



ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

DECREE № 27

12 April 2018

On Awarding Institutional Accreditation to “EUROPEAN REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL ACADEMY” FOUNDATION

General Information on the Institution

Full name of the TLI	European Regional Educational Academy
Acronym	EREA
Address	Davit Anhaght 10, Yerevan, Armenia
Decision and timeline of previous accreditation	Have not undergone any

Guided by the regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs” approved by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N 978-Ն decree; by RA Government decree N 959-Ն (30 June, 2011) on “Approval of RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation”; by the Procedure on the Formation and Functioning of Accreditation Committee of “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation (ANQA) as well as by ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel, in the open session held on 21 March 2015, the Accreditation Committee of “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) discussed the issue of state institutional accreditation of European Regional Educational Academy (hereinafter: EREA) with the presence of the representatives of the RA Ministry of Education and Science, Chair of the Expert Panel, ANQA coordinator of the accreditation procedure as well as EREA representatives.

Having examined the self-analysis presented by EREA, the Expert Panel report, follow-up plan as well as ANQA conclusion, the Committee stated the following:

The main phases of the accreditation process were carried out following the below-given time-frame:

Submission of Application	May 19, 2017
Submission of Self-assessment report	July 7, 2017
Site-visit	02-05 October, 2017
Submission of Expert panel report	December 14, 2018
Submission of the Follow-up plan	January 30, 2018

The expertise was carried out by an Expert Panel formed in compliance with the requirements set forth by the ANQA regulation on the composition of expert panel. The assessment was carried out based in line with 10 criteria of institutional accreditation established by N959-Ն (30 June, 2011) decree on approving RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation.

While carrying out the expertise the expert panel took into consideration the fact that the EREA is a HEI which carries out transnational education (established on the agreement between the governments of the Republic of Armenia, Republic of France, and Federative Republic of Germany). The mission of the TLI is “To provide multi-profile higher professional education, regional coverage, European standards, international scientific education developments, implementation of scientific-research activities”.

The Academy has not undergone any accreditation in line with State Accreditation Standards operating before 2011. The current process of accreditation has been launched on the written application form of the Academy.

The EREA positions itself as an intergovernmental TLI however, the operations undertaken by the Academy are not in line with its mission. In particular, the TLI is aimed at carrying out education in line with European standards, yet the reflection of the latter in the Academic Programmes (hereinafter referred to as AP) is weak. The undertaken research is limited and does not reflect latest European and regional developments. In general terms, both internal and external stakeholders share the element of “professional education” reflected in the mission. Yet, the concepts “European” and “research” are less clear (vague) for stakeholders. The goals set in 2017-2020 SP are not precisely linked with the mission, which do not guide towards the implementation of the latter. Operating mission and the Strategic Plan (hereinafter referred to as SP) mainly do not reflect the opinion of internal and external stakeholders. Moreover, the lack of a holistic approach to evaluation and improvement of mission and aims, as well as that of precise and reliable mechanisms endangers the process of revealing achievements and drawbacks of the TLI, transparency of operations, as well as steps towards further precise and correct planning.

The EREA carries out 11 undergraduate and 10 graduate APs. Academic process is organized also in 4 regional branches of the TLI: those located in Gyumri, Vanadzor, Gavar and Ijevan cities. The APs are elaborated in line with current state academic standards. The Academy has started carrying out the academic process aimed at intended learning outcomes (hereinafter referred to as ILO). In generic terms, the ILOs described in APs are in line with National Qualifications Framework (hereinafter referred to as NQF), yet, the ILOs need diversification as far as separate components are concerned. ILOs are mapped per discipline. The contextual sequence of the latter is ensured. The policy on credit allocation is described, yet the said allocation is not carried out in line with ILOs.

Teaching and learning methods (hereinafter referred to as TLMs) are formulated in the APs per separate ILO. Yet, in the majority of cases, methods are generic for all outcomes: there is no method differentiation per knowledge and skills, and those are more aimed at knowledge formation, rather than that of skills and competences. The EREA underlines the importance of creating an environment conducive to student-centred learning. Notwithstanding the fact that at present the overwhelming majority of methods exercised are teacher-centred, it is evident that there is a strong inclination towards student-centred approach: the teaching staff does its best to implement modern methods of teaching.

The Academy has a multi-component assessment system. The assessment methods utilized in the Academy are more aimed at assessing the knowledge, rather than competences and skills. Assessment, teaching, learning and ILOs face the need of alignment. The TLI has requirements put forward to theses and assessment rubric per component, yet the examination of theses revealed that irrespective of existing requirements, not all theses comply with them, in particular, certain theses have a research and applied components, and some do not. Positive is the fact that the TLI has a procedure assisting academic honesty. Course and graduation papers and graduate theses are checked via Plagiatizm checking on-line programmes.

Fully realizing the importance of having teaching staff with high professional qualifications, recruitment is carried out either by means of competitions or inviting professors. Notwithstanding the fact that the TLI does not carry out evaluation of effectiveness of mechanisms of teacher recruitment and selection, both the students and administrative staff are contented with the teaching staff. Teacher recruitment is carried out based on requirements put forward to each category, yet those are very generic and are not described per separate APs. Worth mentioning is the fact that the Academy has adopted a policy of having only part-time teachers (hourly paid), stating that this way it is able to involve more specialists from practical fields. Yet, the teachers are not only representatives of practical fields; there are also many teachers who teach in other TLIs as well. Of concern is the issue of teacher stability, especially given the fact that almost all teachers are part-time, one and the same teacher teaches a number of disciplines (up to 6-7), which can have an impact on the quality of teaching on the one hand, and endanger the smooth academic process on the other hand.

The TLI has certain mechanisms aimed at analyzing and evaluating the effectiveness and quality of teaching and support staff operations; student surveys, lesson-observations, discussions. The Academy realized the importance of professional development, yet, either financial resource allocations (1% of the budget) or operations undertaken are but limited. Hence far, there are no serious achievements; moreover, the training carried out hence far are mainly due to personal ties of the teachers and on their own initiative. The TLI has certain mechanisms of teacher and support staff promotion (publications in the scientific journal of the Academy, monetary encouragement).

Currently resource base of the TLI is sufficient for AP implementation, which serves as a base for improvement and stability of operations aimed at AP implementation. Positive is the endeavour of the Academy to ensure the academic process with necessary resource base. The Academy is open and ready as far as resource allocation is concerned. Moreover, it strives to improve auditoria and laboratory conditions, modernize academic infrastructures. However, the classrooms are not adapted to implementing interactive methods and organizing different role plays, the number of auditoria with Smart boards and projectors is limited. Enrichment of resource base is mainly carried out either within the framework of international grant projects or donations. TLI budget is mostly accumulated from tuition fees, which is vulnerable from the prospective of stability. The TLI lacks a precise system of financial resource management and diversification of flows, which would otherwise be the token of financial stability. Financial resource allocation is not carried out based on strategic goals.

Student recruitment, selection and admission are carried out on corresponding regulations. Currently, the Academy has 1375 students (out of the said number 1010 study in Yerevan, and 365 in branches). Students get necessary support from the Academy. With the aim of enhancing effective learning of students, the TLI creates necessary opportunities to organize additional classes and provide recommendations. However, notwithstanding the fact that the TLI has Career and Alumni Centre, almost no operations aimed at student assistance are carried out, the centre is almost not integrated in academic procedures of the Academy, student awareness of the Centre is low. There is no alumni database, analyses on alumni employability are not conducted in a systematic way, data on student employability are received non-formally and are not thorough.

Research is one of the priorities of the Academy, yet its main directions and principles are not yet determined. Notwithstanding the fact that the issues to be found in the field of research are highlighted in the 2017-2020 SP, their formulations are generic and do not reflect concrete research interests. There are no budget allocations for the implementation of research-scientific operations, development and stability. No tangible steps targeted at finding financial means, aimed at enhancing research are being undertaken. No precise policy and procedures aimed at implementing and developing research are elaborated hence far. The TLI does not yet have a concept of viewing research and its outcomes as a stable source of income which would otherwise allow for commercialization of research procedures and its outcomes, as well as enhancement of a more applied and up-to-date research (in particular in line with modern trends of research operations at an international scale) and consequently have a considerable input from the perspective of ensuring stability of financial flows. No inter-chair and interdisciplinary research activities are carried out. Student involvement in research is very limited. The research carried out by teachers is mainly done on the initiative of the latter. There is a need to undertake more active and practical steps with the aim of ensuring harmonious link between research and academic operations and providing continuity.

Encouraged with its mission, the Academy underlines the importance of international relations both with local labour market and international colleagues. The TLI views the establishment of external relations and internationalization as one of its strategic directions, yet, there is a necessity to precisely elaborate internationalization policy and procedures, which can enhance precision of operations, activate cooperation and enhance student and teacher mobility. Cooperation with local companies is effective which has also been stated by employers. The lack of financial resources aimed at enhancing international cooperation, the fact that the TLI almost does not participate in grant projects hinder the process of effective cooperation with local and international establishments and bodies. Worrysome is the fact that being an intergovernmental TLI, cases of teacher and student development are extremely scarce; moreover, there are no mechanisms enhancing mobility.

The existence of documents regulating the functions of administration bodies, infrastructures, as well as those of separate posts, the existence of sectorial regulations and procedures ensure the viability and operations of management bodies. Since there is no regulated procedure on effectiveness evaluation of the management system and the operations of separate infrastructures, the TLI does not carry out evaluation of efficiency with human, material and financial resources, thus endangering the purposefulness of its expenditures. The system of governance of the TLI has minimal human resources, mainly through transferring the functions of infrastructures to one person-responsible, and within opportunities, combining different posts. The risk of such an approach is that the person in charge can be incompatible with the requirements of effective management of this or that post.

The system of governance in formal terms allows for teacher and student participation in decision-making operations. However, de facto participation of students in decision-making operations is quite passive, and no mechanism, aimed at revealing the reasons and enhancing their activity, is being implemented in the TLI.

As an outcome of a non-rooted nature of mechanisms and tools of implementing the SP and the loose link between the short-term plans and the SP, the latter does not serve as a document to plan and guide the daily operations of the TLI. No precise review of current procedures has been carried out, since the lion portion of the latter has only recently been elaborated and no precise mechanisms of review have been implemented. Environmental scanning is not systematic.

The TLI IQA is quite young and not thoroughly integrated in the procedure and is not carried out in a systematic way. Despite the policy, including some principles and guidelines, the existence of many processes, hierarchical IQA system is not yet in place. Although the TLI has developed quality assurance policy and procedures, those mechanisms, which would give the opportunity to evaluate the continuous improvement of all the activities and quality assurance culture formation processes, are not clarified and comprehensive. There are no systematized measures taken for the efficiency of the system, the collaboration with different subdivisions is very

weak. The imperfection of the mechanisms and the toolkit for evaluating the effectiveness of different processes and the lack of analysis do not give the opportunity to evaluate the QA processes influence on APs and improvement of academy's operations. Although there is some perception of PDCA processes and cycles, the existing procedures and processes are not segregated per cycles and are mixed. Because of the absence of the systematized feedback system, with the exception of students' evaluation of professors' performance, as well as because of internal and external stakeholders' infinitesimal involvement, the IQA system is not viable. IQA is not connected with strategic objectives and cycles. It has not yet defined qualitative and quantitative data to measure its performance and to improve its functioning.

Taking into consideration that:

- a. European Regional Educational Academy has sufficient material and human resources to carry out its APs at a decent level,
- b. Certain drawbacks and shortcomings have been revealed in different fields of its institutional capacities:
 1. **"IQA system"**-the shortcomings of the field impede the Academy to evaluate the effectiveness of its operations, reveal the drawbacks and risks, to search for solutions with stakeholders,
 2. **"Mission and Purpose"**-the issues of the field do not allow internal and external stakeholders to clearly perceive the positioning of the Academy and the specificities of organizing academic process in the territory of the Republic of Armenia,
 3. **"Governance and Administration"**-the issues here have a direct impact on the effectiveness of the management system of the Academy, modernization of APs and improvement of academic environment,
 4. **"Research and Development"**-the shortcomings of the field weaken the link between research and academic processes, can impede the formation of critical and analytical skills among the students,
- c. In case the above-mentioned shortcomings are not eliminated immediately, they can render the implementation of strategic goals as well as the trustworthiness of degrees awarded risky.
- d. The analysis of strengths, opportunities and current issues the Academy faces demonstrates that the implementation of corrective consultation aimed at reforming the situation is realistic, yet the follow-up plan needs precision and a strict external monitoring

As a result of voting the Committee:

DECIDED

1. **To award conditional institutional accreditation to European Regional Educational Academy for 2 /two/ years.**
2. After the publication of the decision on accreditation award, to submit the action plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report and respective time schedule to ANQA within two months taking into account:
 - a. the necessity of giving urgent solution to the existing problems existing in the field of “**Mission and Purpose**”, “**Governance and Administration**”, “**Research and Development**”, “**Internal Quality Assurance System**” peer reviewed results in accordance with international standards, recommendations;
 - b. the requirement of having KPIs for evaluating the effectiveness of operations undertaken by the Academy,
 - c. the peer review and consultations provided by the international experts on integration of the Academy into EHEA.
3. To pay special attention to strengthening the ties between research and learning, improvement of management system, modernization of necessary material-technical base, training of the teaching staff, teacher and student mobility, internal quality assurance.
4. According to the requirements of clause 12 of the Regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Education Institutions providing professional academic programs and their Professions” every 6 /six/ months to submit a written report to ANQA on the results of the carried out activities.
5. Taking into consideration December 16, 2017 decision of the Board of Trustees of European Regional Educational Academy to rename the EREA, accreditation certificate will be handed over to “European University” Foundation.

Chair of ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

12 April 2018

Yerevan

S. Avetisyan