

ISSUE 4 • DECEMBER 2023

# NEWSLETTER

## NEWS ABOUT PROJECT ACTIVITIES

### The Annual Steering Committee Meeting of SMARTI Project

On November 20, the annual steering committee meeting of Erasmus+ SMARTI took place at the Public Administration Academy of the RA in a hybrid format. The Meeting was attended by Gerard Cullen, the Project Coordinator from Dresden University of Technology; Katja Ullmann, the coordinator of the Language Center of the same university; and some representatives from Public Administration Academy of RA, Armenian National Agrarian University and other member institutions of the Project.



The Meeting's Agenda included:

- project's impact on the partner HEIs and educational processes;
- EMI (English-Medium Instruction) Centers' activities;
- testing of two English language modules;
- external review of EMI Centers and English language modules.

On November 21, ANQA held a meeting with the representatives of Dresden University of Technology. The discussions revolved around the planning and implementation of external review of the EMI Centers and English language modules designed in the Project's partner HEIs.



**SUPPORT FOR INNOVATIVE  
METHODOLOGY, APPROACHES AND  
TOOLS FOR TEACHING THROUGH THE  
MEDIUM OF ENGLISH IN ORDER TO  
IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL YIELD,  
SUSTAINABILITY AND  
INTERNATIONALIZATION**

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## National Awareness Day of the SMARTI Project at Vanadzor State University

On November 23, 2023, within the framework of the Erasmus+ SMARTI Project two important events were organised at Vanadzor State University for the internal and external stakeholders. The National-Awareness-Day Event, which was followed by the 1st piloting of the EMI two modules, was attended by some representatives from Lori Region Administration and regional universities; guests from the public sector and partner institutions; as well as a large number of academic/administrative staff and students of Vanadzor State University. The working languages of the event were English and Armenian.

Welcome speeches were made by Rustam Sahakyan, VSU Rector; Gerard Cullen, SMARTI Project Coordinator; Arpine Iraghatspanyan, Erasmus+ National Office representative; Tereza Khechoyan, Vice-Rector for Foreign Relations at PAARA; and Hasmik Mkrtchyan, Head of Programs at the Tourism and Analysis Department of Lori Regional Administration.

Lusik Vardanyan, the local coordinator of the SMARTI Project, presented a brief description of the current state of the Project.

The VSU students Arpine Hakobyan, Angela Ter-Movsisyan, and Ani Barseghyan, who participated in the PESTLE analysis of the Armenian economy performed by the students of Dresden University of Technology, as well as the online discussion organized by Liverpool John Moores University, expressed their positive feedback and impressions they gained from these meetings. They highlighted the importance of such events for the development of their professional competences and interpersonal skills.



## National Awareness Day of the SMARTI Project at Armenian National Agrarian University

On November 21, the regular awareness event, National Awareness Day, of the Erasmus+ SMARTI Project was held at Armenian National Agrarian University. Among the participants were Gerard Cullen, the EU coordinator of the Project, Katya Ullman, the director of the Language Center of the Technical University of Dresden, Tereza Khechoyan, the Armenian coordinator of the Project, Kima Ghulyan, the coordinator of the Technological Future of Armenia initiative, and Mariam Arzumanyan, the program coordinator of the British Council Armenia office. In addition to the Technical University of Dresden and ANAU, a number of universities from Latvia, Portugal, Great Britain, and Armenia cooperate within the project.

As previously communicated, the primary objective of the SMARTI Project is to assist professors across various disciplines in teaching their subjects in English and to facilitate the internationalization of Armenian universities, promoting mobility and staff and student exchanges.

Liana Vardanyan, the Head of the Career Development and Life-long learning division at ANAU and the Coordinator of the SMARTI Project, presented the project's progress and achievements. Discussions centered around proposals for organizing courses and events dedicated to English language development.

The Project Coordinator, Gerard Cullen, and other attendees expressed satisfaction with the Project's advancement. Mr. Cullen highlighted a "pleasant" concern regarding the limited number of Armenian students at the internationally exemplary Dresden University of Technology. The hindrance posed by inadequate knowledge of English and foreign languages, as acknowledged by Garegin Hambardzumyan, the Head of the Department of International Relations, is impeding the further development and specialization of students, particularly given the abundant opportunities for mobility programs at ANAU.

Within the Project's scope, ten modules have been developed, with "EMI Oral Teaching Skills" and "ESP Pathway" scheduled for implementation at ANAU starting from December 1.

At the end of the meeting, the guests visited the newly opened SMARTI EMI Center.



## National Awareness Day of the SMARTI Project at State University of Shirak

On November 24, the opening of the EMI Center was held at State University of Shirak within the National Awareness Days (NAD) of the Erasmus+ SMARTI project. The EMI Center has been equipped in the frame of Erasmus+ SMARTI project.

The opening ceremony of the Center was attended by the professor of the University of Dresden, SMARTI Project coordinator Gerard Cullen, the director of the Language Learning Center of the same university Katya Ullman, the Armenian coordinator of the SMARTI Project, the vice-rector of the Public Administration Academy of RA Tereza Khechoyan, SUSH Rector Yervand Serobyan, SMARTI Project SUSH coordinator Hovik Melkonyan, representatives of administrative, academic staff and students of SUSH and other universities of Gyumri.

At the beginning of the event, the guests were welcomed by Yervand Serobyan, the Rector of SUSH. He expressed his appreciation to SMARTI Project Coordinator Gerard Cullen for the fruitful cooperation and noted that the international cooperation is one of the strategic priorities of SUSH. Thanks to the international cooperation, new structural units, the Biotechnology Laboratory, etc. were established at SUSH.

As an outcome of the Erasmus+ SMARTI project, it is planned to establish another structural unit at the University - the Foreign Language Learning Center, which will provide educational services not only to the students and employees of SUSH, but also to the interested population of the city of Gyumri and Shirak Region.

SMARTI Project Coordinator Gerard Cullen welcomed the attendees and thanked them for their participation. He noted that the SMARTI Project is of great importance not only to Armenian Universities, but also to international cooperation.

As an outcome of the Project, the

academic staff and students of Armenian Universities and Dresden University will carry out mutual visits, experience and information exchange in the scope of the mobility program.

Hovik Melkonyan, the local coordinator of SMARTI Project, welcomed the attendees and thanked all the participant universities for their readiness to introduce and implement this new idea. He presented the activities carried out at SUSH in the scope of this Project. The Armenian coordinator of SMARTI Project Tereza Khechoyan and the participant of SMARTI Project Katya Ullman also gave welcome speeches.



## National Awareness Day of the SMARTI Project at Goris State University

On November 22, Goris State University hosted a series of events within the framework of the Erasmus+ SMARTI Project. The event was attended and welcomed by Lilit Atabekyan, the Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, Engineering, and Economics; SMARTI Project Coordinator Gerard Cullen; the Armenian Coordinator of the project, Teresa Khechoyan; the representative of the Erasmus+ National Office in Armenia, Arpine Jraghatspanyan; deputy head of Goris community, Irina Yolyan, as well as internal and external stakeholders of the university.

Meri Grigoryan, an employee of the GSU Quality Assessment and Assurance Department, presented the SMARTI Project, the functions of the EMI Center, and the pilot courses of the two modules developed by GSU to the participants of the event.

During the event, GSU students presented their perspectives on EMI, discussing academic mobility programs through a question-and-answer session.

As part of the event, the SMARTI EMI Center was officially opened.





## Dissemination of SMARTI Success on the Global Stage

SMARTI Lead Partner Armenia Tereza Khechoyan, Director for International Cooperation and Development at the Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia, attended a number of international events and presented the activities and achievements in 2023 under SMARTI project.



Particularly, she attended and shared the information about SMARTI Project at the following events:

- University of Maribor (Slovenia) where she attended the international week event and delivered lectures to the students of the Faculty of Economics and Business,
- Transilvania University of Brasov (Romania) where she delivered lectures to the students of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration,
- GIZ Eastern Partnership Regional Fund for Public Administration Reform “Professional Civil Service and TVET in the Eastern Partnership Countries” Educational Program in cooperation with the Hertie School, organized in Berlin, for women leader-representatives of Eastern Partnership countries,
- Skillman International Forum 2023 (Riga, Latvia) themed Planet of Skills. Renewed Perspective on Networking Potential organized by Skillman.EU (Italy) and Ministry of Education and Research of Latvia, attended by more than 300 participants,
- Activities under United Nations Economic and Social Commission Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (UN-APCICT/ESCAP) Digital Leaders Programme themed Empowering Women Entrepreneurs through Digital Transformation, organized by APCICT, Incheon, Republic of Korea.

# Connecting Minds, Empowering Futures Globally



# SMARTI TEACHING AND LEARNING

## EMI Center Opening and Module Piloting 1st at the Public Administration Academy of the RA



On November 21, the opening of the “English as a Medium of Instruction” Center took place at the Academy. The Center, equipped with the financial support of the Erasmus+ SMARTI Project, will serve to teach English at the Academy. The long-term goal is to teach the educational program “Public Administration” in English, which will contribute to the internationalization of the institution, student and staff mobility.

The first pilot training of Erasmus + SMARTI Project was conducted in the Public Administration Academy of RA. In order to observe and evaluate the works carried out within



the Project, Prof. **Eduardo Cardozo**, representative of the Catholic University of Portugal, a member of SMARTI Consortium, visited the Academy as an observer and evaluator.

As part of the SMARTI Project, representatives of PAARA have developed two modules. The module entitled “Oral Teaching Skills Part 2 (Case Studies to support analytical thinking approach)” was authored by the Director for International Cooperation and Development of the Academy, SMARTI Armenia Coordinator, subject teacher **Tereza Khechoyan** and English teacher **Lusine Grigoryan**.

“EMI Individual Teaching Support” module was developed by **Tereza Khechoyan**. The first lesson of the course was dedicated to these themes.

On December 12, the Public Administration Academy of RA continued the first pilot training of Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education SMARTI Project. The second lesson was primarily aimed at presenting in detail the modules entitled: “EMI Individual Teaching Support” and “Oral Teaching Skills Part 2 (Case Studies to support analytical thinking approach)”. The trainers: **Tereza Khechoyan**, Director for International Cooperation and Development of PAARA and subject teacher, and **Lusine Grigoryan**, English language teacher, created a lively atmosphere in the classroom. The latter emphasized the importance of analytical thinking and case-based learning, and then offered solving a problem pertaining to deforestation which is very critical nowadays.





## Module Piloting 1st at Vanadzor State University

On November 23 2023, the first Piloting session within the Erasmus+ SMARTI Project took place at Vanadzor State University, involving both internal and external stakeholders. The event centered around the presentation of two lessons conducted by VSU lecturers Arine Danielyan, Armine Gevorgyan, Gohar Dokholyan, and Nune Khublaryan. These lessons were designed within the framework of two EMI piloting modules: Module 1, focused on the Communicative Approach—Student-Centered and Blended/ICT/E-Learning-based, and Module 7, covering EMI Student Assessment Strategies (Formal and Alternative Assessment).

The lessons were jointly conducted by language and subject teachers. Arine Danielyan delivered the theoretical part of Lesson 2, "Student-Centered Learning and Constructivist Learning Theory: Project-based Learning/Research-based Learning/Flipped Classroom/Case-Based Instruction," under Module 1. The practical aspect was facilitated by subject teacher Armine Gevorgyan, who chose the topic "PR in Restaurant Business" and employed the "Flipped Classroom" method to introduce it to the participants.

Lesson 3 of Module 7, entitled "Formative/Summative/Hybrid Assessment Techniques and Strategies: AoL vs. AfL," was presented by language teacher Gohar Dokholyan and subject teacher Nune Khublaryan. Gohar Dokholyan covered the theoretical aspects of Formative/Summative/Hybrid Assessment, discussing the advantages and disadvantages of these assessment forms. Nune Khublaryan transitioned to the practical part, demonstrating some effective ICT tools for formative and summative assessment.

At the end of the event, EU representatives

expressed their satisfaction with the work so far conducted by the VSU working team and encouraged them to continue the piloting of the planned lessons.

The second part of the Piloting was held from December 19 to 25, 2023, targeting VSU's internal stakeholders. During the first training session Arine Danielyan addressed issues related to Formal/Alternative Assessment Techniques and Strategies, while Armine Gevorgyan introduced practical assessment methods for the "PR in Restaurant Business" course, showcasing alternative assessment tools including, but not limited to, Kahoot, Padlet, and Flip. She also organized a Kahoot interactive quiz with case-scenario analysis.

The training session held on December 20 was devoted to the basic principles of the Communicative Approach and Student-Centered Design, with a special focus on Cooperative Learning Strategies. First, language teacher Lusik Vardanyan highlighted the key elements of effective communication and collaboration essential for a successful career. She further elaborated on the alignment of communicative approaches with the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy across four knowledge dimensions. Following this, subject teacher Anna Khachatryan provided practical insights, offering the participants some useful cooperative learning strategies and interactive exercises such as Gallery Walk, Think-Pair-Share, and Four Corners.

On December 21, during their session on assessment concepts, L. Vardanyan and A. Khachatryan focused on the Threefold Mission of Assessment within Module 7.

Lusik Vardanyan emphasised the importance of aligning evaluation with key learning

components: learning outcomes, activities, and assessment methods. She also provided insights into the specific characteristics of outcomes-based, task-based, and competency-based assessment strategies. Anna Khachatryan introduced practical assessment tools: role-playing, case discussions for outcomes-based assessment; tests and case studies for task-based assessment; feedback, and a SMART Rubric for debate assessment. She emphasized integrating Nearpod for interactive evaluation.

On December 25, the concluding training session focused on Communicative Approach and Blended/ICT/E-Learning strategies. Conducted by Gohar Dokholyan and Nune Khublaryan, the session covered theoretical aspects and effective ICT tools, such as TED-Ed designed for video-based assignments to engage students, and Socrative, a tool for real-time data analysis in teaching and learning. These insights provided the participants with helpful guidance for implementing these strategies into their lessons.

Upon completion of the training, the participants were awarded certificates as a recognition of their achievement.



# Module Piloting 1st at Armenian National Agrarian University



The modules were developed and the training sessions were conducted by Liana Vardanyan, a PhD and Associate Professor in English. Garnik Sevoyan and Seryozha Karapetyan, precision agriculture specialists, also contributed to the development of the modules.

As previously mentioned, ANAU is responsible for two modules: "EMI Oral Teaching Skills" and "ESP/English for Special Purposes." The total teaching duration for both modules is three weeks, with three meetings per week.

It is worth noting that 30 registered participants enthusiastically expressed their willingness to join the courses to enhance their English proficiency.

On December 4, an external evaluation was conducted for the piloting of two modules developed by ANAU as part of the Erasmus+ SMARTI Project. To participate in the event and assess the modules, Eduardo Cardoso, a lecturer from the Catholic University of Portugal, visited Armenia.

Eduardo Cardoso expressed great satisfaction with the high-quality

compilation and delivery of the modules. He specifically highlighted the engaging nature of the materials and the interactive, student-centered approach adopted in the classes. An online survey was also administered by the program to evaluate the pilot teaching of the modules, involving participation from the expert, course participants, and the trainer. The course received high ratings from all parties involved.





## Module Piloting 1st at Goris State University

The EMI piloting training initiative, which commenced on November 22, signifies a significant milestone at the newly inaugurated EMI Center at Goris State University (GSU), exclusively dedicated to GSU students and staff. Proficient educators, including Lilit Atabekyan (a subject teacher) and Naira Mezhlumyan and Naira Safaryan (Language teachers), conduct the training sessions.

The training program is organized into two modules, providing a comprehensive approach to curriculum development and instructional design:

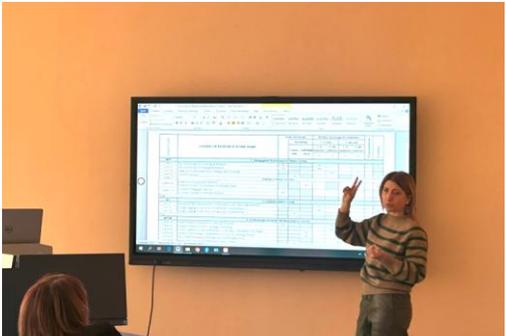
**1. Pre-Modular Curriculum Development and Instructional Design (ECTS and EU Tuning and EU Tuning Framework Training):** This module encompasses essential

components of curriculum development and instructional design, with a focus on concepts such as ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) and EU Tuning. The integration of EU Tuning Framework Training ensures alignment with European standards and educational frameworks.

**2. EMI Module Curriculum Development and Instructional Design:** This module specifically addresses the EMI intricacies, tailoring the curriculum and instructional design to the unique challenges and opportunities presented in an English-language learning environment.

Integral to the training process is the incorporation of evaluation and feedback.

Both EU and Armenian project coordinators actively participated in observing the training sessions. To gain insights into the effectiveness of the EMI Center, the trainers, and the overall training experience, trainees were required to complete a questionnaire. Developed thoughtfully by Riga Technical University, this questionnaire serves as a tool for assessing various facets, including the facilities at the EMI Center, the proficiency of the trainers, and the overall quality of the training program.



# EMI Center Opening and Module

## Piloting 1<sup>st</sup> at State University of Shirak



At the end of the training, the participants filled out appropriate questionnaires in the online format, which will present their level of satisfaction, recommendations and observations with the organizational activities of the workshop, as well as with the content and delivery of the mentioned modules. Considering the latter, the second piloting of the presented modules will be conducted in February 2024.

On November 24, the opening of the EMI Center was held at State University of Shirak within the National Awareness Days of the Erasmus+ SMARTI project.

Hovik Melkonyan, SMARTI project SUSH coordinator, and Hasmik Matikyan, lecturer at the “Chair of Foreign Languages and Literature”, conducted a test (piloting) of the educational modules “EMI Quality Assurance” and “EMI Research and

Writing Skills” in the newly opened EMI Center with modern technical equipment.

About eighty-five lecturers and students from both SUSH and other universities operating in Gyumri participated in the opening of the Center and the courses. During the training, the participants were introduced to the main principles and features of the Center’s work quality assurance, as well as research writing.

The activities carried out during the opening of the Center and the workshops were covered on SUSH official website and social networks.





# QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE SMARTI PROJECT EVENTS

## External Review of EMI Centers and Modules within the Scope of SMARTI Project

As a result of the Erasmus+ SMARTI Project, partner HEIs' EMI (English-Medium Instruction) Centres and English-taught modules will undergo an external review. ANQA will be the coordinator of the process.

Following the accreditation plan developed for the process, workshops were organised for the partner HEIs' groups responsible for the preparation of self-evaluation. During the discussions with the stakeholders, the main approaches to EMI Centres' self-evaluation, criteria and indicators were presented.

The discussion focused on the following:

- The set goals and objectives for the EMI Centre's activity: How will the Centre contribute to the implementation of the HEI's mission and strategic plan with its activities?
- How will the set goals be achieved? Are there any specifications regarding persons responsible for the processes and resources required to achieve the goals?
- The criteria for staff recruitment: What are the requirements for the EMI Centre's employees? Are there position passports and capacity building programmes for the staff?
- The cooperation with other HEIs or EMI Centres: How clear are the areas for cooperation?
- The outcomes of two English-language modules tested in EMI Centres and mechanisms for enhancement.
- The resources: Does the Centre's resources align with the set goals?
- The activities and implemented systems in the direction of communication with stakeholders and information dissemination.
- The study, identification and dissemination of good practices: How does the Centre disseminate its good practice and localize other practices?
- The quality assurance of EMI Centre's activity: Does the Centre regularly measure its achievements against the set goals and indicators? How does it ensure continuous enhancement of the process?

Next on, workshops for expert panels engaged in external review processes are planned. The site visits are scheduled for the first quarter of 2024.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### EMI Study Visit to Riga Technical University, Latvia

The EMI Study Visit to Riga Technical University, Latvia, scheduled for May-June 2024, emerges as a cornerstone event. This visit invites two representatives from each partner university and a Quality Assurance expert to explore the realm of EMI Master's and PhD programs. The course is poised to enrich the participants' perspectives, equipping them with a wealth of knowledge to enhance their own institutions' EMI initiatives upon their return.

### 3rd National Awareness Day (Combined with 2nd Piloting)

The 3rd National Awareness Day, integrated with the 2nd Piloting initiative, is set to unfold from February to June 2024. This range of events will foster heightened awareness and understanding within the academic community. As educators, students and external stakeholders of HEIs converge to partake in this comprehensive event, the mixture of theoretical knowledge and practical applications promises to shape a more EMI-savvy academic landscape.

# SMARTI CONSORTIUM

Coordinator



Partners

