collection and analysis at EU, emphasizing the component of qualitative analysis;
- 50.** to form a complete team for the smooth operation of the quality assurance system, including mitigation of dependence on individuals, and for building an institutional system, moving from the implementation of individual work to the implementation and management of system work, as well as to carry out activities for professional training of these employees;
- 51.** increase the engagement of internal and external stakeholders in quality assurance processes.
- 52.** support the introduction of a quality assurance system in the branches.

## PEER-REVIEW FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EDUCATION INSTITUTION'S INTEGRATION INTO EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

Examining the eligibility of the European University to integrate into EHEA, and observing the development process and the results of the implemented processes, it becomes obvious that the University has achieved a lot in the last 3 years, including investments in its infrastructure, creation of internal quality assurance system and internationalization. In 2018 EU became a member of European Association of Higher Education Institutions (EURASHE), which will allow the University to be more closely integrated into EHEA, and further developed its internationalisation plans, enhance its quality assurance system, and could lead to a further cooperation agreement with institutions in other European countries. ANQA accreditation will help EU to reassure the public, parents of the students, students, employers and other stakeholders of the quality of the Institution and its commitment to high standards. The University has built an internal quality assurance system and attempts to integrate it into all other processes: it is now part of quality culture of the University. Policies and procedures have been established for this purpose, but their implementation have been slowed by the COVID 19 pandemic and other factors. Internal quality assurance system is based on a comparable quality policy, and includes benchmarking with local and international universities, feedback from both internal and external stakeholders, and support for academic programmes and career development. Class observations in Yerevan and in branches are conducted by QA department along with the Chairs. Currently no information about QA strategy and development could be found on University website, so it is unavailable to external stakeholders. Current department of Quality Assurance is quite small and has to deal with a huge workload, which is affecting University activities. The department will also benefit from the staff development activities provided by ANQA. However, we can state that the current situation is a good start. The current credit system and credit transfer are guaranteed under the internal QA system and could lead to higher enrolment of international students.

As for internationalisation policies, the University has already acquired partners in others countries, including Russia, Italy, France and Austria. Some of the students have participated in student mobility programs, and some members of the staff have participated in international conferences. Both students and the staff participated in Erasmus programme. There are some international students, mostly from Iran and Syria, studying at EU. English proficiency is quite high among the staff and the students (above 80%), so in the future more programs could be delivered in English. Several graduates mentioned one of the areas for potential improvement that involves inclusion of language



component into all degrees along with a course on international professional communication. An interesting new development is creation of International Business School, which will organise short-term and long-term programs for business leaders both in Armenia and abroad, enabling them to continue their professional development and bring much needed cash flow for the future development.

### **Recommendations**

As mentioned in the observations, the University has created and built internal Quality Assurance system, which requires a huge workload to implement. It will help to ease this workload by providing extra support and funding to this department, and further involvement of external stakeholders in the quality processes, such as organising employer satisfaction surveys, staff development on the issues of quality (organised events and workshops run by ANQA on student assessments, programme development, etc). It needs to be shown how the teaching staff is engaged in decision making processes and what procedures are used for the performance reviews of teaching and administrative staffs. It should be stated whether there are clear criteria for it.

Information posted on the University website should be provided not only in Armenian but in English as well, if EU intends to increase the enrolment of international students. It is necessary to include information on degrees, modules and their quality, opinion of employers on graduates' work, as well as mobility programs and language support. Website upgrade will not only contribute to the recruitment of new students, but will also support university position both nationally and internationally.

The University may also benefit from further application for joint grants with its partners, which will include staff and student mobility, research development and quality improvement.

Invitations to foreign lecturers for delivering guest lectures or complete modules can benefit students and staff and will contribute to the implementation of the EU's internationalisation strategy. That could be easily organised now, as most universities in the world switched to online teaching.

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**Menum Sghomonyan**  
**Expert Panel Chair**

24 February, 2021

## DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

### COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

External evaluation of the institutional capacities of EU was carried out by the following expert panel:

1. **Menua Soghomonyan** - Associate Professor at the Chair of Political Institutions and Processes, Yerevan State University, Candidate of Historical Sciences (PhD), Armenia;
2. **Inna Pomorina** - Bath Spa University, Doctor of Economics, UK;
3. **Suren Parsyan** – Armenian State University of Economics, Chair of Microeconomics and Organization of Entrepreneurial Activities, Associate Professor, Candidate of Economics (PhD), Armenia;
4. **Larisa Harutyunyan** – Ministry of Finance of RA, Head of the Department for Coordination of Cooperation with Foreign Countries and International Organizations, Brusov State University, Associate Professor, Chair of Education Management and Planning, Candidate of Economics (PhD), Armenia.
5. **Nora Gevorgyan**– Russian-Armenian University, Senior Lecturer, Chair of World Politics and International Relations, Candidate of Political Sciences (PhD), Armenia.
6. **Alla Sargsyan** – Gavar State University, year 4 student at the Department of Finance, Faculty of Economics, Armenia.

The composition of the expert panel was agreed upon with the Institution and appointed by the decision of ANQA Director.

The work of the expert panel was coordinated by Meri Barseghyan, specialist at ANQA Policy Development and Implementation Division.

The translation was provided by Vardanush Baghdasaryan, lecturer at the Chair of English Communication and Translation, BSU.

The protocols were compiled by ANQA representative Anahit Terteryan.

All members of the expert panel, the coordinator and the translator have signed confidentiality and impartiality agreements.

## PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

### **Application for state accreditation**

EU applied for state institutional accreditation by submitting to ANQA the application form, copies of the license and respective appendices.

The ANQA Secretariat examined the data presented in the application form and the appendices in the application package.

Upon the decision on accepting the application request, a bilateral agreement was signed between ANQA and EU. The schedule of activities was drawn up and approved, which was changed twice due to the COVID-19 epidemic, as well as state of emergency and later martial law declared in the Republic of Armenia.

### ***Self-evaluation***

Within the stipulated time frame, on January 31, 2020, the University presented the self-evaluation report on institutional capacity in Armenian and in English according to the form set by ANQA, and the package of attached documents.

The self-evaluation of the University was carried out by a team formed for that purpose by the order of the EU Rector. The team included representatives from the administrative, academic, teaching staffs and students of the University, as well as the Directors of the EU branches.

The ANQA Coordinator examined the Report to verify its technical compliance with ANQA requirements. The self-evaluation report submitted by EU complied with the established common format, had corresponding documents and the appendices required by the format. Afterwards, the self-evaluation report and the package of attached documents, as well as the electronic questionnaire completed by the University were provided to the expert panel, the composition of which was previously agreed upon with the European University and was approved by the decree of the ANQA Director.

### ***Preparatory phase***

ANQA conducted four trainings on the following topics to prepare the expert panel for the work and to ensure the effectiveness of the processes:

1. The main functions of the members of the expert panel;
2. Preliminary assessment as a stage of preparation of the expert report, the main requirements for the report;
3. Methodology of observing document and resources;
4. Ethics and technique of conducting the meetings and making formulating questions.

Having observed the self-evaluation report and the package of accompanying documents of the TLI, the expert panel conducted the preliminary evaluation according to the format, identifying the list of documents, issues and questions required for additional observation, and mentioning relevant target groups or units. During the preliminary evaluation, the members of the expert panel participated in the online classes held at the University and the final certification exams.

Within the scheduled time, the expert panel summarized the results of the preliminary evaluation and formed the schedule of the site visit<sup>2</sup>. Guided by the ANQA manual on external review, the schedule included the intended meetings with target groups, close and open meetings, document observation, etc.

### **Preliminary visit**

On October 21, 2020, an online meeting with the management of the European University was held on Zoom platform. During the meeting the schedule of the site visit was discussed and agreed upon with the University, and the list of additional documents to be observed was presented; discussions and mutual decisions were reached on organizational, technical and informative questions of the site visit, as well as questions related to the norms of conduct and ethics of the meeting participants. The conditions for conducting the work of the focus group meetings and the expert panel were discussed, and the rules of conducting online meetings were clarified.

### **Site-visit**

The site visit was initially planned to be conducted in a five-day timescale, but as the meetings were held online, the five-day timescale of the site visit was substituted with six days, maintaining the same workload for the expert panel. The online site visit of the expert panel was held on November 2-7, 2020. In line with the schedule, the operations of the expert panel initiated with a close meeting, the purpose of which was to discuss and reach agreement with the external expert Inna Pomorina upon the framework of the expert evaluation, the issues to be clarified during the site visit, the strengths and weaknesses of the University per standard, the procedure of focus group meetings, and clarifying further steps.

All the expert panel members, the ANQA coordinator and the translator attended at the meetings.

The site visit initiated with the meeting with the EU Rector and culminated with the meeting with the management of EU. Focus-group meetings with the teaching staff, students, Deans, Heads of the Chairs, employers and alumni were conducted to discuss the questions, and the members were selected from a list initially provided by the

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<sup>2</sup> APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT

university. All the meetings (including the open meeting and the meeting with the members selected by the panel) foreseen by the schedule have been carried out in line with the schedule. The expert panel conducted document review<sup>3</sup>, resource observation<sup>4</sup> and focus group meetings with a range of EU Units using an online platform.

During close meetings of the panel at the end of each working day, the interim results of the expert evaluation were identified, and at the end of the site visit the main results of the site visit were summarized.

The expert evaluation has been carried out within the framework of State Criteria and Standards of Accreditation and ANQA procedures, following which the assessment has two levels: **satisfactory** and **unsatisfactory**.

### **Expert panel report**

The expert panel conducted the preliminary evaluation as a result of regular discussions based on the electronic questionnaire completed by the European University, the presented self-evaluation report and observing the attached documents, the conducted online class observations, participation in graduation exams, and observations during the site visit. Based on the observations made after the discussions, the expert panel and ANQA Coordinator prepared the draft of expert panel report. The international expert prepared an independent opinion on the peer review. The documents were translated and provided to the expert panel. The text of the peer review opinion is included in the expert panel report. The draft report was submitted to the European University on 15 January, 2021.

The European University sent its response on the draft report to ANQA on 29 January, 2021. ANQA provided the University's observations to the experts. On February 11, 2021, ANQA organized an online meeting for the University and the expert panel, during which the University's observations on the preliminary expert report were discussed.

Taking into consideration the University's observations, the expert panel prepared the final report, which was approved by the panel on 23 February, 2021.

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**Meri Barseghyan**

**Expert Panel Coordinator**

24 February, 2021

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<sup>3</sup>APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

<sup>4</sup> APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED BY THE EXPERT PANEL

## EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

**History:** European University (formerly called European Educational Regional Academy) was founded on the basis of the agreement on “Cultural, Legal and Technical Cooperation” (dated 4 November, 1995) between the Government of the Republic of Armenia and the Government of the French Republic, the agreement on “Technical Cooperation” (dated 24 July, 1998) between the Government of the Republic of Armenia and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, and the agreement on “Investment Promotion and Protection” (dated 23 July, 1998) between the Government of the Republic of Armenia and the Government of the Italian Republic, as well as on the basis of the Decree No. 978 (dated 15 October, 2001) of the Government of the Republic of Armenia.

By the Decision of the EU Board of Trustees (dated 26 December, 2017), “European Educational Regional Academy” was renamed “European University”.

The mission of the EU is: “Ensure a strong combination of three peaks of EU symbol (education, science, services to the public), their interconnected activities and equal development, for which they should:

- provide quality and continuing education through the combination of Armenian and European best practices, and training specialists for a range of social spheres;
- establish strong partnership relations with local and international vocational education institutions for EU internationalization, gaining and exchanging experience, co-operation, including research and mobility;
- strengthen relations with the business environment dealing with issues of organizing internships, graduation paper topics and employment.”

**Education:** European University provides higher education in Information Technology, Economics, Management, Finance, Tourism, Law, International Relations, Linguistics, Psychology, and Architecture.

The University currently provides higher education within a three-level education system (Bachelor, Master, 5 Postgraduate), including 15 Bachelor, 14 Master and 6 Postgraduate academic programmes in full-time and part-time education systems.

In modernizing the academic programmes, the University considers that the key components include implementation of multi-profile quality higher education academic programmes, which are in line with modern labor market requirements, are compatible with international standards, and are in line with international scientific and educational

developments, which should be aimed at improving work performance of the graduates, and should be directed at access to education, transparency of organizing availability, implementation of student-oriented, scientific and educational activities combined with advanced academic experience to train specialists capable of applying the acquired knowledge in practice in the sectors of both national economy and management of organizations.

One of the strategic priorities of EU is the modernization and improvement of the Academic Programmes.

**Research:** The vectors of aspirations the University has in the field of research and development are the implementation of basic and applied research contributing to the development of science, education and economy, the creation of knowledge through research, the introduction of these results in the economy, the transfer and dissemination of knowledge among the public, integration of knowledge acquired from research into educational process, and commercialization of those results. Consider it in terms of the goals set by the TLI in relation to the academic programmes, the teaching staff and resource development.

The aspirations of the University are different for a range of spheres of research activity. Thus, in case of research conducted by the students, in addition to obtaining practical results, the main goal is to develop research skills, and achieving this will enable students to solve problems hindering future professional development, gain practical skills at their internship while conducting research in the organizations, clarify the vectors of their future professional activities, and adopt a more targeted approach in dealing with information to be able to gain knowledge through this process. The aspirations of the young researchers and lecturers include undertaking programs to support the scientific activities of young researchers and lecturers, encouraging the scientists with the most effective performance by providing salary raises in particular.

**Internationalization:** Defined by EU Strategic Development Plan 2018-2022, an important component of the University's mission is to “establish strong partnership relations with local and international vocational education institutions for EU internationalization, gaining and exchanging experience, co-operation, including research and mobility”, for the implementation of which the priority goal of “Expansion of external relations and internationalization” has been defined, for the provision of which the following sub-goals have been defined:

- a) expansion of external relations and international programs;
- b) expansion of mobility for the teaching staff and students.

**Quality Assurance:** Defined by EU Strategic Development Plan 2018-2022, one of the priority goals for achieving the mission is “Continuing improvement of the quality

assurance system, the implementation of which will allow the University to develop interconnected and integrated activities for education, science and society that are aimed at meeting the needs of internal and external stakeholders, and the EU Department for Quality Assurance and Communication is responsible for ensuring this process. The quality assurance policy of EU is based on EU mission, and it should contribute to the effective implementation of the EU strategic goals, the compliance of the academic programmes and the qualifications awarded at EU, the achievement of the learning outcomes set for the learner, the compliance of provided education with the NQF, and increasing the efficiency of activities at EU.

***Source:** sources for the identification of facts in the above mentioned fields are the documents provided by the TLI (e.g. self-evaluation report, strategic plan, action plan, plans of the departments, concept documents, etc.)*



## I. MISSION AND PURPOSES

**CRITERION:** The Tertiary Level Institutions' (TLIs) policy and practices are in accordance with its mission, which is in accordance with the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (hereafter ANQF).

### Findings

**1.1 The TLI has a clear, well-articulated mission that represents the institution's purposes and goals and is in accordance with the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (hereafter ANQF).**

The mission and vision of the European University are fixed in the University's strategic development plan 2018-2022, according to which the EU strives to become a leading university providing, in accordance with the developing demands of the society's economy, theoretical and practical knowledge, practical skills and abilities and which will release practical specialists. The European University stresses, in its strategic plan, proportionate and interrelated development of education, research and the directions reflecting the services provided to the society.

After the first institutional accreditation of the European University in 2017, the mission and vision of the university have been fundamentally reviewed and clarified in the strategic plan 2018-2022. The observation of the self-analysis and strategic documents of the EU revealed the fact that the goals and objectives set in the previous strategic plan of the university did not have any tangible link with the real activity and capacity of the university.

The following major goals are declared in the EU strategic development plan 2018-2022:

- modernization and improvement of professional academic programs;
- increase of management and administration efficiency;
- expansion of internalization;
- regular improvement of quality assurance system;
- development of branches.

The strategic plan of the university development describes, in detail, the objectives set for the achievement of the above-mentioned goals. It became clear, after the self-analysis, observation of documents and an expert visit, that the European University marks the importance, on a strategic level, of the above-mentioned goals, particularly focusing on internalization, mobility, capacity building, expansion of its participation in international projects, application of quality assurance mechanisms. It should be mentioned that the action plan-schedule of the strategic plan of the university

development is not a complete document because of the absence of possible exhaustive actions stemming from the goals and objectives, implementers as well as clear indicators for the evaluation of the result of some actions.

The EU mission, strategic goals and objectives are localized in the 2019-2022 strategic plans of faculties, with respective deadlines, but those responsible for the implementation of the procedures and the required resources are not defined.

The EU provides academic programs on bachelor, master and postgraduate levels, there is a matrix representing the compliance of the EU PEP with the descriptors of the RA national qualifications framework. The EU mission emphasizes the directions implemented at the EU.

Although the EU mission targets the main areas of the university's activity (education, science, social services), it must be mentioned that the promotion of science is not properly reflected in the strategic plan, science does not have a status of a defined goal in the SP. Thus, the provision related to the promotion of science at the EU is defined as an objective stemming from the first strategic goal (development of research skills) in the university strategic plan.

The EU provides largely such academic programs which are offered by other RA universities, too, nonetheless neither these programs nor the mission nor the goals of the EU clearly introduce the specificity of the university from the perspective of professional directions and positioning in the labour market.

The strategic goal to develop branches limits itself with the improvement of the conditions of the building and material-technical base: the specific directions of the branches' activity are not introduced in the strategic plan of the university.

## **1.2 The TLI's mission, goals and objectives reflect the needs of the internal and external stakeholders.**

The European University marks the importance of the participation of its internal (students, teaching staff, support staff, and administrative staff) and external (state, local and international partner universities and scientific organizations, graduates, employers, applicants, parents) stakeholders in the planning, implementation and assessment of the university strategic development process.

The expert visit showed that the European University prioritizes identification of its internal stakeholders', especially students', needs, making administrative circles more available for students, giving a quick and operative solution to the students' various problems, responding to their suggestions. Students of the EU have a possibility to participate in the decision-making process on different levels of the university management (scientific council, rectorate, scientific councils of faculties), thus they could participate in defining the mission and goals of the university. Nevertheless, neither in

the self-analysis nor during the expert visit suggestions made by the stakeholders were introduced. The study of the university strategic plan and documents showed that the European University had started realisation of the previous recommendations, related to the university strategic planning, made by the expert panel, proof of this is, in particular, that the current university strategic development plan has been elaborated based on identification of the stakeholders' needs using SWOT analysis.

If the objectives and actions defined in the European University strategic development plan (which relate to the modernization of academic programs, methods and technologies, development of human resources, improvement of infrastructures and resources, etc.) evidently reflect the internal stakeholders needs, involvement of the external stakeholders is not clearly reflected in the strategic plan. Neither the introduction of the SP, nor the self-analysis shows how much state priorities are reflected in the university strategic development plan: during the expert visit the absence of the members, representing the state, of the university management council did not give a chance to understand the degree of consistency of the state approaches and the EU strategic guidelines.

After the study of the documents and expert visit, an impression was formed that as external stakeholders, in reality, are considered those lecturers who combine their job at the university with their main workplace (state, territorial governance authorities, enterprises, etc.). The connection with local employers is largely conditioned by the above-mentioned lecturers, whose involvement in the elaboration of the university strategic plan, the definition of the goals and sub-goals, nonetheless, is not clear.

The absence of an effective mechanism for contacting graduates still does not ensure the involvement of this important group of external stakeholders in the EU strategic planning. The confident, but still embryonic, the start of the university's international collaboration, which is reflected by the scarcity of foreign partner universities or embryonic states of collaboration with them does not make obvious the involvement of this group of external stakeholders in the EU strategic planning.

### **1.3 The institution has approved mechanisms and procedures to evaluate the achievement of its mission and purpose and to further improve them.**

The evaluation of the results related to the achievement of the European University mission and purposes is conducted through bottom-up accountability: on a yearly basis, reports are introduced by the heads of chairs to the faculty scientific council, by faculty Dean and heads of administrative units to the university scientific council, by the Rector of the university to the university management council. The report introduced by the Rector to the Board of Trustees contains the performance of the university

strategic development plan (the 2019 report was more detailed than the 2018 report, though in both of them the content is documentary).

The study of the EU reports showed that, although, the reports included facts reflecting the performance of actions set in the strategic plan, the scarcity of analytical components in them does not give a chance to evaluate the degree of goal achievement. The content of the report is exclusively descriptive and informative, analyses, as well as improvements planned on their basis, are almost absent (it does not evaluate whether the result is the one expected, if not, what is the reason). Generalisations and analysis of the report results are absent, too.

Evaluation indicators for the implementation of the European University 2018-2022 strategic development plan are defined in a respective (of the same name) document. Part of the actions introduced in the strategic plan are defined in such a way as to reflect quantitative and qualitative indicators of performance. The other part of actions is described in general so as their outcomes are not clearly assessable (for example, regulation of financial resources management, negotiations with foreign universities for granting a double diploma to students).

**Considerations.** The European University succeeded, as a result of expert recommendations for previous accreditation, adopt a mission and goals, which reflect more the directions of the university activity and correspond to the RA national qualifications framework, strategy, which reflects more the real capacity of the University. The scientific component, although, is not reflected with goals in tune with the ambitions defined in the strategy, planning of research, directed to development, is less than the real capacity of the University: this circumstance may take the university astray from its guidelines targeted in the strategy. In the EU strategic goals and vision, the absence of the university specificity may have a negative influence on the understanding of the mission and realisation of respective activity by the university's internal community as well as on the scope and quality of collaboration between the university and employers, partners and other external stakeholders.

At the European University, the culture of strategic planning and evaluation of results is in its implementation phase: Placing SWOT analyses in the basis of strategic planning, diversification and improvement of feedback mechanisms with the internal stakeholders will give a chance to ensure a more comprehensive view over the strategic development processes at the university.

The European University realises the importance of organizing strategic processes in the logic of the PDCA cycle. Recently, the increase of accountability mechanisms, their improvement and the increase of transparency are hopeful from the perspective of implementation of a strategic planning and outcomes evaluation culture. At the same

time, it must be mentioned that the mostly descriptive-informative nature of reports, their structure and non-compliance with the provisions of the strategic plan, absence of analysis and evaluation of results in them, as well as absence (at least, scarcity) of subjective discussions over the defined objectives in the university scientific and management boards do not ensure a tendency to lead strategic processes in the PDCA cycle, which may endanger the vision defined by the EU to become a leading university in Armenia. It must be noted as well that elaboration of short-term programs stemming from the strategy, elaboration of mechanisms for strategy evaluation by the university are considered as part of the coming planning which is a reassuring circumstance.

**Summary:** Taking into consideration the circumstance that after the previous conditional accreditation, the European University has redefined its mission and goals, ensured its compliance with the national qualifications framework, real potential of the university, development tendencies of education and labour market, apply quality assurance mechanisms in strategy implementation, internal stakeholders are partially involved in the definition of strategic objectives, the expert panel finds that the University meets the requirements of the first criterion.

**Conclusion.** The correspondence of the institutional capacities of EU to the requirements of criterion 1 is **satisfactory**.

## II.GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

**CRITERION: The TLI's system of governance, administrative structures and their practices are effective and intend to the accomplishment of its mission and purposes by keeping the governance code of ethics.**

### **Findings**

**2.1. The TLI's system of governance ensures regulated decision-making process in accordance with defined code of ethics and has efficient provision of human, material and financial resources to accomplish its educational and other purposes.**

In accordance with the normative acts regulating the RA higher education system and its charter, the governance of the European University is realised by a combination of collegial and individual governance types. The EU's highest governing collegial bodies are the EU's Board of Trustees and scientific council. Rector is the executive body. Authorities of the EU's governing bodies are defined in the EU's charter, their activity is regulated by respective charters. In the middle circles, the collegial bodies are faculty

councils, individual governing bodies are deans and heads of chairs, as well as heads of administrative subdivisions.

In accordance with its 2018-2022 strategic development plan, the increase of governance and administration efficiency is defined as EU's priority strategic goal, for the accomplishment of which the University has set an objective to introduce principles of ethics, improve organisational structure, ensure availability of information to the stakeholders, implement mechanisms for efficient management of financial resources.

The University has elaborated a charter for the scientific council, a charter on ethics, internal discipline rules, faculty charter, other acts, created an ethics committee under the scientific council. In this way the European University ensures the institutional-normative basis of the governance system.

Starting from September, 2019, a series of structural-organisational changes have taken place at the European University, particularly, ten educational subdivisions – departments – have been reorganised into four faculties, a department for post-graduate education has been established, the position of Vice-Rector on Development Programs has been dissolved, a position of Vice-Rector on External Relations and Internalization has been created with Departments for International Cooperation and Foreign Students under its subordination, a Department for Quality Assurance and Communications under the Rector's subordination has been established, etc.

It became clear after the expert visit that, although, the above-mentioned structural-organisational changes have received satisfaction from the university's management and board of directors, the University still does not have a comprehensive analysis of the efficiency of the introduced changes, especially, analysis of evaluation of their correspondence with the EU's strategic goals.

In accordance with the results of the study of the self-analysis, submitted documents and, especially, the visit, the expert panel, in relation to the above-mentioned structural-organisational changes, revealed several provisions, in particular:

- The EU marked the importance of the quality assurance of the academic programmes, reserving these functions to a separate subdivision (Department for Quality Assurance and Communications) and taking care of the employees' required professional training. It must be noted that the Department for Quality Assurance and Communications is under Rector's direct coordination.
- Quality assurance functions mainly relate to academic programmes and educational activities, and do not reveal many problems connected with the administrative staff's activity<sup>5</sup>.
- In some of the EU's administrative subdivisions, there is a functional-work imbalance – there is an overload in one place, and underload in another.

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<sup>5</sup> This section was reformulated considering the University's observations.

Individuals perform substantially extensive work out of the scope of their job responsibilities. The Director of the Department for Continuing Education and Career, taking into account the circumstance that he had previously headed a subdivision performing functions of external relations, currently continues to carry out functions of external relations and internalisation, combining them with the functions assigned to him *ex officio*. The position of Head of the International Cooperation Department is still vacant. In the Department for Quality Assurance and Communications, functions of the university's quality assurance and public relations are *de facto* combined. There are 3 full-time positions in the department, one of which (for communications) is still vacant.<sup>6</sup>

- Coordination of science development is either reserved to heads of chairs or individual initiatives. At the European University, there is no research development policy, as well as the function of coordinating that policy *operatively* with proper reporting tools. The Vice-Rector on Education and Science, being, *ex officio*, the general coordinator of research, is overloaded both with administrative and educational activities.
- Reorganisation of the Personnel Department into the Department for Human Resources is largely of nominal nature. The Human Resources Department has not been assigned to elaborate and implement a comprehensive and systematic policy on human resources involvement, retention, promotion and motivation, no care was taken about training the employees who perform the above-mentioned functions or recruiting new staff.

The expert panel, studying the submitted documents and communicating with the university management, governance council, internal and external stakeholders, and states also some findings related to the EU's governance system, in particular:

1. The EU's administrative staff, teaching staff and students are satisfied with the communication with the University's management, university management's problem-solution approaches, and interpersonal relations at the University.
2. In the self-analysis, the EU, with the increase of governance efficiency, considers its weak sides, particularly, the absence of additional financial resources, insufficient integration of the internal quality assurance system into the processes taking place at the University, considers as external challenges, particularly, dependence on tuition fees, decline in population's solvency.
3. In the EU's Board of Trustees, there are members who are not well aware of the University's problems, processes taking place here, nevertheless, have opportunities to broaden and deepen the University's scope of cooperation.

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<sup>6</sup> This section was reformulated considering the University's observations.

4. At the EU, there is no strategic budgeting, a clear and comprehensive policy on income diversification, taking into consideration the significant professional potential of the University. Some steps undertaken in this direction last year include one-year, six-month and three-month courses in business development, business management and business skills organized in the system of supplementary education, as well as start of courses at the Pearson and Foreign Language Testing and Training Department in 2021, can be positive signals to income diversification.<sup>7</sup>
5. At the EU, although, there is the position of Vice-Rector on Education and Science, still, neither in relation to results nor process, research management and coordination at the University are visible.
6. The EU's internal stakeholders are satisfied with the correspondence of business relations to the ethical rules set by the University. Nevertheless, on the website, there are no protocols or decisions of the EU's governance collegial bodies' meetings, which somewhat makes the issue of properly informing the stakeholders about the taken decisions problematic. The influence of the application of norms defined by the Ethic charter and internal discipline rules, activities of the committee on ethics under the scientific council on the institution's activity is not analyzed.
7. Some administrative officers, who play a key role in the university governance, also have a large educational load (the Vice-Rector on Internalisation teaches eight courses, the Vice-Rector on Education and Science teaches ten courses, Head of the Department for Quality Assurance and Communications teaches seven courses).

## **2.2. The TLI's system of governance provides student and teachers opportunity to participate in decision-making processes directed to them.**

In accordance with the European University's charter and other normative acts, the university's lecturers and students are given a chance to participate in the decision-making procedures related to them. Together with the acts on higher education regulation, the EU's charter, charters of the scientific council and rectorate, faculty charter, internal discipline rules are considered as the legal basis ensuring the university's internal stakeholders' participation in the decision-making procedures.

In accordance with the charter of the EU's scientific council,  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the members of the scientific council are students. Students have the same proportion in the faculty council, too. The President of the students' council is an ex officio member of the Advisory Board under the Rector – the rectorate. It became clear from the study of the documents that in the EU's scientific council students from the branches are not

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<sup>7</sup> This section was reformulated considering the University's observations.



introduced. Their participation in the decision-making procedures related to them is mediated by the students' council of the headquarters.

In the decision-making procedures related to them, the main format of the EU's lecturers' participation is chair meetings, where they have an opportunity to share an opinion about the projects under discussion, make suggestions. The lecturers, directly or in a mediated way, have an opportunity to raise their concerns in faculty councils. Nonetheless, the study of the documents and expert visits showed that the lecturers' participation in decision-making procedures is mainly about the issues related to teaching and learning.<sup>8</sup>

The charter of the EU's scientific council defines the membership of the heads of the university's branches to the scientific council. Due to the specificities of the branches' organisational structure, the lecturers as well as students' participation in the decision-making procedures related to them, is not visible.

The EU's main staff lecturers and students are not considered as members of the University's higher collegial governing body, the Board of Trustees, and thus do not participate in the decision-making procedures related to them, which, in particular, relate to the university structure, financial estimate, its performance and other issues.

The Department of Foreign Students considered a platform for revealing foreign students' needs.

There are no analyses of the EU's internal stakeholders, particularly, lecturers and students, participation in the University governance. A way of participation of the EU's internal stakeholders' in decision-making procedures related to them may be considered the application, during the elaboration of the university's strategic development plan, of questionnaires, among internal and external stakeholders, on the weak and strong sides of the university, areas subject to changes.

### **2.3. The TLI's develops and implements short, mid, and long- term planning consistent with its mission and purposes and has clear monitoring and implementation mechanisms.**

At the European University, short-term and mid-term planning is directly highlighted in the institution's strategic development plan. There is no commitment to implement mid-term and short-term planning in the list of actions of one of the goals, increase of management and administration efficiency, set out in the strategic plan. Instead, one of the plan's actions, implementation of quality assurance cycles in the activities of all the EU's subdivisions, for the goal of quality assurance system improvement may be considered as an attempt to introduce planning in the management culture.

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<sup>8</sup> This section was reformulated considering the University's observations.

In compliance with the self-analysis, the action plan set out in the university strategic development plan serves as a basis for mid-term and short-term planning for the University's subdivisions activities.

At the European University, long-term planning is carried out with a five-year strategic plan (in this case, the EU's 2018-2022 strategic development plan).

During the previous accreditation, an issue was raised - the annual work plans of the EU's subdivisions had been interrelated with the long-term strategic plan, whereas, mid-term planning as such had not been carried out.

As related to this criterion, during the previous accreditation, another issue – that indicators for goals achievement had not been defined in the plans, there were no evaluation mechanisms for strategic goals and respective analyses – was raised as well. As for the solution of the problem, the EU elaborated evaluation indicators for the achievement of strategic goals with action status (completed, in process, partially completed, etc.), outcome evaluation mechanisms and those responsible. It must be noted that in the document “Evaluation Indicators for the Results of the Implementation of the European University’s 2018-2022 strategic development plan”, there are some irregularities and inconsistencies, in terms of the formulation of some indicators and mechanisms for the evaluation of the results. For example, the evaluation indicator for the result of the action "Redevelopment of subject programs with a new format" is defined as "Development of subject programs with a new format", and the evaluation mechanism is considered "approved subject programs with a new format". The sub-objective of "Research Capacity Building" in this document is expressed in only one action, namely, "Assessment and planning of research opportunities for private, community, country and region", the evaluation of the result of which is defined as "Developed list of priority research topics", the evaluation mechanism of which was declared "approved research topics". According to the self-analysis, the EU's medium-term planning is based on the strategic plans of the subdivisions. However, the study of the documents revealed that the European University is not yet implementing medium-term planning. There is no medium-term plan that implements the provisions of the strategic development plan and has a more detailed opening. Strategic development programs 2019-2022 on the internal quality assurance of education at the EU, external relations and internationalization development strategy 2019-2022, career center strategic plan 2019-2022, strategic plan for library development 2018-2022, and faculty strategic development plans 2019-2022, although essentially stem out of the University's strategic development plan, cannot be considered medium-term, given their four-year or five-year duration.

The short-term planning at the EU is carried out with annual plans of the subdivisions. As in the case of mid-term planning, short-term planning as well is not

considered, university-wide, an opening in the university's strategic development plan. Actions introduced in the annual plans of the subdivisions are not so much based on the provisions of the strategic plan, but rather remind of actions of an operative plan, a schedule of a process organisation.

Data on the mid-term and short-term planning of the EU's branches' development is not available.

At the European University, monitoring mechanisms of planning include reports of the chairs, faculties, administrative subdivisions, Rector, where there is no analysis of the performance and which are not based on the provisions set out in strategic plans.

#### **2.4. The TLI conducts environmental scanning and draws on reliable data during the decision -making process.**

In the planning of its activities, the European University marks the importance of the study of the factors influencing its activities. In the University's strategic development plan 2018-2022, the EU has planned to study the best Armenian and European practices related to professional academic programs, requirements of the labour market.

In compliance with the self-analysis, the working group who developed the SP of the EU conducted a comprehensive study of the changes ongoing in the Armenian and foreign higher education services markets, identification of existing problems, evaluation of the efficiency of the University's activities, identification of actual directions for the University's development, opportunities for the introduction of new forms of education. However, the comprehensive analysis is not documented.

The EU, to define the directions for its strategic development, has as well carried out a SWOT analysis, in the result of which, for example, among positive factors influencing the University's activities, are considered the collaboration opportunities in scope of "EURASHE", publicly formulated priorities to help develop the regions (as related to the opportunity of developing the branches).

Nevertheless, the absence of documented variants of both this and the above-mentioned studies does not give an opportunity to understand how, with what methods the study of the external factors has been conducted. SWOT analyses have been carried out on the basis of the results obtained through surveys among the University's internal (student, lecturer, administrative employee) and external (employer, graduate) stakeholders, moreover, the simple content of the questionnaires (mark three strong sides of the EU, three weak sides of the EU, areas subject to changes) does not provide an opportunity to reveal especially the external stakeholders' needs and positions. There is no data on the process and results of the planned focus groups and interviews. The absence of analytical component in reports, in its turn, does not give a chance to reveal the connection between the carried-out analyses and planned improvements (for

example, what are the impulses the University received from the visits and other business trips of the University's management in the scope of EURASHE?).

It became clear from the expert visit that the factors influencing the University's activities are revealed mainly in the following ways:

- constant contacts with the part-time lecturers (especially those involved in economic and public sectors) who form a large number at the EU;
- meetings with employers;
- observation of the students' internship results.

The study of the documents and the expert visit, on the other hand, showed that the mechanisms for revealing the factors influencing its activities and obtaining reliable data on its activities are incomplete: Particularly:

- It became clear from the observation of the university's annual reports that the opportunities of the members of the Board of Trustees, in relation to providing impulses for the University's activities, are scarcely used.
- There are no analyses or data related to whether the University studied those of the state priorities (which, for example, are fixed in the Government's plans, Government's or departments' concepts, etc.) which, to some extent, comply with its mission and goals, education profile (tourism, service, justice, foreign security policy, information technologies, etc.).
- In the University governance system, there is no marketing and data function for obtaining reliable information on its activity, to ensure a basis for correct decision-making. Although, for the expert panel, for example, the motivation to establish a branch in Kapan was convincing (in terms of connecting the youth with the region), still it was not clear what was the data to serve as a basis for making such a decision.
- The University arranges few deep surveys, focus groups, ordered researches to reveal the tendencies of the labour market.

## **2.5. The management of the polices and the processes draws on the quality management principle (plan-do-check-act).**

In accordance with the EU's Quality assurance policy, at the EU processes are carried out with Quality management PDCA cycle. The application of the Quality management PDCA cycle principle at the European University is in its implementation stage. Policies and procedures related to governance processes were elaborated in 2018-2019. In the same period, the University's structural reform has taken place. In compliance with the self-analysis, the circumstance of the policies and procedures, requiring the application of the PDCA cycle principle, being newly implemented conditions the unclosed status of the cycle in different management areas. It became clear

from the expert visit that, due to the outbreak of the COVID19 pandemic, the significant disruption of the normal activities of the Armenian educational institutions, from the beginning of 2020, hindered the successful continuation of the planned processes at the European University as well.

It became clear from the study of the documents and the expert visit that the processes planned in the strategic plan are largely in their planning, in some cases, the implementation stage, quality assurance PDCA principles are still applied only in the processes of academic programmes implementation, and not completely. It became clear from the study of the University's general management's, administrations and educational subdivisions' activities planning and reports that they are not developed with the logic of the PDCA cycle.

## **2.6. There are mechanisms in place ensuring data collection on the effectiveness of the academic programmes and other processes, analyses and application of the data in decision-making.**

At the European University, data collection and analysis of the professional academic programs and efficiency of other processes have been regulated starting from the previous academic year. The provisions of the document "EU Feedback Policy" are not completely implemented. In accordance with the EU's self-analysis and feedback policy, data collection on the efficiency of the processes taking place at the University is carried out through surveys, discussions, meetings, seminars and workshops, as well as use of the feedback part of the University's website.

Surveys about teaching quality, satisfaction with the resources are properly conducted at the EU. Nonetheless, the analysis of these surveys, reports on the reforms introduced on their basis are either absent or, at least, not public (they are not found on the webpage).

In the academic programs, the improvements noticed in recent years are based on the consideration of the survey results as well as the solution of the problems identified during the discussions and workshops with the internal and external stakeholders. Nonetheless, no document, which would address the issues revealed during meetings with, especially, external stakeholders for a particular time period, their analysis, the connection between the revealed issues and the processes taking place at the University, evaluation of the University's capacity in relation to the solution of that issues, etc., was made available for the expert panel. The absence of qualitative analysis of the survey results on the quality of courses and teaching (although it is noted in the self-analysis that they are analysed in the quality assurance department and introduced to the Rector) does not make it understandable how much the improvement of academic programs is based

on the results of that surveys, maybe the improvement is the result of the rational approaches of those responsible for the academic programs.

The collection, analysis and use of the data on the efficiency of the academic programmes, as well as the mechanisms for implementing the policy ensuring the evaluation of all this are monitoring of the academic programmes at EU, and the reports in this regard are discussed in EU chairs.<sup>9</sup>

The expert visit showed that, in contrast to the headquarters, monitoring of the academic programs of the University's branches is weak.

It also became clear that data collection is spontaneous, and its analyses carried out in working order and are not linked with the University's goals.

## **2.7. There are impartial mechanisms evaluating the quality of quantitative and qualitative information on the academic programmes and qualification awards.**

Tools for spreading information about the European University are the EU webpage, Facebook platform, booklets. Short information about the EU's academic programs (qualification granted, profession, outcomes of academic programme and list of disciplines) is provided on the University's webpage in Armenian and English. There are no course descriptions, information about the academic programs such as career perspectives, teaching and learning methods and approaches, mobility opportunities, etc. There is no information about the career and promotion of the graduates of the academic programs. In the self-analysis, there is no data on objective evaluation mechanisms for publishing information about the academic programs and qualifications granted.

**Considerations.** It is obvious that, especially after 2017, the European University entered into a new phase of reforms, some elements of management reforms are tangible, nevertheless, the expert panel saw no concept or a reform plan, where the University's activities would be analysed and evaluated, in a detailed way. Even in the textual part of the document "The European University's Strategic Development Plan 2018-2022" the informative-descriptive part essentially predominates.

After the previous accreditation, tangible changes were introduced in the University's governance and administration areas. Mainly, the institutional-normative base of the governance system operation was completed. Structural-organisational reforms were introduced, in compliance, as far as possible, with the University's mission and strategic goals. Educational subdivisions were streamlined. Tangible steps were taken in the directions of reserving the governance of administrative and educational subdivisions to modern and motivated specialists, rejuvenating the teaching staff. All this

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<sup>9</sup> This section was reformulated considering the University's observations.

can serve as a basis to undertake confident steps in the direction of the achievement of the European University's strategic goals.

The University's management staff, heads of separate administrative and educational subdivisions are motivated and committed to improve the institution's governance system, meet lecturers' and students' needs, develop academic programs, improve the indicators of the University's activities in different areas. There is a healthy ethical-psychological atmosphere at the University, relationships between the management, employees and students are warm and cooperative. Due to the commitment of the University's management as well as a relatively small number of the University's internal stakeholders, the emerging issues are operatively resolved.

The EU realizes some of its weak sides in the increase of the governance efficiency, external challenges and accordingly plans to improve its indicators, in particular, fixing in the strategic plan regulation of financial resources management, the importance of implementing training services in the direction of involving additional financial resources.

Nonetheless, in the University's governance system, there are many problems of administrative nature, which relate to the relationships between the Board of Trustees-University management-middle governance circles, distribution of roles and functions. The Board of Trustees performs mainly the formal part of its statutory functions (approval of the report, approval of the budget, the election of the Rector, etc.). It does not define the specific directions of the University's development, does not weigh the goals and capacity of the University, does not make claims relating to the real research base of the academic programs, national priorities, development of the society and economy, tendencies of the labour market. It does not commit the University to proportionally develop research and does not assist the University to obtain respective financial, material-technical and consulting resources. The EU's Board of Trustees is not well aware of the University's problems, does not commit it to conduct governance with the culture of management, diversify income. The contribution of the Council in the EU's development becomes more evident when, through the mediation of foreign members, relations are established with foreign universities.

The science, being one of the peaks of the EU's mission triangle, is paid too little attention to from the perspectives of management and financial planning. The efficient policy of science promotion is almost absent, the funds allocated are insignificant.

At the EU, decision-making procedures are not based on reliable qualitative and quantitative data, which may hinder the achievement of strategic goals. Functional-role disproportions of some of the subdivisions may influence full execution of responsibilities and duties. The fact that the subdivision, executing the quality assurance function, is not under the subordination of the Board of Trustees (it is under the subordination of the

executive body – the Rector) makes the issue of its independence problematic. As the task of the quality assurance department is not only to identify issues related to the quality of academic programs, but also other processes, the quality of the activities of different subdivisions and officials of the university, so that department should not be constrained in its activities depending on the executive. Accountability of the quality assurance subdivision or the person in charge directly to the Board of Trustees will make it more independent and less constrained to identify problems related to the activities of the university executive body and its reporting subdivisions.

Despite the administrative workers' and lecturers' motivation and dedication to work, low wages, absence of a modern model for human resources management, research promotion policy and the insignificant amount of the allocated funds do not yet allow to recruit more quality specialists into the teaching and research processes at the University. Under the conditions of a low salary, key managers' commitment to a heavy teaching load takes much time and energy from them, at the expense of improving the quality of governance.

The University's internal stakeholders have a chance to participate in the decision-making procedures related to them due to their representation at the chairs, students' council, faculty councils and scientific council. Branch teachers and students, however, generally do not participate in decision-making, which can damage their academic and work motivation.

Conduct of analyses, by the EU, of the internal stakeholders' participation will help to reveal problems and enhance participation. Scarcity of in-depth interviews, focus groups, related to the academic programs and other processes, among the internal stakeholders also deprives the University of collection of valuable quantitative and qualitative data as related to this issue, and, consequently, using it for the increase of participation efficiency. During the development of the University strategic plan, data collected, among the internal stakeholders, on the university's strong and weak sides, areas subject to changes may ensure a superficial picture of needs identification. Questions about strengths and weaknesses are general.

Although, after the previous accreditation, at the European University the long-term planning processes significantly improved, especially in terms of applying quality assurance elements, the university's educational and some administrative subdivisions derive their long-term planning from the provisions of the University's strategic development plan, the accountability culture has started to make itself noticeable, nonetheless, the absence of indicators for the evaluation of performance results, the absence of those responsible in the plans of the subdivisions, the absence of mid-term planning at the University, the circumstance of the subdivisions' short-term planning being far from the University's strategy, as well as the non-analytical, descriptive and



documentary nature of the submitted reports influence negatively the proper implementation of the processes, depriving them of trustworthy monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The surveys, introducing the University's priorities in a more detailed way (separate rows of questions related to the state of research, internalisation, quality of the academic programs, etc.), or in-depth interviews with the institution's internal stakeholders may provide a more comprehensive picture of needs identification, and, consequently, make the stakeholders' participation in the university management efficient. From this perspective, the definition of the University's internal and external stakeholders' needs analysis can be encouraging for the quality assurance process in the University's strategic development plan 2018-2022.

The study of the local and international practice, tendencies of the labour market by different working groups of the European University, SWOT analyses, carried out for the definition of the ways for the University's strategic development and involving internal and external stakeholders, are important proofs of the implementation of quality culture at the University. Regular meetings and workshops with the part-time lecturers, working in practical areas, and the employers of some programs are a necessary condition in terms of the revelation of the factors influencing the University. At the same time, significant shortcomings in data collection mechanisms, not using the opportunities of the Board of Trustees in the issue of external stimulus identification, visibly not linking the University's academic programs and research with the state priorities risk the circumstance of a trustworthy decision-making procedure, as well as do not reveal the University's development potential and capacity.

The expert panel gives a positive evaluation of the circumstance that at the EU a professional discourse has started to form over the principles of the quality management PDCA cycle. The EU's manual on quality assurance, quality assurance policy, concept on the quality assurance of education, feedback policy may become a basis for the increase of the management quality and implementation of a quality culture. This can be facilitated by the fact of several officials of the University being trained at the ANQA. At the same time, the circumstance that the mastering of the quality management elements by different university governance circles (Board of Trustees, Rectorate, faculty and administrative subdivisions management) is delayed or devalued, that the University's quality assurance functions have not yet reached to the identification of problems in the activities of the administrative subdivisions or individual officials, highlights the need for the reinforcement of the management elements in the governance and administration of the University, the non-execution of which may endanger the achievement of the strategic goals set by the EU and smooth implementation of its mission. The Board of Trustees does not put this issue before the Rector of the University, the Rector, in his

turn, does not put it before the structural subdivisions. The quality assurance subdivision does not still manage to methodically assist the University's administrative subdivisions to organize the process with the PDCA principles, which is a sign of either lack of resources in the quality assurance structure or of devaluing the above-mentioned circumstance by the University. Work planning, execution, evaluation and improvement processes are not evaluated due to the scarcity of clear quantitative and qualitative indicators. This is hindered as well by the imperfection of the data collection and analysis system.

During the last two years, data collection on the efficiency of the European University's academic programs and other processes has been regulated and intensified. The expert panel gives a positive consideration to the fact that the collected data, in one way or another, is used in the decision-making process. On the other hand, the absence or inaccessibility of the collected data and analysis of the identified problems, the ambiguity of the connections between the identified problems and the processes implemented at the University, the absence or inaccessibility of analytical reports on academic programs monitoring and review processes, the weak control over teaching in the branches speak of the obvious lack of monitoring, evaluation and control mechanisms in the governance of the European University, indicators of which are, particularly, the serious problems and omissions existing in the research organization and public responsibility processes.

Although the University management operatively responds to the problems raised by the internal stakeholders and does everything possible to solve them, nonetheless, the EU needs a comprehensive policy ensuring an objective and critical evaluation of the existing processes. The spontaneous, unsystematic nature of data collection, one-time nature of their analysis as well as not linking them with the University's goals, the absence of a concept defining the main directions of the university's activity, outlining the principles of reforms and evaluating the opportunities may endanger the achievement of some of the important strategic goals defined by the EU.

**Summary.** Taking into consideration the circumstances that the European University's governance and administration are not implemented by means of professional management mechanisms and principles, the decision-making process is not based on data collection and analysis, the processes influencing the activity of the University are not identified and analyzed, the accountability system is not developed, the Board of Trustees does not clearly define the University's development directions and accordingly put problems before the Rector, in the result of which the EU's development directions are yet not clear, the prospect of providing additional financial inflows is very vague, the expert panel concludes that the institutional capacity of the European University does not meet the requirements of Criterion 2.

**Conclusion.** The correspondence of the institutional capacities of EU to the requirements of criterion 2 is **unsatisfactory**.

### III.ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

**CRITERION: The programmes are in concord with the institution’s mission, form part of institutional planning and promote mobility and internationalization.**

#### **Findings**

**3.1. The academic programs are thoroughly formulated according to the intended learning outcomes, which correspond to an academic qualification and are in line with the TLI’s mission and the state academic standards**

One of the priority goals set for the implementation of the EU Mission under the Strategic Development Plan of European University 2018-2022 is “Modernization and Improvement of Academic Programmes”. For the implementation of this goal, the University intends to carry out the following processes:

- Benchmarking implementation and reflection of results;
- Developing Academic Programmes for training professionals with applied knowledge, skills and competencies for a range of parts in society;
- Improving the material and technical base necessary for effective implementation of Academic Programmes;
- Providing highly qualified and competent teaching staff for effective implementation of Academic Programmes;
- Applying innovative forms of education in the field of vocational education;
- Expanding research capacity.

32 educational programmes are incorporated in 4 faculties and 4 branches of the University, 14 of which are for BA, 12 for MA and 6 for postgraduate degrees. The Academic Programmes of EU corresponds to the mission of the University from the perspective that the University implements education through the combination of Armenian and European experiences, training specialists for different social spheres. The university offers academic programmes at the 6th, 7th and 8th levels of higher and postgraduate education defined by the NQF. The expert panel revealed that the University, taking into account the issues identified during the previous accreditation, reviewed its Academic Programmes and attempted to align the learning outcomes of the Academic Programmes with the NQF by mapping the expected course and learning outcomes defined by the Academic Programmes. However, expert studies and panel

meetings with stakeholders show that the competitive advantage and feature of the EU over other similar Academic Programmes is not reflected in the Academic Programmes.

According to the EU Strategic Development Plan 2018-2022 sub purpose “Conducting Benchmarking - Reflection of Results”, benchmarking of academic programmes was carried out by specialty Chairs within the framework of the developing academic programmes. The academic programmes were subjected to environmental analysis of similar or related programmes offered by universities in Armenia, Russia, the United Kingdom, Austria and other countries. As a result, the outcomes of academic programmes, as well as teaching, learning and assessment methods were reviewed.

In order to guide the development of course curricula, EU has developed and validated the regulation on "Course Curriculum Development and Validation", which sets out the main requirements for course curricula. The process of developing and implementing academic programmes mainly takes into account defining learning outcomes, their implementation and assessment, as well as the student-centered approach. However, it should be stated that there are profound differences and polarization in implementing and applying the Academic Programmes for both full-time and part-time studies, and at the University and its branches. In addition, the academic programmes in the branches do not consider local specifics and priorities; the teaching methods, as well as professional and academic qualifications of the teaching staff lag far behind those in Yerevan branch.

The study of the academic programmes revealed that there are repetitions in the BA and MA academic programmes. There is a lack of interest in science and continuing education in the master's program. After the previous accreditation, in some qualifications, the practical skills component has been supplemented, which allows the graduates to easily find a job in the labor market.

Curricula at the departments of Law, Management and Service basically have a logical sequence by semesters, which provides a complete chain of academic programmes.

### **3.2. The TLI's has a policy that ensures alignment between teaching and learning approaches and the intended learning outcomes of academic programs promoting student-centered learning.**

The choice of teaching and learning methods at European University is made by the curriculum developers in accordance with the requirements of the academic programmes. The methods used in the academic programmes range from lectures, practical classes, group work, individual student projects, organizing roundtable discussions, etc. Moreover, within the last two years the resources of the University have been replenished, and they are used for organizing roundtable discussions, workshops, webinars and conferences. Class observations conducted by the expert panel show that

interactive methods are used for some courses at the departments of "Law" and "Service", but the selected methods are mainly teacher-centered and outdated, they do not contribute to building analytical and research capacities and professional thinking among students. The site visit revealed that in case of online education (due to the epidemic) the teaching and learning methods were not adapted, and the teaching was carried out using the same methods.

The teaching in the branches is carried out according to the curriculum validated by the EU in Yerevan; the curriculum also involves recommendations for the teaching and learning methods. Lecturers are free to choose their methods.

It should be noted that the Quality Assurance Department conducts surveys to identify suggestions provided by EU students, both in terms of teaching, choice of learning methods, and students' perception, mastery, and applicability of the course in general. The site visit revealed that the identified issues are then discussed at the chairs, after which the relevant changes are made. For example, during the professional meetings with the university stakeholders it was revealed that developing business plan projects, individual and group work were incorporated in the assignments for the specialty "Management", with the aim of developing students' ability to work in a team.

### **3.3. The TLI's has policy on students' assessment according to the learning outcomes and ensures academic integrity**

As a result of previous accreditation, European University has regulated student assessment processes by developing and implementing a number of regulations and procedures, such as procedures on "Implementing Academic Credit Transfer and Accumulation System at European University", "Organizing and Conducting Student Internship at European University", "Organizing and Conducting Final Exams at European University". At the University the student's final grade is formed during the semester, based on the assessment factors and their value, taking into account attendance, mid-term and final stages of knowledge testing, workshops, individual work, student participation and extracurricular work. Knowledge, professional competencies and skills acquired during the course are assessed by a multifactor system in accordance with the regulation on EU academic credit accumulation and transfer system, according to which the course is assessed as follows: individual work – 15 points, student participation and university activities - 25 points, i.e. during the semester the student may not conduct independent research and do extracurricular activities, but score 40 points at final exam and pass to next semester. The site visit revealed that in case of practical work the values are distributed in such a way that the student receives extra points for participating in practical activities, the individual project is subject to mandatory defense, and there are

assessment criteria for the defense. There are mid-term and final exams at the University; students get 40 points for the final exam. As a result of professional discussions it became clear that, for example, in case of “Management” specialty, the activities conducted during the course in “Strategic Management” are mostly practical: students develop strategic plans for a specific company, introducing a specific section at each lesson, which helps them to prepare for the final exam. The same refers to “Linguistics” specialty – the share of practical activities is quite large, also conditioned by specialized peculiarities.

Internships at EU are carried out in accordance with the procedure on “Organizing and Conducting Student Internship at European University”. According to the curriculum, practicums and pre-graduate internships are envisaged. Practicum is envisaged for full-time BA degree, it is organized by the end of the examination period of the second semester of the 3rd year (July-August) for a period of 4 weeks. Pre-graduate internship is organized for full-time and part-time BA degree by the end of the examination period of the first semester of the 4th and 5th final academic years respectively (February-March) for a period of 4 weeks. Practicums and pre-graduate internships can be conducted in state and local self-government bodies, non-governmental organizations, commercial and non-profit organizations, as well as in other non-governmental associations at the student's request with the consent of the head of the association and the EU Rector. By the end of the practicum and pre-graduate internship, students submit reports, which should be then undergo a defense. Examination of the reports revealed that they are not analytical and are of no practical significance. The internship report is graded on a 100-point scale according to the criteria set by the EU assessment procedure. Discussions during the site visit showed that findings of researches conducted by the interns during internships are not implemented in relevant organizations or in the research paper of the students.

The final attestation at the University is carried out in accordance with procedures on “Preparation, defence, assessment and appeal of graduation papers of the final attestation of graduates at BA degree in EU” and “Preparation, defence, assessment and appeal of master theses of the final attestation of graduates at MA degree in EU”. The requirements and criteria for graduation papers are clearly defined. Studying graduation papers and master theses, it was revealed that especially the technical requirements for conducting the work are generally adequately met; however, some works don't include clearly substantiated research problems, topic relevance, labour market requirements, and practical component. Although the EU leadership and heads of the chairs state that the graduation papers and master theses are subject to the academic integrity rating system (antiplagiarism), there is no record of non-compliance with the rules of academic integrity among the papers defended.

Fairness of student assessment and academic integrity is managed by relevant university regulations that set out the principles of academic integrity, including issues related to preventing deviations from academic integrity, with academic integrity and impartiality as a priority. The University also has a procedure for appealing grades.

### **3.4. The academic programmes of the TLI are contextually coherent with other relevant programmes and promote internationalization and mobility of students and staff.**

Benchmarking implementation is one of the activities defined by EU Strategic Development Plan 2018-2022. The University also plans to develop and implement a benchmarking policy soon. In developing and reviewing its curricula, the EU studied the experience and international standards of local and foreign advanced institutions. The study of the self-evaluation report of the University shows that the comparative analysis of the academic programmes was conducted in the following aspects:

1. Specialty and qualification,
2. list of specialty subjects,
3. course load,
4. learning, teaching and assessment methods,
5. content composition of academic programmes,
6. internship,
7. learning outcomes of academic programmes.

As a result of benchmarking with Armenian (ASUE, YSU, BSU, French University in Armenia) and foreign universities ( Lomonosov Moscow State University, Oxford University, Vilnius Business College, etc.), the number of hours dedicated to degree courses and the hours for individual work have been increased; in addition to the increased hours of practical training, courses have been incorporated into the Academic Programmes (e.g. a course in "Organization and Management of Events" is added for MA programme in "Service" specialty). Taking into account the analysis, the University also plans to increase student internships.

Intra-university and inter-university mobility of students is regulated by the procedure on "Academic Mobility of Students in Higher Education Institutions" and regulation on "Academic Mobility at European University". The site visit revealed that the University had carried out benchmarking with the University of Kufstein in Austria, and it intended to introduce a joint program with the possibility of providing double diploma in the near future, which would be the first experience for the University. The University has signed student mobility agreements with a number of European universities, and some programmes are currently being implemented. It is noteworthy, however, that despite the activities conducted, there is lack of mobility among students

and lecturers; the inbound mobility level is quite low between European University's Yerevan and regional branches.

### **3.5. The TLI has a policy ensuring academic program monitoring, effectiveness assessment and improvement.**

Monitoring and reviewing the Academic Programmes at EU is carried out within the framework of the University's internal quality assurance process, the main purpose of which is to enhance the quality of academic programmes, ensure compliance with ever-changing labour market requirements, competitiveness and enhancement.

As a result of discussions, focus group discussions, surveys, and chair meeting discussions with stakeholders during the academic year 2018-2019, as well as defined by EU strategic development plan 2018-2022, to implement the priority goal of “modernizing and enhancing the academic programmes”, to expand internationalization, in accordance with the schedule in the strategic action plan, the reviewed academic programmes and curricula were developed and approved in March, 2019.

This is an ongoing process and according to the information received during the site visit, the academic programmes are subject to a comparative analysis once a year, a SWOT analysis is conducted, and the work is organized by a relevant vocational chair. As an example, assessment criteria for distance education have been reviewed. According to the information received, in the framework of the quality assurance process, polls are conducted among the internal stakeholders (academic staff, students) meetings are organized with employers to enhance the academic programmes. As a result, the academic programmes are being reviewed, and the process is aimed at creating competitive specialists. The Chairs have also developed their clear goals in accordance with their academic programmes.

It should be noted, however, that there is no mechanism and procedure developed for assessing the risks of the academic programmes; in addition, the results of actual monitoring are not systematized, and the reforms are often not based on monitoring results. The involvement of external and internal stakeholders in this process is quite passive. Analysing the reports of chairmen of the examination committee after the final attestations of the BA and MA degrees, on the basis of which the University analyses the factors influencing the students' progress, contributes to assuring and enhancing quality of the academic programmes, and based on that suggestion for improvement are presented.

**Considerations:** The expert panel evaluates positively that, in general, the Academic Programmes are in line with the mission of the University, meet the state educational standards, and are described in detail, which is actually reflected in the legal



framework of the University. However, it should be noted that there are profound polarization and differences between the academic programmes developed for full-time and part-time academic programmes, as well as Yerevan and regional branches, which may jeopardize the process of granting credible graduation qualifications. It's commendable that the University introduced a practical component in the academic programmes, as well as conducted relevant benchmarking for developing the academic programmes, which contributed to aligning similar academic programmes in Armenia and foreign institutions. EU's low performance in terms of research results is reflected in shortfall of the research component in the academic programmes, which negatively affects the quality of APs.

The teaching methods for academic programmes are diverse and comprehensive, with tendencies to improve, which is commendable. The role of emphasizing quality assurance processes is essential, through which the necessary improvements are identified and made through feedback. These improvements, however, are not widespread; they mainly depend on the consistency of the Head of a Chair and the level of perception of the academic programmes. The expert panel finds that closer cooperation between the Quality Assurance and Communication Department and the EU units will help to identify the content issues of the EU academic programmes, ensure risk management and continuous improvement.

The model of evaluation of academic programmes at the University is clearly stated, and there is relevant legal basis. However, current logical inconsistency between the learning outcomes and assessment methods for a number of subjects jeopardizes their credibility for being outcome-oriented. In terms of academic integrity, there are relevant basic documents, but in terms of implementation, the mechanisms for revealing, correcting and excluding facts need to be improved. Along with fulfilling the technical requirements for the process and defence of graduation papers and master theses, the cases of not clearly comprehending or not defining research problems in those works, as well as sometimes non-observance of academic integrity, show that the problem of organizing the structural segment of research in the academic programmes by university leadership and middle management did not receive sufficient attention.

Benchmarking was carried out on key academic programmes at the University, which is definitely positively evaluated by the expert panel. Notwithstanding, it should be noted that the latter's competitive advantages and features are not emphasized. Activities are being undertaken to enhance outbound mobility at the University, but inbound mobility is rather passive and is not considered a priority.

Although a monitoring of academic programmes is being conducted at the University, the results of conducted monitorings are not systematized, and the reforms

are often not based on the results of the monitoring. The input of external and internal stakeholders in this process is quite passive.

**Summary:** Taking into account the fact that the academic programmes introduced in the University are mainly based on the mission of the latter, are clearly formulated, based on the results of previous accreditation, teaching and learning methods, and the quality assurance tools of academic programmes have been improved; there is a clear assessment policy, and benchmarking of academic programmes is being carried out, as well as continuous improvement activities, the expert panel concludes that the European University meets the requirements of Criterion 3.

**Conclusion:** The correspondence of the institutional capacities of EU to the requirements of criterion 3 is **satisfactory**.

#### IV.STUDENTS

**CRITERION: The TLI provides relevant student support services ensuring the effectiveness of the learning environment.**

##### **Findings**

#### **4.1. The TLI has set mechanisms for promoting equitable recruitment, selection, and admission procedures**

The selection and admission of applicants in the BA full-time and part-time learning systems in European University are conducted based on existing regulations, which are revised and edited towards each academic year. The applicants enter European University by taking part in unified or inter-university exams, within the scope of which the examination tasks are complied with the syllabi approved by RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport and the requirements of unified exams. The admission in MA full-time and part-time learning systems is also carried out according to the provisions of corresponding regulations. In the latter case the selection of students is conducted, taking into consideration the recommendation of the chair, and academic performance; and for the full state compensation of the tuition fee a professional examination is required.

There are preparatory groups in the institution, the graduates of which get the opportunity of 10% additional discount on tuition fee in the 1<sup>st</sup> year, in case of overcoming the passing bar. There is a college under the institution, the graduates of

which, in case of overcoming the passing bar, get the opportunity to continue education in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> year at the institution, depending on their academic performance.

The number of applicants during the recent years continually shows a tendency of growth; a drastic increase has been noted especially in the part-time learning system. Meanwhile, there is the Department of Foreign Students at the institution, which supports foreign students in organizing effective academic processes. The recruitment, selection and admission of foreign students are conducted according to EU admission regulations and “Selection Order of Foreign Students into RA Higher Education Institutions, As Well As Family Members of Diplomats Working in RA Diplomatic Service Bodies in Foreign Countries” approved by N 700-N decision of RA Government, dated as of 28 April 2011.

With the aim of student recruitment, days of open doors and site visits for college and school students are organized, the official website and social media accounts of the institution carry out advertisement campaigns. There is a bilingual section of applicants on the website, where appropriate information on admission regulations, tuition fees, necessary documents is presented, but the institution lacks mechanisms for efficient assessment of students recruitment mechanisms and applied tools.

#### **4.2. The TLI has policies and procedures for revealing student educational needs.**

There are elements of policies of identifying student needs in the institution; besides the institute of corresponding bodies is introduced. The voicing out of student needs is implemented by means of the box of anonymous letters, complaints and suggestions in the university. The academic needs in the institution are also revealed through regular student surveys by the evaluation forms of course/lecturer and general satisfaction. In accordance with the accepted criteria, students are also enrolled in EU governance bodies (25%), and the president of students’ council is considered a member of rectorate in their capacity.

The students of EU through students’ council and individually have the opportunity of revealing student needs in the governance bodies. Nevertheless, the site visit revealed that the awareness of students of their academic needs is not on proper level yet, and mostly social problems of students are identified and solved.

It became clear during the meeting with students within the framework of site visit that the students voice out their problems also during meetings with deans in corresponding faculties and heads of chairs, although the process is not regulated and recurrent. In the case of foreign students the problems are presented in the Department of Foreign Students.

#### **4.3. The TLI provides advising services, opportunities for extra-curricular activities supporting students' effective learning.**

To to boost the efficiency of the learning process of students, the institution focuses on creating the opportunity to organize additional classes and provide consultancies. The organization of consultancies is implemented according to a schedule approved beforehand, within the framework of which each lecturer at least once a week provides consultancies to students studying both in the given faculty and in other specialties. Consulting classes are implemented for those students, who need additional support or additional explanation of a topic, because they did not quite master or were absent from a class. The consultation schedules become available for students by means of attaching them on announcement boards. The satisfaction of students with consultations is estimated through student surveys; nevertheless, there are no analyses of the efficiency assessment of conducting consultancies. During the site visit it was revealed that the university intended to organize additional classes for students who missed them because of the martial law in the Republic of Armenia.

The consultation classes also include assistance in conducting internships and writing individual and course papers.

#### **4.4. The TLI has set regulation and schedule for students to receive additional support and guidance from the administrative staff of the faculty.**

The processes for providing support and guidance to students in European University are established by a corresponding regulation, as well as are described in the student guideline of EU. Although there are no clear-cut regulation and timeframe for addressing the administrative staff in the institution, it became clear from the meeting with the stakeholders, that when needed, students can freely address the administrative staff and get support and guidance, concerning the discount system on tuition fees, established by the institution, the selection of topics of graduation papers and master's theses, and the place for pre-graduation internship. It also became clear during the site visit that after addressing the administrative staff, the problems were accordingly solved, and the students, including foreign students, were mainly satisfied with the services provided by the administrative staff and with the delivered information on problems regarding the organization of the learning process.

#### **4.5. The TLI has student career support services.**

The Career Center is responsible for providing services promoting student career in the institution, and it acts in accordance with the corresponding regulation, approved in march 2019. The career center provides students with consultancy on the selection of the place for internship; besides, it has a separate account on social media platforms,

where announcements of vacancies are regularly updated. The EU Career Center has also created an online database, including information on graduates of the last 5 years, with regularly updated data. The career center regularly organizes seminars, discussions, trainings, which are aimed at boosting the competitiveness of students in the labor market, gaining new skills, developing the capacities of writing logically structured CVs.

The EU Career Center is a bridge between employers and university stakeholders, promoting collaborative relations between them, particularly by organizing workshops, meetings for employees in the question-answer format, during which the employers present the requirements and peculiarities of the labor market, typical of the given time period. Nevertheless, the awareness of the information provided by the center is still low among students and graduates.

#### **4.6. The TLI promotes student involvement in its research activities.**

The inclusion of students in scientific-research activities in the institution is carried out through presentation of individual, course and graduation papers, as well as master's theses. The institution has a policy, according to which master's students at the last academic semester present a report, for which they get 7 credits, designated by the curriculum. However, as it turned out during the site visit, the students were mostly unaware of presenting such reports.

Some activities have research components /particularly in the case of learners within the framework of the program implemented in collaboration with Synopsys/, but the latter is not commonplace and is mostly based on individual initiations; there is no institutional approach.

In recent years, lecturer-student collaborative researches have shown growth tendency to some extent; there are also collaborative publications. The students of EU have the opportunity to publish articles free of charge in the collection of scientific articles. In spite of the fact that the institution has no Student Scientific Society, the chairs organize scientific seminars, which sometimes have inter-chair character. The examination of master's theses also has shown that the research component is weak, the data in the theses are not always topical; besides, the selection of thesis topics is mainly not conditioned by the demands of the labour market and the needs of the employers.<sup>10</sup>

The Chair of Management in the institution has scientific-research laboratory, in the activities of which EU students, lecturers, Ph.D. students and researchers are included.

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<sup>10</sup> This section was reformulated considering the University's observations.

#### **4.7. The TLI has a responsible body for the students' rights protection.**

The provisions on defending the rights of EU students are presented in “Internal Code of Conduct of EU” “Code of Ethics of EU” and other internal codes. The Students' Council /SC/ is considered as the body for the protection of students' rights, the functioning term of which is 2 years, according to the charter. Any person studying at the university can become a member of Students' council, who will present a written application to SC. The question of becoming a member of SC is decided by the presidency of the SC. As it turned out during the site visit, the council has no active role in identifying the education needs of students, as well as defending their rights.<sup>11</sup> The students learn about their rights and responsibilities from the contracts, which they sign with the university. They mostly address the administrative staff in case of questions and problems, and during the meetings in the scope of the site visit it became clear that there are no actual cases of right violations. SC usually conducts social-cultural and sports events, in which international students also take part.

The SC is also a member of ANSA, within the scope of which its activity is not apparently reflected; besides, the collaboration with other Armenian universities is also limited to the platform of organizing sports and cultural events.

#### **4.8. The TLI has evaluation and quality assurance mechanisms of student educational, advisory and other services**

The evaluation of educational, consultancy and other services provided in the institution is mainly ensured by surveys of students about lecturers and courses. As a result of those surveys, information collection has been implemented, after which followed resource replenishment and improvement of the state of auditoriums.

EU Career Center is also engaged in the activates of evaluation and quality assurance, there are some feedback mechanisms with graduates, which are aimed at improving the quality of processes.

**Considerations.** The expert panel evaluates positively the regulated implementation of recruitment, selection and admission processes of students by the institution both in BA and MA full time and part time learning systems, which boost the number of students. It is positive that the institution organizes preparatory classes, and there is a college under the university, the graduates of which also join the group of students of the university afterwards. Additional steps are being taken to recruit foreign students and inform them about the university, which will after promote the boost of visibility of the institution in the international arena. Nevertheless, there are no indicators of evaluating the effectiveness of student recruitment mechanisms and applied

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<sup>11</sup> This section was reformulated considering the University's observations.

tools by the university. Such evaluations will help the continual development of admission and selection mechanisms.

The expert panel evaluates positively that the use of mechanisms of revealing students' problems is focused on within the context of promoting creation of academic environment by the institution. There are some elements of policy of revealing educational needs of students in the institution, for example by means of student surveys and the box of anonymous letters, complaints and suggestions in the university, which create opportunity for identifying the students' needs. It was also noted within the scope of meetings with students that they are free to voice out their problems in the dean's offices and chairs of corresponding faculties. Meanwhile, the identification and recording of educational needs are valued, which will foster the boost of motivation of students and improvement of academic process.

From the perspective of making the academic process more effective, the EU students are provided with additional consultancy services; it is also commendable that the process is carried out in accordance with regulated and previously approved schedule. Consultancies are also given about the place of internships, as well as during individual, course and graduation papers. The consultancy and additional activities will foster the student's progress in academic performance and improvement of learning. The satisfaction of students with consultancies is evaluated based on student surveys; nevertheless, there are no analyses on assessing the effectiveness of their implementation.

Although there is no fixed schedule for addressing the administrative staff of EU, the students freely address the deans of corresponding faculties, heads of chairs and other administrative staff members with the aim of getting appropriate support and guidance. This fact also proves the efforts put in organizing effective learning in the institution.

The expert panel evaluates positively the activities of Career Center with the students and graduates, particularly measures are taken within the context of developing student-employer collaborative relations. An online database of graduates has been introduced in the institution, which also promotes quicker response to employment issues and corresponding alternative job offers. Within the framework of the site visit, the students also certified about seminars, discussions and trainings, regularly organized by the Career Center. More systematization of activities and creation of database for a multitude of employers by the Career Center will promote the extension of employer-institution cooperation.

All in all, the expert panel considers the degree of involvement of students in research activities problematic. The implementation of research activities by the students is mostly limited to presentation of individual and course papers, which contain a small component of research and analysis, which in its turn hinders the development of creative mind. There is a research component in the learning process /particularly in the

case of Synopsys program/, but the latter is not commonplace and does not encompass other specialties. The promotion of this approach will foster aligned development of all the programs and introduction of research components in all the programs.

The main body responsible for defending students' rights is considered Student Council, which, as it turned out, mainly organizes social-cultural and sports events, involving also international students. The activities of SC need more systematization in terms of defending students' rights and identifying their needs and finding possible solutions, which will promote more targeted and effective implementation of the activities of Student Council.

The collection of information on student satisfaction with educational, consultancy and other services, as well as their evaluation is mainly implemented within the framework of student surveys; nevertheless, the use of results of surveys by EU will promote the growth of student satisfaction with educational, consultancy and other services and formation of more agreeable academic environment.

**Summary.** Taking into consideration the fact that the institution has clear-cut mechanisms of student recruitment and admission both in full-time and part-time learning systems, there are mechanisms for identifying students' needs, the institution organizes additional classes and consultancies for students, there is a body for defending students' rights, the learners are also involved in the process of making decisions concerning them, the expert panel concludes that EU meets the requirements of Criterion 4.

**Conclusion.** The correspondence of the institutional capacities of EU to the requirements of criterion 4 is **satisfactory**.

## V.FACULTY AND STAFF

**CRITERION: The TLI has a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff to accomplish the institution's mission and to implement the goals set for academic programmes.**

### **Findings**

**5.1. The institution has policies and procedures promoting recruitment of a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff capable of ensuring programme provisions.**

To solve the problem concerning the given criterion of the EU 2018-2022 strategic development plan (provision of highly qualified and skilled teaching staff for the effective implementation of academic programs), the university developed and approved a



selection and evaluation regulation of teaching staff, and set out the job descriptions of lecturers and some support staff members (assistant in the dean's office).

According to the regulation on selection and evaluation of EU teaching staff, the selection of lecturers in the university is implemented by combining the quantitative (number of scientific papers in last three years, number of attended events in last three years, participation in workshop trainings, participation in research or grant programs, experience of teaching in a foreign language) and the qualitative (scientific degree, knowledge of foreign language) data, with corresponding point estimates. According to the regulation, in order to teach vacant courses, an open competition is announced (the announcement is put in the website of the university), which is implemented by the attestation committee; the contestant with the highest points becomes the winner of the competition. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the grading criteria of lecturers participating in the competition require input data (scientific degree, scientific and educational-methodological papers, participation in trainings and research grant programs), while output data for grading criteria are not applied during selection (how individual work is organized, how material is delivered, how research is encouraged, etc.). Some important capacities and skills are fixed in the job description (capacities of organizing academic and scientific-research papers, teaching, knowledge assessment, auditorium management, organizing team work, etc.), the degree of command of which in the case of newly selected lecturers is not revealed with clear mechanisms; instead, as it turned out during the site visit, those circumstances are somehow revealed during the interview of candidate lecturers with heads of chairs.

It became clear during the site visit that some lecturers were hired by competition within the framework of the above-mentioned regulation. Because of the limitations of the variety of teaching staff in regions, the selection and attestation in the branch universities are not yet implemented according to the above-mentioned procedures. Meanwhile, it should be noted that the information on competitions for the positions of the dean, head of chair and lecturers is missing on the website of the university, especially during the period of observation. The official website has no section for vacancies. There is no information on the teaching staff of the specific chair (teaching experience, scientific and educational-methodological publications, scientific degree and title, implemented projects, etc.).

There are procedures of electing head of the chair and faculty dean: however, the given documents do not express the peculiarities of the institution.

The payment for practical classes has recently become equal to that of the lecture, as a result of which the hourly payment for practical classes has risen by 40%. Meanwhile, it became clear from the site visit that the payment of lecturers in the university branches, as well as tuition fees, are notably lower as compared to the headquarters.

According to the self-evaluation and the submitted documents, the EU headquarters is full of teaching staff having lecturers with scientific degree and title. In contrast, the specific weight of lecturers with scientific degrees in the branches is lower.

There is a tendency of growth in the specific weight of main staff, which reflects the policy adopted by the university. Aspirants and Ph.D. students also teach in the university. More than half of the lecturers in EU deliver professional courses for foreign students in English. Those lecturers meet certain requirements of knowledge of English.

A significant number of lecturers in EU are secondarily employed, some of which are presented to the employers.

## **5.2. The teaching staff qualifications for each programme are comprehensively stated.**

According to self-evaluation, the requirements presented for the professional qualities of the teaching staff are defined in the regulation on selection and assessment of the EU teaching staff, as well as in the job description of EU lecturer and in the academic programme descriptions. The observation of academic programme descriptions showed that specific requirements for professional qualities of lecturers are not defined there. A general description of current teaching staff implementing the academic programme is briefly presented in the section of necessary resources for the implementation of academic programmes within the academic programme packages (the fact of conducting the scientific-pedagogical activity, corresponding to the direction of the course; specific weight of lecturers holding scientific degree and title in the whole teaching staff). As we can see, no specific requirement for academic programmes is set out; in the case of all academic programmes, we deal with the same generic requirement, which are reflected in the regulation of selection and assessment of lecturers and their job description, which were mentioned above. It became clear during the site visit that one of those formal requirements, having a corresponding professional qualification, is sometimes not kept in the university branches. Neither in academic programme packages, nor in job descriptions or other documents there is an established requirement presented for the qualification of a lecturer teaching an interdisciplinary course.

Quantity of hours is not yet defined for scientific-research activities in the workloads of lecturers, in contrast to the intention set out in the improvement program, generated as a result of the previous accreditation.

## **5.3. The TLI has well established policies and procedures for the periodic evaluation of the teaching staff.**

The evaluation of lecturers in the European University is implemented in a multi-factor way, weighing the defined criteria in points and thus forming the lecturer's rating. According to the regulation on selection and evaluation of the EU teaching staff, the

evaluation of lecturers is carried out by a sum of grades of two groups of criteria, educational-scientific activity and quality of teaching. The first group of criteria includes quantitative and qualitative data on the educational-scientific activity of the lecturers (scientific and educational-methodological publications, participation in scientific conferences, research programs and grants, teaching experience, knowledge of foreign language, etc), which are weighted by corresponding points. The second group of criteria is the results of class observations and student surveys. It should also be noted that the evaluation of lecturers is a two-stage process. The first stage is in-chair document attestation, when the lecturers submit documents on the results of their activities to their head of chair, who, after a corresponding evaluation, submits the attestation documents with class observation report to the EU attestation committee. The second stage is the all-university attestation, when the attestation committee presided by the rector, based on the results of in-chair attestation and student evaluation of the lecturer, certifies the lecturer. As we can see, input criteria are also valued in the evaluation process of the lecturers.

It became clear during the site visit that EU had already carried out lecturer attestations: as a result of it contract with some lecturers were terminated, because of not corresponding to the defined criteria.

Class observations are mainly carried out by heads of chairs, sometimes by leading and well-experienced lecturers. In order to identify the problems of teaching and collect the results by means of class observations, European University has developed a class observation form, which has spaces for information on the class topic of the day, class description, involvement of students, teaching methods, character of assignments, effectiveness of using the lesson time, section for comments and suggestions, etc. It is clear from the site visits and studying the filled forms of class observation that the attitude towards this tool of evaluation of the lecturer is still superficial in EU, particularly in the branches. Brief formulations in the comment section of the class observation form, sometimes the absence of such formulations or just one written word, observation of classes of essentially different professions by the same observer, even the cases of filling in the forms without observing the class (which is apparent from different hand writings on different observation forms of classes, but with the same signature) come to prove the above mentioned. The way and quality of the analysis of results of class observations differ from chair to chair: those analyses are more brief summaries, rather than profound analyses. Anyway, sometimes they display notes on the visible problems. Although the results of class observations are sometimes discussed in chair meetings, there is no information on changes generated due to them. There is no information on complex analysis of the results of class observations, discussions about them during the

meetings of chair and faculty councils and the scientific council reports. It is also unknown how frequently the class observations are conducted.

EU has also developed a course evaluation form in order for the students to evaluate the teaching of the lecturer and the overall course. The questions of the quiz can all in all be an indicator of satisfaction with the teaching for the student; nevertheless, they are generic and do not clearly and thoroughly evaluate the lecturers, according to output criteria. For example, it became clear during the site visit that sometimes in the headquarters, mostly in the branches, there is a practice of lecturing, which often seemed regular for the students (cases of lecturing also take place during distance learning): however, no information was found that this phenomenon is given attention at the university.

It should be noted that there are no possible analyses on the effectiveness of student surveys and class observations (as a phenomenon, a system), particularly how they influenced the quality of teaching and what needs was revealed.

There are no mechanisms of self-evaluation and peer evaluation of lecturers in EU. EU also lacks a clear policy on mentoring new lecturers.

#### **5.4. The TLI implements teacher professional development in accordance to the needs outlined during regular evaluations (both internal and external).**

The provision of highly qualified and skilled teaching staff is a strategic problem for European University, for which the university has intended to train 20-25 per cent of the staff annually. According to the self-evaluation, in the last two-three years the lecturers of EU have participated in professional trainings in the fields of economics, tourism, as well as English language. It turned out during the site visit that the university also organized trainings in the spheres of developing outcome-based course and methodology of outcome-based assessment. In the state of moving to distance learning, because of the Coronavirus pandemic, EU managed to teach the majority of lecturers about some tools and principles of Moodle electronic learning system.

In spite of plans of EU to train lecturers, the university has no qualification increase program for lecturers, which could establish major and elective courses in computes knowledge, pedagogical skills, general research capacities, as well as contemporary issues of the specialty, innovative approaches of teaching and other directions. This fact, as well as the lack of analyses on the effect of the above-mentioned trainings on teaching, have been formulated as a problem also during the previous accreditation. The sharing of leading experience in the university is not given due attention. Because of financial deficiency, the training of lecturers out of the university are not encouraged. Nevertheless, the current positive tendencies of internationalization in EU outline some prospects of lecturers to train abroad.

It was impossible to clearly find out from the observation of training plans and the site visit how much those trainings relate to the problems identified during the evaluation of lecturers and revealed needs, in order for it to be clear on what principle the given lecturers get enrolled in the training courses by annual plans.

#### **5.5. The TLI ensures the sustainability of the teaching staff according to academic programs.**

European University values increasing the specific weight of permanent staff in the overall teaching staff. The strategic plan of the university intends 5% growth in the specific weight of the permanent staff every year. In order to provide that, the policies and procedures of selecting and evaluating lecturers have recently been reformed; salary has risen to some extent. According to the self-evaluation, the number permanent employers in the overall teaching staff has risen from 10% of the 2017-2018 academic year to 43% in 2019-2020 year.

European University also values the recruitment of young personnel into the teaching staff. According to the self-evaluation, in the previous academic year the 62% of EU teaching staff was up to 40 years old.

Meanwhile, the site visit showed that European University has problems with the teaching staff reserve, which is obvious especially in the branches. If the lecturers are absent, problems of substituting them arise. The specific weight of lecturers in the teaching staff with scientific degree and title in the university branches is several times lower as compared to the rate of the headquarters. Some lecturers, especially in the branches, teach a great number of subjects (even up to 12), and those subjects are quite far from each other from the perspective of topics and specializations. Some professional courses in the branches are taught by specialists with no proper qualification.

The employment contracts of the full-time lecturers in EU are signed for one year. No essential raise in salary is yet for the preservation of young lecturers. There is no information on other conditions and means of motivation.

#### **5.6. There are set policies and procedures for the staff promotion.**

According to self-evaluation, EU conducts a policy of mentoring new lecturers. Mentors can be heads of chairs, professors and experiences associate professors, who guide aspirants and Ph.D. students in scientific and educational-methodological activities. However, it should be noted that the mentorship policy in EU is not clear-cut and has no regulatory basis; and the site visit showed that there are no specific conditions or incentives for developing the institute of mentorship.

The university encourages its best graduates to apply for the third degree of education (postgraduate, Ph.D.) and to pass on to scientific-pedagogical work. Sometimes

EU gives monetary or other incentives to its lecturers with good results. Nevertheless, there is no clear and standardized policy of incentives for scientific and educational-methodological work. Particularly, EU does not take special encouragement measures in order to be published in journals by impact factor or for lecturers to participate in foreign scientific conferences. The publication of lecturers' articles free of charge in the EU scientific journal is considered an incentive.

#### **5.7. There is necessary technical and administrative staff to achieve the strategic goals.**

According to self-evaluation, European University has recently added the administrative and support staff, in order to improve the service of academic programmes. On September 1, 2019 the number relation of administrative and support staffs employees and the students was 1/24:

The job description for the dean, dean's office assistant and head of chair (the latter conducts administrative work, apart from scientific-pedagogical function) are set out. The head of chair in terms of functions is overloaded. He/she is responsible for the quality, contents, supervision, benchmarking of academic programmes, internationalization, relations with the labour market, internship coordination, and organization of research, reports and other functions. The head of chair is accountable to the dean, the vice rector for education-scientific affairs and the rector.

The support staff of the university was recruited with young employers, with knowledge of foreign languages and computer skills. The bases and mechanisms for the training of the support staff are not clear. The raise in number of the support staff has also not been estimated in terms of the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

Many employees of the administrative staff also have quite a big auditorium workload, up to a full-time employment. The problems with the quality and supervision of teaching are especially apparent in the branches.

**Considerations.** After the previous accreditation, European University has significantly improved the policy of selecting and evaluating the teaching staff, creating its normative basis and in some cases utilizing it. The multifactor evaluation of the teaching staff, both during the selection and attestation, is crucial in recruiting and preserving qualified personnel, the tendency of which is becoming apparent. Recently the equalization of payments for practical classes and lectures, which raised the salary by 40 per cent, certainly has a good effect on the quality of education. Nevertheless, the overall salaries continue to remain low, as compared to the function and input requirements intended for by the procedures of selection and attestation of lecturers and job descriptions: this fact jeopardizes the implementation of those functions and requirements within realistic limits and can bring forth merely formal processes. The

difference in salaries of the lecturers in the headquarters and the branches can create problems in terms of the quality and effectiveness of teaching in the regions.

The lecturers in European University mostly have the necessary qualifications, capacities and motivation for providing the learning outcomes of academic programmes.

The question of academic workload and particularly its allocation is problematic in EU. The heavy supremacy of auditorium component in the academic workload and the weak component of research in the condition of current low salaries deprives a responsible lecturer of the opportunity to work on their professional progress. In order to provide the learning outcome of the academic programme, the lecturer should also conduct some individual work with the students, but it is impossible to work productively with great number of students in the condition of heavy weekly auditorium workload. The fact that the lecturers in both Yerevan and regional branches teach plenty of courses cannot certify the problems concerning the quality. A person teaching plenty of courses cannot allocate proper time to research, and the role of research in the quality of teaching is great.

The fact of the lecturers in European University knowing foreign languages and more than half of them teaching courses in foreign language creates visible opportunities for implementing new and fascinating academic programmes in foreign languages and engaging research grants. The satisfaction of lecturers with the overall working atmosphere and their motivation are also essential facts in terms of successfully engaging them in development programs.

After the previous accreditation, European university has set out the professional requirements for professional qualities of lecturers in the procedures of selection and evaluation of lecturers and their job description, which will foster recruitment and preservation of qualified pedagogical staff. The university would greatly benefit, however, if the academic programme descriptions also contained requirements specifically referring to the profession, as well as particularly output requirements connecting research with the education, the implementation of which would significantly provide the full achievement of learning outcomes.

The implementation of class observations is crucial in terms of boosting the quality and effectiveness of teaching. Apparently, the question of class observation has recently been given significant attention. Conducting them and analysing and evaluating their results will promote quality improvement of teaching. The improvement of the evaluation system of lecturers by the students and the evaluation of the survey results from the perspective of teaching quality can improve the implementation of academic programmes. The practice of self-assessment and peer review will complete the image of assessment of lecturers and will more clearly identify the existing problems.

The readiness of the university to improve the level of preparedness of lecturers each year by  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and learning English and digital skills will promote professional progress of the lecturers. Nevertheless, the process needs coordination. The increase of qualification of lecturers in EU is not implemented based on a special programme and regulation, which would make the process more targeted and available. Taking into consideration all the weaknesses of the university in the field of research, it is necessary to both improve the research skills of some lecturers by means of special courses, but also guide them in terms of conducting research-based teaching.

European University is able to provide the sustainability of the teaching staff, especially in the headquarters. The positive moral-psychological atmosphere in the university, operative solutions to problems, motivation of students are contributing factors. Meanwhile, the problems with qualified staff reserve (which can be both a result of low salaries and multitude of courses) can risk the quality of learning, especially in the branches.

The initiation of the practice of mentorship has recently become an important achievement for EU, which fosters the establishment of scientific-pedagogical traditions. Nevertheless, the lack of regulation in the process can slow down already noticeable success of the university in that direction. The lack of essential incentive policy for the research results of a lecturer affects the quality of academic programmes, especially their research component.

A sufficient number of administrative and support staff mainly provides the regular learning process and promotes the implementation of academic programmes. Rejuvenation of the administrative and support staff makes it more promising. Nevertheless, some manifestations of functional in balance of administrative staff (a great number of work functions, implementation of functions not referring to their position, great administrative and academic workload, etc.), big auditorium workload of some key administrative officials and some problems with accountability may affect the solution of strategic problems of the university.

**Summary.** Taking into consideration the fact that European University usually manages to recruit highly qualified and motivated specialists for the implementation of academic programmes, who essentially improved the policies and procedures of selecting and evaluating lecturers, the conducted trainings improve the qualities of lecturers, there are tendencies of rejuvenation of the teaching staff, class observations and lecturer evaluations take place, the institution is trying to preserve the sustainability of the teaching staff, the expert panel finds that EU meets the requirements of Criterion 5.



**Conclusion.** The correspondence of the institutional capacities of EU to the requirements of criterion 5 is **satisfactory**.

## VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

**CRITERION: The TLI ensures the implementation of research activity and the link of the research with teaching and learning.**

### Findings

#### 6.1 The TLI has a clear strategy promoting its research interests and ambitions.

According to the charter of European University, one of the main objectives of the university is the implementation of scientific, scientific-methodological, educational-methodological researches and scientific-technical activities. European University has also set a goal to become a research university. Although in 2018-2022 strategic development plan the university saw its mission in united and interconnected development of education, science and the directions of public services, research is not defined in the strategy as a separate aim. The research aspirations of university are defined in the EU strategic development plan either within the scope of one sub-goal, i.e., expansion of research skills, or within the framework of annual measures of “Stimulation of scientific-research activities” in the context of the sub-goal of having highly qualified and skilled teaching staff. By the measure of “Stimulation of scientific-research activities” one or two inter-university scientific conferences a year are meant, as well as conduction of in-university scientific conferences and scientific seminars. Within the framework of the sub-goal of “Expansion of research skills” it is also intended to evaluate the possibilities of implementing research activities in the university, as well as enroll orders on individual, community and republic level.

It became clear from the observation of self-evaluation, examination of reports and the site visit that no evaluation of research opportunities of the universities was carried out; after the previous accreditation EU made no clarifications of the existing policy and directions, except for work aimed at information technologies, as a result of cooperation with “Synopsys” company. Although it is mentioned in the self-evaluation and concept note of EU 2019-2022 development of scientific-research activities that the leading directions in the scientific activity of EU are the problems of economy management, world economy, IT sphere, public rights and environmental safety, there is no document containing quantitative and qualitative data, analysis and clear plan on the implementation of these directions. For example, the results of research activities in this direction conducted by the university, grant involving programs, etc. are unknown.

According to the self-evaluation conducted by the university, in case of researches implemented by European University students, the main goal, along with getting applicable results, is the development of research skills, the implementation of which will give students the opportunity to solve the problems hindering future professional development, get practical skills while conducting research in a separate company within the framework of internship, clarify their future professional directions, work with information in a more targeted way, be able to get knowledge from it. Nevertheless, the courses observed by the expert panel, course guides and graduation exams certify that the component of research is not much focused on especially in Bachelor students' papers; besides the level of their novelty is still low.<sup>12</sup>

“The EU 2019-2020 Concept Note of Development of Scientific-Research Activities” also prescribes to create conditions for formation of groups conducting research in various aspects of the economy, which will then turn into scientific-research centers and will implement consultancy and information analysis activities. It became clear during the site visit that a laboratory was created under the chair of Management, in order to promote development of the university in the sphere, but there are no visible results of all this in the university yet.

Taking into consideration the problems mentioned during the previous accreditation in terms of not allocating resources for the implementation of scientific-research activities, European University has started to allocate finances in the budget (1.57% for 2019, and 3.03% for 2020): the expenses are intended for obtaining laboratory equipment and materials, implementing publications and participating in conferences. The university has also not conducted identification and substantiation of needs in terms of resource allocation for this; besides, corresponding financial resources have not been provided for proportional development of the sphere in the branches.

## **6.2 The TLI has a long-term strategy as well as mid and short -term programmes that address its research interests and ambitions.**

The achievements and problems of the university in the research field are identified to some extent in 2019-2020 concept note of scientific-research activities of European University. According to it the achievements are as follows:

- 2/3 of the university teaching staff holding scientific degree,
- the existence of Ph.D. in the university,
- existence of one professional council awarding scientific degrees in the university,
- collection of scientific articles having been published in the university since 2011.

The following problems are identified:

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<sup>12</sup> This section was reformulated considering the University's observations.

- most of the implemented researches not having applicability and not being aimed at the solution of specific problems,
- few lecturers being involved in researches,
- the publications not being internationalized, scarcity of publications in international magazines,
- not expanding the directions of scientific activities in the university.

The concept note touches upon the solution of the above-mentioned problems only in a form of wishes. There is no plan aimed at solving those problems. All in all, the development of scientific-research activities of EU is planned neither in med-term, nor in short-term plans. No indicators for the evaluation of research outcome are defined.

Although, especially in the last two years, some activation of separate research initiations is noticeable (inter-specialty research programme commenced in the scientific-research laboratory under the Chair of Management named “Management of Creative Art”, research with the University of Tver with the topic “Development of Art Tourism, with the Aim of Increasing Attractiveness of Cities in Russia and Armenia”), such initiations are not intended for all directions in the institution.

Researches in the university are conducted both by individual lecturers, and lecturer groups. Thus, some chairs have started to plan inter-specialty research programs within the framework of laboratory of scientific researches under the Chair of Management, but at the moment there are no approved and financed research programs, except the 2nd stage of the programme “The Problems of Financing the RA Agrarian Sphere and Ways of Solution by Means of Applying Modern Financial Tools and Mechanisms”, approved within the scope of “Scientific Programme of Young Scientists”, organized by RA Science Committee.

There is no specialized department or an individual responsible for the coordination of scientific programs in European University, who would systematize the participation of the university in state and international scientific programs, the boost of international visibility of the research activities of the university, and involvement of financial means. The vice-rector for educational-scientific affairs is responsible for the scientific-research field, who has great education-related administrative and just educational workload, for being able to implement effectively the above-mentioned.

Setting target objectives in front of the university by EU Board of Trustees in terms of developing research is not visible.

### **6.3 The TLI ensures the implementation of research and development through sound policies and procedures.**

Thus, the scientific-research units of EU do not get basic financing from the state. Even within the framework of the programs of topic-related financing of the Scientific

Committee under the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, only one collaborative programme has been implemented till now. The fundraising capacities in the university are weak or the existing potential does not function.

In 2017-2019 the university has allocated from their own finances 1.1 per cent for the implementation of research programs, and it is intended by “Concept Note of Development of EU 2019-2022 Scientific-Research Activities” to make it 3 per cent at least. The main reason for not allocating is not financial, but lack of research policy and applications.

The printing of educational-scientific literature, authored by the teaching staff of EU and recommended by the institution, is implemented using university funds. From 2011 EU publishes the “European University Collection of Scientific Articles” free of charge for the teaching staff and students.

There is no information on research papers of EU that have been commercialized. The university lacks the chain starting from the idea of research outcome up to its operation. No studies on the scientific potential of the chairs have been conducted, even in the form of swot analyses.

There is no complex and coordinated policy of research development. However, at the same time, there is a normative-legal base (the Order of scientific researches, the Code of ethics, the Regulation on implementation of post-graduate professional education, the Regulation on admission to Ph.D., the Regulation on studying at Ph.D., the Order of being a Ph.D. applicant, the Order of annual rating of the lecturers, the Regulation on publishing the outcomes of research papers) coordinating the implementation of researches in EU (scientific-research activities of the lecturers, dissertations, master’s theses).

#### **6.4 The TLI emphasizes internationalization of its research.**

Although according to self-evaluation there is a procedure of collection and coordination of information on various international programs, proposed by different foundations and partners, the research activities and programmes, based on international cooperation agreements signed by EU, are very few, nearly not noticeable. Although the sub-goal of participating in grant competitions with international financing is formulated in the EU strategic development plan, and although recently some measures have been taken with the aim of being involved in 2 ERASMUS+ programs as coordinator and partner (although the mentioned format is aimed at developing capacities, there is some research element in it), noticeable progress in this perspective has not been recorded yet.

EU takes some measures with the aim of organizing international scientific conferences and making publications in magazines of CIS and foreign countries. According to self-evaluation, the teaching staff of EU annually participates in 25-30

international scientific conferences and scientific seminars, which mostly take place by individual initiation. During 2015-2019 the EU lecturers printed 20 works in the CIS and internationally reviewed magazines and collections of materials of scientific conferences. It is worthwhile to mention that there are no researchers being printed in journals with high index of citation yet. There is no information on scientific publications in collaboration with researchers of international universities. There is also no information of PhD student mobility within the framework of ERASMUS + program.

In the state of lack of a department coordinating the development of scientific-research activities the departments of external relations and internationalization or responsible individuals in EU prioritize the educational component of internationalization process, rather than the research component.

### **6.5 The TLI has well established mechanisms for linking research with teaching.**

According to self-evaluation, one of the ways of linking research activities with learning process in EU is the introduction of the research outcomes implemented by the lecturers within the learning framework of the given course (educational manuals, monographs). In the last five years the lecturers of EU have published 11 scientific-research and educational-methodological works.

EU has a multi-component system of student assessment, within the framework of which points for individual research papers are intended, but the students may skip that research and get the passing grade only by intermediate and final exams. On the other hand, the evaluation mechanisms of individual papers are not clearly defined (for example, rubrics).

The list of topics of research papers of students is formed and presented by the lecturer teaching the given course. There is no information on the topicality of the research topics offered to students within the framework of academic programmes and their further applicability, which makes it difficult to evaluate the quality of research papers. The supervisors of research topics are mainly appointed without taking into consideration the student's opinion.

The observation of academic programmes, graduation papers and master's theses has shown that

- The auditorium workload of the student is great, which does not leave necessary time for conducting research within the scope of the course,
- There are no separate courses teaching research skills and techniques; doing that within other courses solely depends on the wish of the lecturer and the fact of giving the issue importance,
- The assignments of courses are not aimed at developing analytical and research skills of students,

- The graduation papers and master's are mainly descriptive, the data used in them is not topical, the application of methodological tools is not visible there, the component of research and analysis is weak.

**Considerations.** The expert panel evaluates positively the fact that EU has intended to become a research university, obtaining necessary teaching staff and infrastructures. On the other hand, not giving much weight to the development of research in the strategic development plan, lack of clear and complex policy on research, lack of clear and meaningful definition of research directions can move research to the background for a long time and in fact risk the quality of academic programmes.

The expert panel also evaluates positively the foundation of the scientific-research laboratory under the Chair of Management, the continuation of educational and research activities in collaboration with Synopsys Armenia, considering that these cases can serve as model examples for other scientific-educational departments. The clear realization of some problems with the development of research in the university is also positive. Meanwhile, the ambiguity of promotion of the mentioned examples, the lack of long-term, mid-term and short-term plans of research development, the lack of clear indicators of research outcome do not allow the research to become an inseparable part of EU planning and overall activity. The expert panel finds that the lack of clear and coordinated research policy has not financial, but organizational reasons. Research policy is not being coordinated and organized. The lack of specialized department or an individual responsible for the coordination of scientific programs in the university, not defining target problems by the Board of Trustees in terms of research development, nearly fully leaving the coordination of research to highly occupied and multifunctional heads of chairs come to prove the above-mentioned statement.

Along with evaluating positively the fact that there is some normative base in EU for somehow coordinating the implementation of research, the expert panel is preoccupied that the university does not take necessary measures for encouraging research implementation. The free-of-charge printing of articles of EU lecturers in the collection of university articles is an important factor, but not enough. Publication in the journal of EU, as well as other reviewed journals of the republic, moreover, internationally reviewed and highly cited juvenilization corresponding differentiated financial incentive. The weakness in fundraising capacities, the weak links between EU on the one hand and state institutions and the business sector on the other, overall weak coordination of research development in the university are caused by scarcity of financial means. The research sphere in the university is financially unstable.

Noticing some efforts of the university aimed at internationalizing research process and outcome, the expert panel finds that the low rate of lecturers being published

in internationally reviewed journals and materials of scientific conferences, lack of publication in highly cited journals, scarcity of research programs in collaboration with partner universities or scientific organizations show that the internationalization of EU activities is far from satisfactory, which risks the visibility of the university and, thus, the opportunities of getting scientific grants. No tangible results of implementing collaborative research programs as a result of international cooperation were recorded.

The expert panel evaluates positively the fact that EU encourages the publication of monographs and educational-methodological works of lecturers, linking them to education. The existence of multi-factor assessment of a course is also positive, the targeted and coordinated use of which will promote the strengthening of the link between research and education. Meanwhile, the small number of the mentioned publications, drawbacks in structural segments of research activities of students, non-involvement of students in research programs of the university (also because of scarcity of such programs), the not research-centered requirements of the course assignments, great auditorium workload of students, the problematic aspects of conducting and evaluating graduation papers and master's theses, and other factors do not provide the strength of research component of learning, which risks the quality of academic programmes. Considering the aim of research skills and capacities, the structural segments of conducting research activities by students need improvement. Besides, the introduction of research outcomes into the academic programmes is not coordinated and does not have a significant effect on the educational process.

There is no initiation of conducting external research activities and programs, especially in the branches of European University.

**Summary.** Taking into consideration the fact that the university does not have a clear policy of research and development, the research directions are not clearly identified and no short-term, mid-term and long-term planning occur aimed at them, no coordination of research development process is implemented, there is disproportionality in terms of functions and a serious problem of financial stability and provision of the research field, the rates of research outcome are very low, there are no tangible results of international cooperation of the university in the field research, the research component of learning is weak, and it is not yet an important and inseparable component of students' activity, the expert panel finds that European University does not meet the requirements of Criterion 6.

**Conclusion.** The correspondence of the institutional capacities of EU the requirements of criterion 6 is **unsatisfactory**.

## VII.INFRASTRUCTURE AND RECOURSES

**CRITERION: The TLI has necessary resources to create learning environment and to effectively support the implementation of its stated mission and objectives.**

### **Findings**

#### **7.1 The TLI has an appropriate learning environment for the implementation of academic programmes.**

The learning process in European University is being conducted in the classrooms available for use by EU in its branches in Yerevan, Gyumri, Vanadzor, Ijevan and Kapan, and these classrooms are equipped with necessary technologies. In the meantime, EU library, made up of necessary specialized literature and with its reading hall, the electronic library, WiFi connection, as well as computer labs, halls equipped with modern technologies, and the like are provided to contribute to the learning and research of the students. In order to enhance the practical skills of students over the academic year of 2018-19 a research laboratory is founded within the chair of management, and a courtroom within the chair of law for performing moot cases.

There is a sports ground on the campus of Yerevan headquarters of EU. The Institution has endeavored to build a covered sports ground too, and it plans to have a covered sports hall.

Throughout the meetings with focus groups following the experts' visit it appeared that the learning resources are mostly modern, and they contribute to the educational outcomes needed. It was specified that due to the bilateral meeting, EU students are entitled to make use of the books in the National Library of Armenia for a month.

But as a result of the expert analysis, it came to light that the libraries have a lack modern specialized literature which was once more proved by the outdated data in the Master's theses. Meanwhile, it is worthwhile to mention that as a result of the previous visit it appeared that the library of the institution does not cooperate with international libraries, it is not even subscribed to any electronic database. This expert investigation also comes to prove that no progress has been noted.

#### **7.2 The TLI provides appropriate financial resources with necessary equipment and facilities as needed to achieve its mission and objectives.**

Resource provision policy of the Institution is based on the objective and actions of the strategic plan of development in 2018-2022, namely *Investing Mechanisms of Effective Management of the Financial Resources*, in line with which finances are allotted per year to the implementation of major and current renovation, to the improvement of



the classroom resources, the expansion of logistical provision, the investment of information technologies in the learning process and the stocking of library resources.

The necessity of acquiring or updating required means and equipment is laid down in the claims made by the departments, and these claims are provided by the administrative and financial manager and the subordinate departments.

During the meetings with internal stakeholders following the experts' visit it appeared that the institution has gone to the expense of improving the learning environment; major renovation has been performed in the branches of Gyumri, Vanadzor and Ijevan, the logistic base has been stocked and updated. In the branch of Vanadzor an electronic library has been created. In the branch of Gyumri the classroom property has been fully updated, and an electronic library has been created.

As stated by the participants of the meeting, EU conducts a situational assessment of the effectiveness of investments. More precisely, EU branch of Gavar has been closed since the required expenses aimed at the renovation could not be justified because of the scarce number of students. It is worthwhile to note that in the light of the scarce number of students in the provinces, the Institution still covers the expenses of the resources.

### **7.3 The TLI has sound financial distribution policy and capacity to sustain and ensure the integrity and continuity of the academic programmes offered at the institution.**

In European University there is, in fact, a certain mechanism aimed at allocating finances, according to which pre-budget statements for the coming year are being made annually where the areas of the distributed finances are reflected. The rector of the Institution implements the current financial management of EU budget, and the Board of Trustees controls the affirmation and implementation of it. And the control of EU budget is implemented through reports and independent audits.

The allocation and the areas of means allocation aimed at fulfilling the predominant objectives of the strategic plan of European University lay the foundation of planning the finances of the Institution. But the policy and procedures of allocating the financial resources are not available. Besides, mechanisms of planning the budget in line with the objectives of academic programmes are not available either. And the allocation of finances is not implemented based on the needs of academic programmes in various branches.

EU budget is primarily made up of the following sources: tuition fees (according to the performance report it constitutes 92.10%), budgeting funds (6.71%), rental funds (1.05%) and fee-based courses (0.13%), and that creates a special sort of dependence of the Institution on the number of students and tuition fees, as recorded by the group of experts.

The expenses of the university are planned, based on the needs and financial capabilities. According to the EU budget of 2019, the bulk of the expenses (52.97%) in the performance report is allotted to the salaries of the professors, study-related staff, and administrative and technical staff.

As a result of the experts' visit it was stated that the Institution appreciates the importance of expanding the financial sources of the budget. To this end, some actions have been taken to ensure the sustainable growth of the inflow of students and the increase in the financial assistance from the state, moreover, increase in the incomes from fee-based courses and tuition fees. Nonetheless, precise mechanisms of the diversification of financial sources in EU are not financed. The discovery and management of risks are also situational.

#### **7.4 The TLI's resource base supports the implementation of institution's academic programmes and TLI strategic plan, which promotes for sustainability and continuous quality enhancement.**

Over the recent two years, European University has garnered and modernized its resource base, which assures certain sustainability of academic programmes and the implementation of the strategic plan. Yet, the functions of assuring and improving their quality are not specified, though during various surveys (esp. among students) the problems related to the resource provision of the educational programs are detected. The allocation of the Institution's budget is not implemented through the allocation of precise indicators. EU does not have a reserve fund. The management of the effectiveness of allocating financial resources, planning and management of the risks is incomplete.

#### **7.5 The TLI has a sound policy and procedure to manage information and documentation.**

The management of information and documentation in EU is implemented under the Charter of EREA document flow. In European University there are certain mechanisms and tools targeted at the management of information and documentation. Foremost, EU webpage, the accounts available in the social media, the system of electronic archive and current document flow, and the electronic information system /EUC loud/, via which the stakeholders are notified of educational, administrative, research and other types of processes being performed in EU serve to this end. In the meantime, as a result of the experts' visit it appeared that the process of enforcing the administrative decisions and commands of the Institution cannot be considered systematized, and EU electronic information system, implemented in 2020, is not completely and fully applicable yet in terms of notifying the external and internal stakeholders and managing the Institution's processes. The documentation with international students and international members of the Board of Trustees is not

systematized. The operation of the system was hampered by the fact that because of the COVID-19 pandemic the University transferred to distance work, for this reason and due to the technical features of the system the electronic system was not used.<sup>13</sup> Some of the necessary processes on the website of the Institution cannot be found for international external stakeholders. Meanwhile, the experts' visit comes to prove that in EU MOODLE learning platform, designed to integrate students, has been introduced, which is a quite operable system, especially in terms of online education, but the available experience does not always ripple through all courses of all academic programmes.

#### **7.6 The TLI creates safe and secure environment through health and safety mechanisms that also consider special needs of students**

Following the experts' visit it came to light that to ensure and control the security of the EU's territory in different buildings of the Institution, video cameras have been installed, and fire protection systems are available in all buildings of the Institution. Security workers and guards are also involved in security services. There is an evacuation plan for orchestrating safe evacuation from the building. There is a ramp for disabled people, but other additional facilities are not supplied. Despite the fact, the Institution has a large number of international students, the Institution does not have a dormitory. Yerevan branch of European University has a first aid station and a cafeteria. Construction works of a sports ground are being conducted. Meanwhile, in the branches of Gyumri and Vanadzor there aren't separate healthcare services, which are required for all students (including the handicapped students), Vanadzor branch does not have a first aid station, and in Gyumri there is a nurse who is available only for a limited period of time - 09:30- 14:00, by the end of the main part of the courses.<sup>14</sup>

#### **7.7 The TLI has mechanisms in place for the evaluation of the effectiveness, applicability and availability of recourses given to the teaching staff and learners.**

The evaluation of the contentment of students and the professional faculty in EU infrastructures and resources is conducted through surveys. As a result of the experts' visit it appeared that in the surveys conducted by European University there are some questions which concern the provision of educational programmes with required technical means, specialized literature and other educational and methodical materials, but not the evaluation of their applicability and effectiveness. Besides, it came to knowledge that students' needs have been found out, based on the surveys, and these needs have been met for a short period of time, e.g. the Institution has obtained a WiFi connection, new computers have been bought, the cafeteria has been improved.

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<sup>13</sup> This section was reformulated considering the University's observations.

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In the meantime, this expert examination revealed that after previous accreditation the mechanisms for evaluating the applicability and effectiveness of resources have been diversified, particularly the surveys, discussions held at chairs and class observations contributed to assessment of the needs regarding resources. Nevertheless, examining the content of the surveys revealed that they, in the current form, are not yet able to identify the needs reciprocally and comprehensively. It should be also noted that needs assessment regarding the resources, despite some positive tendencies, is not yet based on in-depth study of the requirements and outcomes of the academic programmes.<sup>15</sup>

**Considerations:** The expert panel appreciates the EU's efforts in the constant improvement of resources and assuring financial sustainability. Expert analyses come to expose that overall EU has the necessary learning environment. The classrooms, equipped with modern technologies, in EU's branches in Yerevan and the provinces provide the basis for the necessary learning environment of implementing academic programmes. They provide the basis for the constant improvement of the infrastructure in accordance with the academic programmes. Meanwhile, the scarcity of specialized literature imperils the implementation of the objectives of the academic programmes.

There are procedures of allocating finances in EU, but there is no sound policy: the priorities of allocating resources or the principles of their determination are not specified. It is worthwhile to mention that the financial planning of EU is, in fact, conducted, if necessary, since the process does not have systematized policy or mechanisms, thus the university's expenses are planned based on needs and financial capabilities. Foremost, planning, management and monitoring of the Institution's performance in compliance with the finances are not being conducted. The mechanisms for planning the budget by the objectives of academic programmes are incomplete. There are no mechanisms safeguarding the expediency of managing and allocating finances in line with their objectives, as well as applying the finances. These issues may endanger the proportionate development of objectives stated in the strategic plan.

In the meantime, the salary difference of the Institution's main professional faculty and those on secondment and the Institution's policy of entering into a contract with the professional faculty for one year can hinder the process of hiring qualified specialists and the sustainability of the professional faculty. The expert panel finds the dependence of EU on tuition fees bothering since it can give rise to the risk of ensuring the education continuity of the students with lower academic achievement. Besides, the admission of smaller number of students can entail risks of not assuring the full rate of

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<sup>15</sup> This section was reformulated considering the University's observations.

lecturers. The precise plans in compliance with these problems can contribute to the disclosure and management of risk, as well as the assurance of financial sustainability.

The document flow in EU is conducted by a well-developed statute, but in fact the process of enforcing the Institution's administrative decisions and commands is not systematized. The external and internal flow of information is based on certain principles: accessibility, transparency and convenience. In this respect, the fact that the Institution has created its electronic information system and ensured its accessibility for the workers is positive. But the electronic information system of EU is not complete and full in terms of informing the stakeholders and managing the Institution's processes. The full installation of the system of document flow will enhance the improvement of the quality of administration.

The Institution takes enough measures to assure its security, but overall the healthcare services and the conditions meant for the disabled stakeholders need to be improved still in the branches particularly.

The responses of the students and professional faculty's contentment in the available resources are received through surveys, class observations and discussions held at Chairs, which are not yet implemented upon the in-depth study of the educational programme. The effective application and enforcement of the mechanisms for evaluating the applicability, accessibility and effectiveness of the resources will contribute to the discovery of problems related to the accessibility of resources, and to solving them.

**Summary:** Taking into consideration the fact that European University has learning environment provided by the classrooms, technologies and libraries, the recognition and intention of diversifying sources of finances, the intention of applying electronic systems for organizing the learning process, communication and document flow, surveys aimed to discover the needs related to the resources, the expert panel assumes that European University meets the requirements of the criterion.

**Conclusion:** The correspondence of the institutional capacities of EU to the requirements of criterion 7 is **satisfactory**.

## VIII.SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY

**CRITERION: The TLI is accountable to the government and society for the education it offers and the resources it uses as well as for the research it conducts.**

### **Findings**

#### **8.1. The TLI has a clear policy on institutional accountability.**

To regulate the process of its accountability, European University has adopted *the procedure of implementing the policy on accountability to stakeholders*, which specifies the internal and external stakeholders of the Institution, the areas of accountability system, the mechanisms of assuring accountability and the types of their feedback. The principle of internal hierarchic and vertical accountability dominates in the university. The chairs submit reports to the Faculty Councils, dean's offices and Student Council, administrative departments, i.e. to the Rectorate, and the rector renders it to the Board of Trustees annually. There is no system of accountability for the lecturers available and applicable. European University submits reports to the RA MESCS, Science Committee, State Revenue Committee, Committee on Statistics and other state offices by rendering the required data and information on the specified basis.

European University has culture of accountability. However, the reports are predominantly descriptive and factual. They are not based on the provisions prescribed by the strategic plan. There are no sound indicators for assessing the performance of the reports; there is no analysis of performance available, which would expose the level of implementing the strategic plan, short-term and medium-term planning.

Though the inclusion of current and previous years' gaps in the reports is one of the requirements of *the procedure of implementing the policy on accountability to stakeholders*, the monitoring of EU various reports manifested that the discovery of the problems and gaps and the analysis of their causes, as well as the suggestions of amending them are not available.

EU reports are mainly informative and descriptive. There are facts, figures, data stated in them, which are not appreciated from the perspective of core indicators of evaluating the result, and they do not proceed from the objectives stated in the strategic plan. In general, the short-term planning of chairs and administrative departments are mainly operational, they do not derive from the long-term planning and do not comprise an authentic set of Key Assessment Indicator. As a result of the expert visit it came to light that the reports are being submitted in a standard format where there are a few considerations and discussions.

In the light of studying EU's website it appeared that the reports of the Institution to various bodies are not uploaded there. While studying the documents, no reports of the branches have been available.

## **8.2. The TLI ensures transparency of its procedures and processes and makes them publicly available.**

The transparency and accessibility of the Institution's procedures, processes for the public are ensured by EU Quality Assurance and Communication Department created in 2019 via the university's website, Facebook and other types of social media. The information on EU is accessible also in various educational online platforms and manifestos, Yellow pages, manifesto *Dimord*, etc. Graduate and student guides are being uploaded in EU's webpage. Taking into account the fact that the Institution has a great number of foreign students and applicants, there is the page [www.eriicta.com](http://www.eriicta.com) available for them, which provides information on the Institution, the professions available and the qualifications it confers on, learning and tuition fees, the mechanisms for feedback and electronic registration are also accessible. It is worthwhile to mention that the information in the official website is not all-inclusive, and some documents of paramount importance are not accessible at all. Information on the branches is almost skipped.

On the trilingual website of the university and its Facebook page there is information on the news, advertisements, events and other currently performed activities, which assures the accessibility and transparency of information on the Institution's performance. But it should be noted that suchlike updates are not regular. Some documents of paramount importance (reports, estimate of revenues and expenses, the performance report, and the like) and procedures are not available on the website and are not accessible to the stakeholders. The protocols and decisions of the sittings of the Board of Trustees, Scientific Council, the Rectorate, Faculty Council and the chairs are not available on the website. Educational programmes are very generally introduced on the website. The applicants cannot be informed of the mobility chances, competitive advantages, the approaches and methods of teaching and learning. Course content is not available either.

Though as a result of the expert visit it came to light that some lecturers have been hired following the advertisement of competition set on the webpage, the page does not contain the complete information on career possibilities (work conditions, salary, etc.).

Facebook pages of the Career Center and Student Council are also available, via which corresponding infrastructures share the information on their performance. EU contacts are placed on the page, and anyone can contact people in charge.

### **8.3. The TLI has sustainable feedback mechanisms for establishing relations with society.**

The normative base for European University's communication and feedback with the society is made up of the following documents, viz. *EU Strategic Plan of Development of 2018-2022*, *EU Strategic Plan of Communication Development of 2019-2022* and *EU Policy on Feedback*. According to the self-evaluation, feedback mechanisms are the website, Facebook and pages in other types of social media, the surveys with the stakeholders, meetings with the stakeholders, etc.

Quality Assurance and Communication Department, partly Career Center too, perform the function of feedback. These departments have been built very recently, thus their strategic development and strategic performance are still in the phase of planning or initiating. Foremost, surveys are being conducted with the students to assess the teaching quality; surveys are being conducted among students, lecturers and administrative workers to find out whether they are satisfied with the resources; surveys are being conducted even with freshmen to discover some data regarding pre-university education. Once in a while meetings and discussions are held regarding the relevance of the requirements of the labour market to the outcomes of the educational programmes. Quality Assurance and Communication Department follows EU Confessions informal platform of feedback as well. The expert panel, though, has reported that qualitative analyses of the compiled information have not been performed per se. The expert panel has not noticed any serious discussion of the Institution's performance in EU Confessions. The group has not been provided with a document, which would introduce the feedback (opinion, monitoring, counselling, etc.) with international partners concerning the processes of the Institution.

There is no information available on the fact that EU performs certain significant functions, prescribed by *EU Strategic Plan of Communication Development of 2019-2022*, such as:

- analysis of public opinion and rate of EU,
- analysis of critical features in the media and on the Internet about EU and its submission to the rector,
- preparing and sharing media notifications.

At any rate, analyses targeted at assessing the effectiveness of those measures as means of feedback are not available.<sup>16</sup>

As a result of the previous process of accreditation, this expert visit and document study appeared that the Institution does not perform evaluation and in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of the applied tools and feedback, and while selecting the mechanisms does not rely on accurate data.

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<sup>16</sup> This section was reformulated considering the University's observations.



EU has been on Facebook (European Regional Educational Academy-@Euauniversity) since 2011. After renaming the University in 2018, the above-mentioned page continued to be active, in September 2020, the second EU account, called European University Armenia - @European.University.ARM, was created.<sup>17</sup> The page content mainly includes news, the Institution's daily life and certain processes. Special attention has been paid to the participation of the Institution's students and graduates in Artsakh 44-Day War, and the substantive and moral support of the Institution's lecturers and students to them. The posts on Facebook, which referred to the educational process of the Institution, academic projects or competitions, have not been greatly reviewed and discussed upon the consideration of the expert panel, that is why, it was unlikely to evaluate the reliability and dependability of Facebook page as a mechanism of feedback. However, as a result of the expert visit it came to knowledge that the Institution's management intensely responds to the issues raised both on social media and individually, and does its best to solve them.

Though EU appreciates the university's website as a tool of feedback, via which anyone can address a message and get a response by the self-evaluation, the expert panel has not reported any analysis of the effectiveness of the tool. The website enables to register the applicants.

Following the expert visit, it appeared that EU has not established any sustainable and regular contacts with state or international bodies in charge of systematizing the areas related to its professions in order to take actions aimed to improve the educational programs and researches. EU is in partnership with some institutions and private companies of tourism and law, however, the Institution does not have close and regular ties with state offices, which systematize the areas related to its professions.

The expert visit and self-evaluation, the study of documents come to expose that though the majority of members of EU's Board of Trustees are engaged in active specialized, educational, business and public activity, they do not take intense measures to establish stable ties between the university and economics, state sector and labour market.

#### **8.4. The TLI has mechanisms that ensure knowledge transfer to the society.**

Though EU considers the European University's collection of scientific articles a mechanism of transferring knowledge to the society, it has not performed any analysis or monitoring as regards to the "consumption" and expediency of the articles published in it (e.g. which spheres the results of the articles have been invested in, innovation or what references have been made to these articles in scientific publications). It should be noted that the collection is available on the Institution's official website.

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<sup>17</sup> This section was reformulated considering the University's observations.

Another mechanism is the fact of organizing training to receive the right to manage public education institutions. The first training was conducted in December 2019. The specialized lectures, trainings (which are associated with the activities of professional orientation) conducted by the lecturers of EU within the framework of visits to high schools and specialized colleges, and the seminars and open lectures organized in EU are certain mechanisms that ensure knowledge and value transfer (in this case, for pupils and college students).

EU has great professional potential for performing systematized and specialized counselling for the workers related to its professions (tourism and service, psychological services, legal services, business, economics, cultural institutions, etc.), but remarkable actions in this regard have not been taken.

The expert panel has reported as well that the Institution does not perform and make public researches of applied significance for the public (Student research on Yerevan's tourist attraction was the only case discovered during the expert visit). Programs are being implemented in the Republic featuring state institutions and international organizations, which have a serious research component as a rule, but EU has not taken notice of them yet. Generally, the objectives and problems of providing services to the public are not stated in EU's appropriate documents.

A great number of measures stated in the self-evaluation (discussions organized by faculties and chairs, round tables, cultural, sports, patriotic events organized by Student Council in the Institution, Student Council's participation in Pan-Armenian youth gathering, celebration of the Independence Day in Yerablur Military Pantheon, etc.) can be considered manifestations of value transfer to the society, however they are very limited, and there is no way of measuring their volume and influence.

**Considerations:** The expert panel finds it positive that the Institution has an established and sound system of accountability, which is regular and hierarchic. The annual report rendered to the rector, as well as the reports submitted by faculties and other departments are found positive, too. Here the accountability mechanism of lecturers' performance, which has a direct impact on the quality of education is pivotal, but it is not available. Besides, the reports are mainly descriptive and do not reflect the direct link with the strategic plan, and are not meant to detect the problems, their causes, and put forward measures of overcoming them. It should be noted as well that the accountability system is implemented on quantitative and not qualitative basis. All this does not let complete the PIEI circle of improvement (because of incomplete evaluation circle), which endangers the constant development and improvement of those processes.

The expert panel appreciates the EU's aspiration to make its performance accessible to the public. The content of the Institution's website and Facebook page comes

to show that EU solves the problem partially. The fact that numerous procedures, foremost the reports and financial important statements concerning its performance are not posted on the website of EU, which inter alia results from the lack of resources and leads to the fact that the Institution's internal and external stakeholders are not entitled to consider the Institution's performance in its completion and intervene, if necessary, based on the evaluation of the expert panel. This may pose a threat to the important elements of quality assurance of EU's performance.

The expert panel appreciates the fact that European University has so important elements of the policy of links, communications and feedback with the society, such as its statutory instrument, the bodies performing its functions, diverse tools of links and feedback with the society (surveys, seminar-discussions, meetings, website and the media). In the meantime, the in-depth study of these elements comes to expose that they need to be drastically improved separately, and most importantly, the links and communication with the society are not well-developed, they need to be systematically managed. In particular, human resources are needed to systematize and implement that management who could improve the normative base of EU's PR policy and control its implementation. The reservation of quality assurance and PR policy to the same employee is not a right approach from the perspective of management. The infrastructure of quality assurance can discover solely the problems of the system of communication and links with the society, whereas the essence of the system's function is to find solutions to the problems, which should be in charge of another rate. One of the most notable problems of the system of feedback, communication and link with the society is the lack of completion and analysis of problems discovered by virtue of surveys, seminar-discussions, meetings, feedback of the website and social media, and that problem fails to enable to make the improvement measures more specific. The other problem is that the role of EU's Board of Trustees in the process of ensuring the feedback with the external stakeholders is low or invisible. EU does not receive any incentives from state or international bodies in charge of systematizing the areas related to its professions to take actions aimed at improving its educational programmes and research. The feedback is especially weak with international partners. And it, of course, diminishes the visibility of European University within international and local scientific-educational centers, in economics and society, impedes the creation of image tantamount to the Institution's potential. The multifaceted analysis of the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms and the system of links with the society will allow to find out available problems and their causes through targeting the possible ways of reformation. In order to ensure the feedback among external stakeholders, particularly employers and graduates, the performance of the Institution's Career Center needs to be facilitated.

The expert panel finds some mechanisms of knowledge transfer (scientific publications within the university, trainings with principals of public schools) in European University positive, which are, though, limited as to their volume and can be measured with great difficulty. Conducting trainings for getting a right (certificate) to manage public education institution is quite a progressive step, but since they have been conducted only once, they cannot be considered constant and stable yet. Despite the potential of EU's human resources, the fact that the Institution does not provide intense counselling services to its stakeholders or organizations, and it is not involved in state and international programs, which have a research component, the result of which is meant to solve pragmatic issues, comes to prove that knowledge transfer to the public is not necessarily appreciated, which, in its turn, confines the Institution's recognition and the application of its research outcomes. The transfer of values to society is spontaneous, mechanisms are not clear-cut, and the results are invisible or can be barely measured.

**Summary:** Taking into consideration the fact that the system of accountability of EU cannot contribute to the discovery of the problems related to the Institution's performance, the system needs some qualitative improvements, and the toolbar of ensuring the transparency and accessibility of the Institution's performance is not complete and all-inclusive and does not promote the assurance of stakeholders' feedback, the system of the Institution's feedback, communication and links with the society does not make EU visible within international and local scientific-educational centers, in economics and society, consequently, it hinders the process of creating an image tantamount to the Institution's potential, knowledge and value transfer to the society by European University is limited, mechanisms for transfer are not clear-cut, and the results are invisible, and the Institution does not conduct any analysis and evaluation of effectiveness for the applied toolbar and the implemented processes, the expert panel comes to the conclusion that European University does not meet the requirements of Criterion 8.

**Conclusion:** The correspondence of the institutional capacities of EU to the requirements of criterion 8 is **unsatisfactory**.

## IX.EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

**CRITERION: The TLI promotes experience exchange and enhancement through its sound external relations practices, thus promoting internationalization of the institution.**

### Findings

**9.1 The TLI promotes its external relations through sound policies and procedures aimed at creating an environment conducive to experience exchange and enhancement as well as internationalization.**

European University appreciates the internationalization of education and experience exchange, which is clearly reflected in EU's Strategic Plan of Development of 2018-2022, in line with which an important component of the university's mission is to establish firm partnership relations with local and international specialized educational institutions in order to implement EU internationalization, experience enhancement and exchange, and joint performance. For implementing this, the primary objective is the *Promotion of External Relations and Internationalization*, for which the following sub-objectives are specified: 1.promotion of external relations and international programmes, 2. enhancement of professional faculty and learners' mobility.

In order to enhance the possibilities of the Institution's internationalization and integrate it into the European specialized learning environment, European University became a member of European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) in 2018.

The University has a *statute of academic mobility in European University*, by which the procedures of participating in mobility programs are stated. There are cases of lecturer and student mobility, but their number is very scarce: during the second semester of 2019-2020 two students majored in Management studied in Austrian Fachhochschule in Kufstein, Tyrol.

Within the framework of the expert visit and following the meetings with students and professional faculty it appeared that the lack of motivation of potential participants in international programmes and other international projects primarily proceeds from the fact that EU external relations have intensified in the last 2-3 years, the successful implementation of which was hindered by the pandemic. Despite the fact that 93% of the EU teaching staff is fluent in a foreign language and 50% teaches in a foreign language, the University greatly supports the teaching staff and students in preparing documents related to mobility, filling out applications, and other relevant questions, according to the results of the meetings with the expert panel, this problem is pertinent

due to the fact that some of the stakeholders still do not feel confident in applying for English language course, as well as international programs and grants.<sup>18</sup> Another reason for the scarcity of international mobility programmes can be the low compatibility and attraction of EU's academic programmes for foreign students.

According to the EU website, as of 2020, 30% of EU students, including those in the preparatory department, are foreign students, with a large proportion of students from the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as from the Syrian Arab Republic and the Lebanese Republic.<sup>19</sup>

In view of having international students and cooperating with international institutions, some of EU's regulatory documents, education and information packages have been made bilingual, i.e. Armenian and English, and are posted on the website of EU. In the meantime, the expert panel has noticed the scarcity of advertisements and informative articles in foreign languages aimed at enhancing the admission of foreign students.

## **9.2 The institution's external relations infrastructure ensures regulated process.**

In order to assure EU's external relations and internationalization, by EU Strategic Plan of Development of 2018-2022 two new departments have been created: one is in charge of external relations and the department of international students. In 2019 the departments were renamed accordingly "Department of International Cooperation", whose functions are the systematization of international cooperation processes, organization and regulation of learners', professional faculty's and administrative staff's mobility, contribution to EU lecturers' publications in international journals, organization of receptions of international famous scientists and specialists, creating packages of applications for international programmes, supporting the learners and workers participating in mobility programmes, and "Department of International Students", whose main functions are to implement general systematization of international students, to support international students in their entrance and learning in EU, as well to solve various problems related to their housing. In 2020 the Department of International Cooperation was reformed and renamed "Department of Supplementary Educational and Career". The above-mentioned departments for their activities are directly accountable to the vice-rector for external relations. In fact, in the Department of Supplementary Education and Career there are 4 workers (3 rates), who apart from their main functions, perform diverse scientific-educational, technical and organizational functions.

In light of the considerations of the previous accreditation, EU has gone to expenses aimed at the development of internationalization and external relations linked

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<sup>18</sup> This section was reformulated considering the University's observations.

<sup>19</sup> This section was reformulated considering the University's observations.

with signing contracts, paying visits to various European universities, membership of EURASHE, organizing international conferences, etc.

In EU a platform of distance education, equipped with technologies, has been applied, where students and lecturers have the opportunity to attend lectures conducted by leading specialists of abroad, but this opportunity is not fully embraced.

### **9.3 The TLI promotes fruitful and effective collaboration with local and international counterparts.**

European University has signed agreements of cooperation and memoranda with a vast array of local and international institutions and bodies. The University effectively cooperates with Synopsys Armenia CJSC, Vivacell MTS, besides, it has facilitated its participation in various programmes of Erasmus+. The Institution has signed contracts with Educational Complex of Police of the Republic of Armenia, Armenian State University of Economics, Komitas State Conservatory of Yerevan from among Armenian institutions in higher education, and Payame Noor University of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Turiba University of Latvia, Austrian Fachhochschule in Kufstein, Tyrol, Vilnius Business College in Lithuania, Moscow Polytechnic University, Tver State University, Collegium Civitas in Poland, and the Industrial University of Leon out of international institutions. The Institution has re-established its cooperation with Eurac Research Center in Italy. Memoranda of Understanding have been signed with the foundations *Innovative Education* and *Education and Researches*, Water Committee of RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures. Actions are being taken to open an International Business School, and making it territorial afterwards.

But as it turned out following from the expert analyses, not all objectives of the signed contracts are implemented. The number of joint Master and Postgraduate programmes, jointly implemented scientific and research programmes is small. Meanwhile, EU academic programmes are mainly incompatible with their counterparts in abroad. The participation of students and lecturers in mobility programmes is implemented on an individual basis, though it is not being implemented because of distance education and COVID-19 pandemic.

### **9.4 The TLI ensures internal stakeholders' appropriate level of a foreign language to enhance productivity of internationalization**

To enhance its engagement in international partnership programs, European University aspires to ensure the appropriate level of foreign languages of its professional faculty and students. Profound teaching of the English language is being conducted in EU first and second years, which ends up with testing the language knowledge. In the third

year of BA, MA and Postgraduate Education, specialized English is being taught by the academic degree.

One of the criteria of hiring professional faculty in the Institution is the knowledge of foreign languages. Because of the discoveries following the previous accreditation, trainings aimed at enhancing professional faculty's command of foreign languages are being conducted. It should be noted as well that some academic programmes are taught in English, which is emboldened by 10% bonus. Once in three years the professional faculty and study-related staff complete attestation, during which the needs of foreign language trainings are also disclosed. But these activities are not systematized and need to be additionally planned.

It is worthwhile to mention as well that the knowledge of other foreign languages, apart from English, need to be enhanced, in particular within the domains of academic programmes of *Service* and *International Relations*.

**Considerations:** The expert panel appreciates the fact that after the previous accreditation the Institution has undertaken a great number of actions to improve its external relations and internationalization, which will lay the foregrounds for the future development. By having the external relations established and distinct documented policy and procedures of enhancing the Institution's internationalization, based on the corresponding objectives of the Strategic Plan aimed at guiding its functions in the given area, the Institution is engaged in consistent activity targeted at internationalization and development of external relations.

The fact that the Institution has a department in charge, apart from the regulatory documents, is considered positive, and the systematized and planned performance of the department will contribute to the implementation of set objectives. Meanwhile, the load of the department's workers conditioned by performing other functions as well can impede the department's systematized performance. The precision of the functions of workers in charge will contribute to the development of the Institution's potential aimed at external relations and internationalization, establishing new relations and increase of efficiency.

The process aimed at developing European University's internationalization and external relations tends to increasingly grow over the last years. It is positive that the EU attempts to establish relations with both local and international bodies, but the relations with specialized employers of the institutions in the RA and the activation of available contacts will contribute to the development of the sphere, and the mobility of students and lecturers. In the meantime, it should be noted that despite the fact that EU appreciates international cooperation, the link with the educational process is not specified every so often because of the low rate of academic programmes' attraction in the



international domain. The low rate of EU academic programmes' attraction in the international domain and the incompatibility of most academic programmes with their counterparts in international universities hinders European University's effective cooperation with international institutions and bodies.

In this regard, the mechanisms for assessing the efficiency of cooperation are incomplete. The improvement of assessment mechanisms will enable to discover the problems of the domain and will enhance the constant improvement of the quality of partnerships.

Besides, the accessibility of information on international programmes to focus groups, their motivation and the assurance of necessary skills of applying for international programmes are incomplete.

Overall, the Institution appreciates the knowledge of foreign languages and creates opportunities for students and teachers to take additional courses and improve it, but the current process has not had any considerable influence on international exchange programmes in terms of participation, and the number of joint educational and scientific programmes. The enhancement of the level of English among students and lecturers will foster the study of international experience and localization, mobility and the improvement of internationalization.

European University has actual opportunities of using the international ties and opportunities of the members of EU Board of Trustees from European countries so as to ensure the development of external relations and internationalization, but there is load of workers' functions in terms of implementing the systematized process.

**Summary:** Taking into consideration the fact that European University has recently performed intense activity for constantly developing and systematizing its mission's internationalization, regulatory documents are available, there is a department in charge, a great number of contacts have been signed with local and international bodies, EU appreciates and entitles its students and lecturers to improve their level of English, the expert panel assumes that EU meets the requirements of Criterion 9.

**Conclusion:** The correspondence of the institutional capacities of EU to the requirements of criterion 9 is **satisfactory**.

## X.INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

**CRITERION:** The TLI has an internal quality assurance system for promoting establishment of a quality culture and continuous improvement of all the processes of TLI.

## Findings

### 10.1 The TLI has internal quality assurance policies and procedures.

The internal quality assurance of education is fixed in the EU's strategic development plan 2018-2022 as a priority goal. In accordance with the SP development plan and the EU's development strategy for the internal quality assurance of education 2019-2022, at the EU, in 2019, a policy on quality assurance of the EU and a concept on quality assurance of education of the EU was developed and introduced. The policy defines the principles, milestones and procedures for the implementation of the EU quality assurance processes. The goal of the policy is, with the help of clear mechanisms, to ensure a continuous improvement of the University's quality, aiming at the implementation of the EU's mission. The goal of the EU's concept on quality assurance of education is to plan and turn into specific actions the procedures stemming from the EU's mission and priority goals as well as to guide their implementation process. The policy also defines the indicators for the evaluation of the internal quality assurance system, directed to the quality assurance of professional academic programs, evaluation of the lecturers and students, the quality of the required learning resources and ancillary services. Taking into consideration the problems revealed during the previous accreditation, the necessity to clarify the quality assurance processes and regulate the procedures in the Quality Assurance Guide, the EU in 2019 developed and published also the EU Quality Assurance Manual. In the Manual, the internal quality assurance policy, concept, procedures and toolkit are comprehensively introduced. At the EU, one of the procedures for the quality assurance and improvement of education is the "Survey procedure" which defines the procedures of the periodical surveys on quality assurance, identification and improvement of problems. It became clear from the results of the discussions during the expert visit that the problems identified as a result of the surveys are introduced by the Quality assurance and communications department to the EU Rector or during a rectorate meeting in order to give them a solution. The surveys are conducted among the local and foreign students, who study either full-time or part-time, as well as among the lecturers, aiming at the improvement of the internal stakeholders' needs as related to the PAPs, resources and infrastructure, subdivisions. As a result of the surveys conducted in order to evaluate the lecturers' needs, the necessity of training on evaluation methods was revealed, and the University has reached an agreement with the ESU to carry out trainings. In order to improve the PAPs, the Quality assurance and communications department also carries out, among the students, surveys on the courses and lecturers. The surveys on the courses and lecturers, carried out in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of the 2019-2020 academic year, included the following directions:

- quality of the knowledge acquired from the course;

- lecturer's professional knowledge;
- lecturer's skills to deliver the course;
- lecturer's personal qualities;
- applicability of the acquired knowledge.

Approximately 70% of the EU's bachelor and master students, who study full-time and part-time, took part in the survey. The European University started applying the survey mechanism also in the branches, although the policy is not widely implemented in the EU branches, yet, and the system is in its implementation stage. However, the studies of the expert panel show that the analysis of the identified problems and survey results reflect quantitative data, qualitative analyses are not conducted at the University, yet.

At the University, except the surveys, discussions with the internal and external stakeholders are also held. On the basis of the results of the discussions with the employers, changes were made, by the University, to the PAPs, increasing the proportion of the practical component.

The quality assurance rules, regulations and procedures, developed and revised for the EU quality assurance, are submitted to the scientific council for discussion and approval, as well as it becomes clear from the self-analysis that the department submits a report to the scientific council on the works carried out each year.

## **10.2 The TLI allocates sufficient time, material, human and financial resources to manage internal quality assurance processes.**

At the European University, the Quality assurance center was established in 2014. In 2019, due to streamlining, Quality Assurance and Communication Department was established, in the result of which the functions of the internal quality assurance of education were supplemented with the functions of communication, feedback, access to information and accountability. The regulation, approved by the Quality assurance department in 2019, defines the structure of the department, staff list, number of employees. The employees' duties, rights and functions are defined in the above-mentioned regulation and the passport of each employee. As a result of the change of the department functions, the department was supplemented with one more position, making it from two to three. Nevertheless, during the expert visit, two positions were occupied, that of the head of the department and one more position.<sup>20</sup> The Head of the department is appointed directly by the Rector and is subject to the Rector. In accordance with the self-analysis, for the procedure planning, implementation, evaluation, improvement, trainings, monitoring as well as the achievement of other goals, by the initiative of the Quality assurance and communications department and approval and order of the Rector, a Quality assurance expert panel was formed, which is provided with the required

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<sup>20</sup> This section was reformulated considering the University's observations.

property and material-technical resources to execute its functions. In this way, for example in spring 2019, a quality assurance expert panel was formed which, after participating in the trainings organized by the ANQA, elaborated a number of rules, regulations and procedures in order to ensure the correction of the comments related to the EU's institutional accreditation in 2017 and implementation of the actions of the EU strategic development plan 2018-2022.

The quality assurance functions of the EU branches are also monitored by the EU QAC department. Since September 2020, there have been positions responsible for internal quality assurance of education in the branches of the European University, including Vanadzor, Gyumri and Ijevan.<sup>21</sup> It became clear from the expert visit that a quality assurance policy for the branches is developed in the branches. The branch officials cooperate with the EU QAC department, trainings on the elaboration of regulations and awareness of functions were also organized by the head of the department for the officials. In the near future, it is planned to provide also financial means to arrange trainings on quality assurance for the branch officials. It became clear from the study of the documents that the head of the department regularly participated in the trainings organized by ANQA, while the other employers have not yet taken part in external trainings.

The Quality assurance and communications department has a separate room, property, material resources. It became clear during the expert visit that at the University, for the purpose of coordinating the processes, there is no one electronic control system for the headquarters and the branches.

The EU increased its funding for quality assurance processes by 0.19% in 2019, setting 1.24% of its budget for 2020. However, it is clear from both the previous accreditation process and this expert visit that these funds are mainly used to pay salaries.

### **10.3 The internal and external stakeholders are involved in quality assurance processes.**

The ensurance of the EU's internal and external stakeholders' involvement in quality assurance procedures is carried out in accordance with the "Policy for involvement of internal and external stakeholders in EU quality assurance processes". One of the non-formal structures are the internal and external stakeholders' opinions and problems identified by them, which are found on the EU social pages, as well as a box of comments placed at the EU. In order to ensure the involvement of the European University's graduates, as external stakeholders, the Career center initiated the establishment of a Union of the University graduates, which intends to ensure the connection with the University and graduates, ensure their involvement in the University's activity and quality assurance processes. However, it must be stated here that

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<sup>21</sup> This section was reformulated considering the University's observations.

the graduates are not fully involved in the quality assurance processes, the involvement of the Board of Trustees in the processes related to the identification of problems and definition of ways of improvement is not visible, either. At the University, among the external combining lecturers, who are directly involved in quality assurance process, the share of the lecturers representing employer organizations is large. One of the mechanisms for the employers' involvement is their inclusion into the final attestation commissions, however, it must be stated that the analyses of the opinions introduced by the commission are not yet systematic. The involvement of the internal stakeholders – teaching staff and students – is realized through the surveys carried out for the identification of their opinions. The survey analyses mainly contain quantitative data, qualitative analyses at the EU are still few. The Head of the Quality assurance and communications department, ex officio, is a member of the EU scientific council and rectorate, but for this, participates from time to time at the chair and faculty council meetings, but for the surveys, carries out individual and group (focus group) discussions with the representatives of the EU administration and lecturers, students, submits the studies of the documents and identified problems to the Rector or rectorate for discussion.

#### **10.4 The internal quality assurance system is periodically reviewed.**

In accordance with the EU self-analysis, the University quality assurance system is implemented in compliance with the principles of the PDCA cycle. Taking into account the problems identified and observations made during the previous accreditation, after the expert evaluation, the EU reviewed its strategy, mission, vision and goals defined in it.

For the achievement of the priority goal “Continuous improvement of quality assurance system”, an “EU Education quality assurance strategic development plan 2019-2022” was elaborated and confirmed, the actions, projects and results defined in it are periodically discussed by the EU rectorate, and the annual reports are submitted, each year in December, to the EU scientific council. To evaluate and improve the activity of the Quality assurance and communications department, benchmarking of the EU internal quality assurance policy and procedures was realized among the Armenian universities.

At the European University, the principles of the quality assurance PDCA cycle have just entered the professional discourse. It became clear during the expert visit that the internal quality assurance procedures in different areas of the University are on different levels of the PDCA cycle. In particular, a number of procedures and regulations, regulating the area, were developed, taking into account the results of the previous accreditation, structural changes were introduced. The main documentation basis was elaborated and introduced in 2019. Conditioned with this circumstance, the main part of the processes is still in planning and implementation stages. The PAPs were improved,

the students' evaluation system was changed, mechanisms for the identification and evaluation of the lecturers' and students' needs were introduced.

It became clear from the study of the self-analysis and meetings during the expert visit that the EU plans to review of the quality assurance system after the deadline of the Strategic development plan 2018-2022, as well as the University considers the institutional accreditation an opportunity for the review and improvement of the university activity as related to the quality assurance system.

#### **10.5 The internal quality assurance system provides valid and sufficient background for the success of the external quality assurance processes.**

In the framework of the European University's reaccreditation, the self-analysis, submitted by the University, is the second experience after the self-analysis in 2017. The self-analysis, as a basis for the external evaluation of quality assurance, contained some data which was mainly quantitative and did not serve as a basis for qualitative evaluation.

After the previous accreditation, the University also submitted reports on reform programmes for the ongoing processes.

The Quality assurance and communications department also carries out the internal evaluation (analyses of surveys and discussions, reports of monitoring), the results and analyses of which were also provided for the external evaluation.

#### **10.6. The internal quality assurance system ensures the transparency of the processes unfolding in the TLI through providing information on the quality of the processes to the internal and external stakeholders.**

In compliance with the EU quality assurance policy, at the European University, the important principles include accountability and publicity, transparency, objectivity. Provision of information on the quality of the processes at the University is realized through the university official webpage and Facebook page. The main documents related to the activity of the University, Quality assurance policy, Manual, as well as the two self-analyses conducted for the purpose of institutional accreditation are published on the webpage. Nevertheless, the meetings held during the expert visit proved that the awareness of the procedures and mechanisms is still on a low level among both the external and internal stakeholders of the University. The information on the quality assurance processes in the EU branches, main documents and regulations regulating the processes are not available on the webpage, either.

**Considerations.** The expert panel finds that, since the previous accreditation, tangible works, in the direction of the quality assurance system, have been conducted which had a periodic nature. However, the expert panel finds that there is much to be

done here and it is necessary to perform, through the definition of priorities and formation of a clear schedule, a future periodical improvement of the quality assurance system.

The expert panel gives a positive evaluation to the fact that the EU undertook, after the previous accreditation, to improve the quality assurance system and created a basis for its betterment. A number of basic documents and regulations were developed which will provide an opportunity to achieve the goals set in the mission. The Institution introduced a survey culture to identify the problems relating to different areas, as well as applies, in some cases, the method of focus group discussions. The in-depth realization of this all will be beneficial for the reinforcement of a quality culture at the Institution. At the same time, the expert panel finds that the introduction of an analytical component into the summary of the survey results, increase of frequency of focus group meetings, introduction of an internal quality assurance system in the Institution's branches will be beneficial for the system development and involvement of different stakeholders for the Institution.

The expert panel gives a positive consideration to the fact that there operates a responsible subdivision with three employees, there is an appropriate environment for effective work, there is a motivated staff at the University, the financial means allocated to the subdivisions were increased in 2019. At the same time, the study of the functions of the Quality assurance and communications department, the processes in the quality assurance policy and manual showed that the department staff needs replacement which will benefit the full achievement of the set goals and proportional development of all the areas of the Institution. The Quality Assurance Center is provided with material and financial resources, however, in reality, the works related to the quality assurance are carried out by the Head of the department, alone. In the branches, the quality assurance function is in initial stage.

The expert panel gives a positive consideration to the fact that the EU continuously carries out works in the QA processes to involve more internal and external stakeholders, nevertheless, the external stakeholders' motivation in the issue of identifying problems and suggesting solutions is still low. It is positive that the EU established a union of graduates, conducts different surveys among the internal and external stakeholders. Discussions of the results of the conducted surveys and a periodic organization of different focus groups will benefit the involvement of more internal and external stakeholders in the quality assurance processes and continuous quality improvement. The expert panel gives a positive evaluation to the fact that the Institution adopted and is guided with the quality assurance PDCA cycle. Part of the Institution's main processes is in the planning and implementation stages, however, there are several processes that passed the evaluation and improvement stages. The full implementation of

the PDCA cycle in all the areas of the Institution will benefit the development of a quality culture at the EU.

The expert panel gives a positive consideration to the fact that there are certain data collection mechanisms, however, they need improvement, because the collected data is not subjected to qualitative analysis and need to be summarized, and a clear planning based on their improvement. The expert panel finds that there are things to be done as related to spreading the information on the quality assurance processes and results of the carried out works which will benefit the increase of the QA system transparency.

**Summary.** Taking into account the fact that at the EU, since 2019, a number of reforms, aiming at the development of the quality assurance system were introduced, documents regulating the sphere were elaborated, a quality assurance policy and a manual were developed, there exists a relevant department, the EU provides necessary material and financial resources, the internal stakeholders are involved in the quality assurance processes through their participation in surveys and discussions, the EU adopted the quality governance PDCA cycle, the expert group finds that the European University meets the requirements of the Criterion 10.

**Conclusion.** The correspondence of the institutional capacities of EU to the requirements of criterion 10 is **satisfactory**.



## EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

<i>CRITERION</i>	<i>CONCLUSION</i>
1. Mission and Purposes	<b>Satisfactory</b>
2. Governance and Administration	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
3. Academic Programs	<b>Satisfactory</b>
4. Students	<b>Satisfactory</b>
5. Faculty and Staff	<b>Satisfactory</b>
6. Research and Development	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
7. Infrastructure and Resources	<b>Satisfactory</b>
8. Societal Responsibility	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
9. External relations and Internationalization	<b>Satisfactory</b>
10. Internal Quality Assurance System	<b>Satisfactory</b>

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**Menua Sghomonyan**  
**Expert Panel Chair**

24 February 2021

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1. CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

**Menua Soghomonyan** – in 2004 is awarded a Master's Degree at the Department of International Relations, Yerevan State University. In 2007 he received a Ph.D. degree in Historical Sciences. In 2007-2008, he lectured at the Chair of History at Yerevan State Medical University. In 2008-2015 he was an assistant at the Chair of Political Institutions and Processes in YSU, in 2008-2011 - Deputy Dean at the Faculty of International Relations in YSU, in 2011-2019 - Scientific Secretary in YSU, in 2019 – Deputy Rector for Academic Affairs in YSU. Since 2015 he has been an Associate Professor at the Chair of Political Institutions and Processes in YSU.

He is the author and co-author of a number of books and articles.

**Inna Pomorina** - in 1999 graduated with a Master's Degree from Leningrad Institute of Finance and Economics and University of the West of England. In 1984 she is awarded a degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Economics. From 1976 to 1995 she was a lecturer at Leningrad University of Finance and Economics, from 2000 to 2013 she was a Researcher and then a Senior Researcher at University of Bristol, and since 2013 she has been a lecturer at Bath Spa University in Great Britain. She is a member of a number of international agencies and associations, is the author and co-author of a number of scientific articles and researches.

**Suren Parsyan** – In 2011 he graduated with a Master's Degree from the Faculty of Management at Armenian State University of Economics, in 2013 he graduated with a Bachelor's Degree from the Faculty of Law at Yerevan State University. In 2014 he received a PhD degree in Economics, and in 2018 – the title of Associate Professor. Since 2014 he has been lecturing at the Department of Microeconomics and Organization of Entrepreneurship at Armenian State University of Economics. In 2014-2015 he was an expert of the Ad-hoc Committee on Studying the Activity of the Gas Supply System in the Republic of Armenia, and in 2015-2016 – an expert of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, in 2016-2017 - Head of Department of Trade and Market Regulation of RA Ministry of Economic Development and Investment. Since 2017 he has been in charge of Economic Research Office at Hrayr Maroukhian Foundation.

He is the author of more than 30 scientific works. He has participated in a number of programs, workshops, conferences and trainings.

**Larisa Harutyunyan** – graduated from the Faculty of General Economics at Yerevan State Institute of Economics in 2004. In 2010 she received a PhD degree in Economics. Since 2004 she has been working in RA Ministry of Finance. Since 2014 she has been the Head of the Department for Coordination of Cooperation with Foreign

Countries and International Organizations. Since 2010 she has been lecturing at the Chair of Education Management and Planning in Brusov State University. She is a visiting lecturer at Vienna Institute.

She is a member of a number of professional associations, and has received state awards, she has authored and co-authored scientific articles.

**Nora Gevorgyan** – graduated from Russian-Armenian University in 2005. In 2009 she received a PhD degree in Political Science. In 2014 she received a Master's degree in International Relations from Leiden University in the Netherlands. In 2017 she graduated from Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. She lectured at Russian-Armenian University, Yerevan State University of Linguistics and Social Sciences after V. Brusov, University of Tartu and Moscow State University. Since 2009 she has been an Associate Professor at the Chair of World Politics and International Relations at Russian-Armenian University, and since 2020 she has been a Researcher at New Europe College in Romania.

She has received awards and prizes, and is the author of a number of scientific works.

**Alla Sargsyan** is a year 4 student at the Department of Finance, Faculty of Economics in Gavar State University. She is the author of 6 articles. In 2019-2020 she was awarded the second prize as the “Best Student of the Republic of Armenia” in the field of social sciences. In 2020 she participated in the training of student experts, “Student Voice” project, at ANQA.

APPENDIX 2 VIRTUAL SITE-VISIT AGENDA  
OF THE EXPERT PANEL CONDUCTING EVALUATION  
FOR THE INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

**02 November, 2020 – 07 November, 2020**

<b>02 November, 2020</b>		<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duratio n</i>	<i>Input data</i>
1	Meeting with EU Rector	9:30	10:30	60 min	<b>Meeting ID: 841 8234 0408 Passcode: 618627</b>
2	Meeting with Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, Vice-Rector for External Relations and Educational Reforms, and Director of Finances	11:00	12:00	60 min	<b>Meeting ID: 890 9679 6936 Passcode: 969472</b>
3	Meeting with the working group in charge of SER	12:30	13:30	60 min	<b>Meeting ID: 892 4775 4779 Passcode: 752835</b>
4	Break, Expert panel discussion	13:30	14:30	60 min	<b>Meeting ID: 880 0970 5032 Passcode: 838207</b>
5	Meeting with Deans	15:00	16:00	60 min	<b>Meeting ID: 893 2253 7034 Passcode: 560329</b>
6	Document review and closed session of Expert panel	16:45	18:00	75 min	<b>Meeting ID: 880 0970 5032 Passcode: 838207</b>

<b>03, November 2020</b>		<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Input data</i>
1	Meeting with representatives of the Board of Trustees	9:30	10:30	60min	<b>Meeting ID: 849 2180 2233 Passcode: 783955</b>
2	Meeting with Heads of Chairs (10-12 members)	11:00	12:00	60 min	<b>Meeting ID: 835 7425 9027 Passcode: 713654</b>
3	Meeting with alumni	12:45	13:45	60 min	<b>Meeting ID: 868 4347 1917 Passcode: 673708</b>
4	Break, Expert panel discussion	13:45	14:45	60 min	<b>Meeting ID: 896 6462 3416 Passcode: 077105</b>
5	Meeting with employers	15:00	16:00	60 min	<b>Meeting ID: 894 7039 0107 Passcode: 852419</b>
6	Document review and closed session of Expert panel	16:45	18:30	105min	<b>Meeting ID: 896 6462 3416 Passcode: 077105</b>

<b>04 November, 2020</b>		<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Input data</i>
1	Meeting with representatives of full-time and part-time teaching staff (10-12 members)	9:30	10:30	60min	<b>Meeting ID: 895 7024 7790 Passcode: 747458</b>

2	Meeting with representatives of Student Council and international students (8-10 members)	11:00	12:00	60 min	Meeting ID: 863 9909 3361 Passcode: 336954
3	Meeting with full-time and part-time Bachelor students (10-12 members)	12:45	13:45	60 min	Meeting ID: 886 2826 0723 Passcode: 182909
4	Break, Expert panel discussion	13:45	14:45	60 min	Meeting ID: 840 8318 8840 Passcode: 630228
5	Meeting with full-time and part-time Master students (10-12 members)	15:00	16:00	60 min	Meeting ID: 843 8191 7317 Passcode: 200835
6	Document review and closed session of Expert panel	16:45	18:30	105 min	Meeting ID: 840 8318 8840 Passcode: 630228

<b>05 November, 2020</b>				<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Durat ion</i>	<i>Input data</i>
1	Meeting with representative(s) in charge of the Academic Programme in 'Service' specialty	Meeting with representative(s) in charge of the Academic Programme in 'Management' specialty	Meeting with representative(s) in charge of the Academic Programme in 'Jurisprudence' specialty	09:30	10:20	50 min	Meeting ID: 871 6195 8606 Passcode: 593000
2	Meeting with teaching staff in 'Service' specialty	Meeting with teaching staff in 'Management' specialty	Meeting with teaching staff in 'Jurisprudence' specialty	11:00	12:00	60 min	Meeting ID: 843 0238 8299 Passcode: 547414
3	Meeting with	Meeting with	Meeting with	12:45	13:45	60	Meeting

	students in 'Service' specialty	students in 'Management' specialty	students in 'Jurisprudence' specialty			min	<b>ID: 883 6124 1333 Passcode: 838644</b>
4	Break, Expert panel discussion			13:45	14:45	60 min	<b>Meeting ID: 895 1521 3001 Passcode: 434265</b>
5	Meeting with heads of departments (representative in charge of international relations, Head of Career Center, Head of Department of International Students, Accounting, representative in charge of science at Department of Academic-Methodological Control, representative in charge of HR)			15:00	16:00	60 min	<b>Meeting ID: 883 5262 0339 Passcode: 615779</b>
6	Document review and closed session of Expert panel			17:00	18:30	90 min	<b>Meeting ID: 895 1521 3001 Passcode: 434265</b>

<b>06 November, 2020</b>		<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Input data</i>
1	Meeting with Directors of EU branches, heads of administrative and educational departments	09:30	10:50	80min	<b>Meeting ID: 881 4038 2758 Passcode: 684136</b>
2	Meeting with representatives of teaching staff of the branches (8-10 members)	11:20	12:20	60min	<b>Meeting ID: 870 6787 7342 Passcode: 796468</b>
3	Break, Expert panel discussion	12:20	13:20	60 min	<b>Meeting ID: 824 6974 1533 Passcode: 076923</b>

4	Meeting with students of the branches (Bachelor, Master) (10-12 members)	13:30	14:30	60min	Meeting ID: 865 6454 1677 Passcode: 475869
5	Open meeting	15:15	16:00	45 min	Meeting ID: 849 4176 7425 Passcode: 278963
6	Document review and closed session of Expert panel	16:45	18:15	90min	Meeting ID: 824 6974 1533 Passcode: 076923

07 November, 2020		<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Input data</i>
1	Meeting with representatives of Quality Assurance and Communications Department	09:30	10:30	60 min	Meeting ID: 816 7628 5254 Passcode: 644034
2	Meeting with staff members selected by the Panel	11:00	12:00	60min	Meeting ID: 891 9423 7634 Passcode: 247293
3	Document review and closed session of Expert panel	12:30	13:30	60min	Meeting ID: 840 3630 6457 Passcode: 592595
4	Break, Expert panel discussion	13:30	14:30	60 min	Meeting ID: 893 3974 1297 Passcode:



					<b>664978</b>
5	Document review and closed session of Expert panel	14:40	16:40	120min	<b>Meeting ID: 840 3630 6457 Passcode: 592595</b>
6	Meeting with EU leadership	17:20	18:00	30min	<b>Meeting ID: 893 3974 1297 Passcode: 664978</b>

### APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

N	Name of Document	Criterion
1.	Indicators and bases for evaluating performance of the SP	1
2.	Sample of survey or in-depth interview for identifying the needs of internal and external stakeholders to develop the SP	1
3.	Reports or analyses of surveys and focus group discussions conducted for developing the SP	1
4.	Annual action plans of subdivisions (for the last 3 years)	1
5.	Annual activity reports of the faculties (for the last 3 years)	1
6.	Analyses of the annual reports of the SP	1
7.	Minutes of the meetings of the Board of Trustees (two samples for the last two years)	1
8.	Election package for Deans and Heads of the Chairs (announcement link, requirements, decision)	2
9.	Structure of EU branches	2
10.	Functions of the Department of QA and Communications	2
11.	Study and analysis reports of factors influencing the activity of the university	2
12.	Analyses of the results of surveys conducted in EU to examine the factors influencing processes at the University	2
13.	List of the staff at Chairs	2
14.	Educational workload regulations	2
15.	Annual plans of Faculties, Chairs and Subdivisions	2

16.	Reports of the Faculties and Chairs	2
17.	Minutes of the Faculty meetings and Chair meetings	2
18.	Survey analyses (for the last 2 years)	2
19.	Reports on discussions held with external and internal stakeholders in 2019, aimed at reviewing the academic programmes	3
20.	Minutes of the meetings for changes in the academic programmes	3
21.	Course descriptions of the academic programmes	3
22.	Internship reports (for the last 3 years)	3
23.	Benchmarking analyses of the academic programmes	3
24.	Documents on participation in grant programs	3
25.	Results of monitoring the academic programmes and employers' opinions	3
26.	Expert opinion on the academic programmes provided by the employers	3
27.	Protocols for class-observation, analysis of the results (for the last 2 years)	3
28.	Lecturer training plan	3
29.	Time-schedules	3
30.	Lists of assignments for all courses	3
31.	List of educational consultants; meeting schedule	3
32.	Registers, completed internship journals	3
33.	Protocols of the Chairs on changes in the academic programmes	3
34.	Time-schedules 2018-2019 of EU branches	3
35.	Admission regulations for students involved in preparatory groups	4

36.	Education tuition policy for student	4
37.	Bases for reinstating dismissed and dropout students	4
38.	Reports on the analysis of surveys to identify student needs (for the last 2 years)	4
39.	Procedure for selection of elective courses	4
40.	Career Center Report 2019	4
41.	Analyses of the effectiveness of student surveys and monitoring the quality and efficiency of educational services	4
42.	Standards for selection of lecturers (position descriptions)	5
43.	Journals of class observations	5
44.	Sample analysis of student surveys assessing a lecturer	5
45.	Results of mid-term and annual multifactorial evaluations of the teaching staff and examples of amendments based on it	5
46.	Analyses of needs for lecturer trainings	5
47.	Lecturer training packages	5
48.	Lists of scientific and educational-methodological works of the lecturers at the Chairs	5
49.	Portfolios and plans of the lecturers	5
50.	Schedule of scientific workshops; protocols	5
51.	Concept of training young specialists	5
52.	Lecturer attestation reports	5
53.	Class observation documents in branches	5
54.	Examples of graduation papers (for the last 3 years)	6
55.	Documents: articles in international peer-reviewed journals, citation index, budget	6

56.	List of publications per Chairs	6
57.	Budget of the EU branches	7
58.	Lists of replenishment with professional literature by specialties	7
59.	Samples of infrastructure satisfaction surveys and analysis of the results	7
60.	Annual monitoring of the academic programmes; report	7
61.	Reports of the Deans and Heads of the Chairs	8
62.	International cooperation contracts, agreements, memoranda of the University	9
63.	Reports on self-assessment and self-evaluation of institutional capacities and academic programmes of the University conducted by QAD	10
64.	Professional training for the Quality Assurance Department (QAD)	10
65.	Reports provided by Heads of Graduation Committees and their analyses (for the last 3 years)	10
66.	Examples of surveys conducted among international students	10

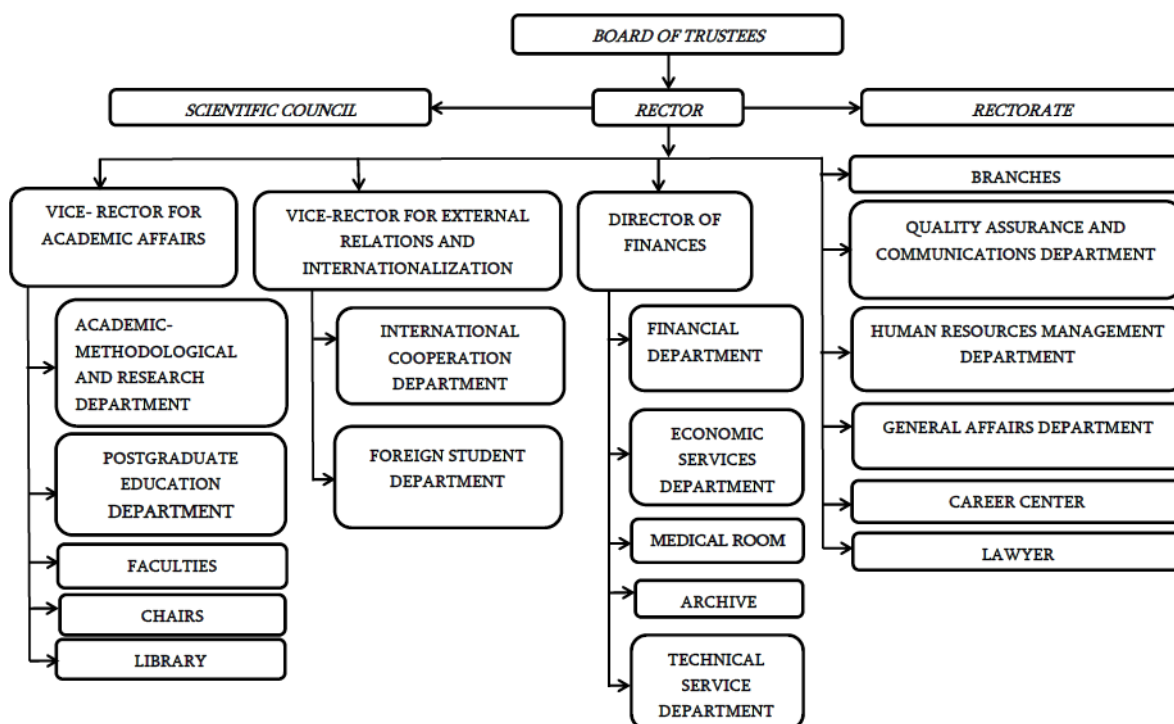
#### APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED<sup>22</sup>

1. Auditoriums
2. Infrastructures
3. Laboratories
4. Computer auditoriums
5. Canteen
6. Library
7. E-library
8. Reading hall

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<sup>22</sup> Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the resources of the University and its branches were observed online through videos submitted in advance by the University.

## APPENDIX 5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY



## APPENDIX 6. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**KPI** – Key Performance Indicator

**EU** – European University

**AP** – Academic Programme

**TLI** – Tertiary Level Institution

**QA** – Quality Assurance

**ANQA** - “National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance” Foundation

**NQF** - National Qualifications Framework

**ST** – Strategic Plan

**SSC** – Student Scientific Council

**SC** – Student Council