



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT  
ON INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION CARRIED OUT AT  
EUROPEAN REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL ACADEMY**

**Yerevan 2017**

## INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of European Regional Educational Academy (hereinafter EREA) is carried out based on the application presented by the Institution. The process of institutional accreditation is organized and coordinated by the “National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance” Foundation (ANQA).

ANQA is guided by the Regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Education Institutions and their Academic Programs” set by the RA Government Decree N978 (30 June 2011) as well as by the Decree N959-Ն on “Approval of RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation”.

The expertise was carried out by the expert panel formed in accordance with the demands set by the ANQA Regulation on “Formation of the Expert Panel”. The expert panel consisted of 4 local experts and 1 international expert (from Belgium).

The institutional accreditation is aimed at not only the external evaluation of quality assurance but also the continuous improvement of quality of the institution’s management and academic programs. Hence, two issues were put forward to the European and local experts:

- 1) to carry out an expertise of institutional capacities in accordance with the RA standards for state accreditation;
- 2) to carry out an evaluation from the perspective of compliance with international developments and integration into European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

This report comprises the results of the evaluation of EREA institutional capacities, i.e. the observations according to the RA accreditation criteria for professional education and peer-review of the international expert from the perspective of EREA’s integration into EHEA.

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## SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

### EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

The expertise of the EREA was carried out by an independent<sup>1</sup> expert panel formed according to the requirements of ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel. The evaluation was carried out according to 10 criteria set by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N 959-Ն decree.

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.

While carrying out the expertise the expert panel took into consideration the fact that the EREA is and 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 EREA positions itself as an intergovernmental TLI and its mission is targeted at multi-profile higher professional education, regional coverage, European standards, international scientific education developments, implementation of scientific-research activities. The expert panel considers that 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 a vaguer for stakeholders. The goals set in 2017-2020 SP are not precisely linked with the mission, which does 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 operations of further precise and correct planning.

The EREA carries out 11 undergraduate and 10 graduate APs. The APs are formulated 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 disciplines. 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 they are more oriented at knowledge formation, rather than that of skills and competences, which has been witnessed either by employers or alumni.

As far as assessment system is concerned, the TLI has a multi-component system. Yet, at discipline level there is no unified approach of assessment criteria: within the scope of every discipline the teacher is the one who makes a decision on the methods to use. The assessment methods utilized in the Academy

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<sup>1</sup> APPENDIX 1: CVs of Expert Panel Members

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 components, yet the examination of theses revealed that irrespective of requirements, not all theses compile 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 plagiarism checking on-line programme.

The Academy carried out comparative analyses of APs with similar APs of other universities with the aim of ensuring alignment as far as content of the said APs is concerned; however, the implementation of benchmarking outcomes in APs is encouraged.

The EREA underlines the importance of creating a student-centred environment. Notwithstanding the fact that among the methods used currently lectures are more common, it is visible that the TLI strives for and is inclined to student-centered approach; teaching staff mostly tries to implement modern methods.

Fully realizing the importance of possessing 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 (teacher, associate professor, and etc.), yet the latter are very generic and are not described per separate APs. It's worth mentioning that the Academy has adopted a policy of working only with part-time teachers (hourly paid), stating that this way it is able to involve more specialists from practical fields. Yet, teachers do not merely represent the practical fields; there are also many teachers who teach in other TLIs as well.

Throughout the meeting with the teaching staff it became evident that they would like to work full-time, yet they do not have this opportunity. Of concern is the issue of teacher stability, especially given the fact that almost all teachers are part-timers, one and the same teacher teaches a number of disciplines (up to 6-7), which can impact 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 has 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); however, these must be further developed with the aim of enhancing professional progress of the staff.

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. Expert panel evaluates positively 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 perspective 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. 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 to find financial means, aimed at enhancing research are being undertaken. Research directions find their reflection in chair annual operational plans. In certain cases the members of the teaching staff are involved in research thematic groups at a chair and infrastructure levels. Scientific seminars are scarce at the TLI.

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 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 underline 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 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. Expert panel is worried with 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 the documents regulating the functions of administration bodies, infrastructures, those of separate posts, as well as the existence of sectoral 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 also 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 demands 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 are being implemented

in the TLI. As an outcome of non-rooted nature of mechanisms and tools of implementing the SP and the loose link between the short-term plans and SP, the SP 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, there is not yet IQA subdivided system.

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 structural involvement, the young IQA system is not viable and the loop of cycles is not closed. 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.

## **STRENGTHS OF THE INSTITUTION**

- 1) Generally successful structural integrity of APs and their alignment with state criteria.
- 2) Implementation of holistic approaches aimed at provision of academic honesty.
- 3) Environment mainly conducive to implementation of APs and its continuous development as a priority of development.
- 4) Opportunities to establish international relations, in particular on the account of founders.
- 5) Valuable experience of close cooperation with local companies.
- 6) Attractiveness for regional foreign students and incoming flow of the latter.
- 7) Striving for transferring to student-centred teaching.
- 8) Motivated and devoted teaching staff.
- 9) Accessibility of consultations and other services to students.
- 10) Involvement of internal stakeholders in decision-making procedures.

## **WEAKNESSES OF THE INSTITUTION**

- 1) Rupture of the link between the functioning mission and de facto operations.
- 2) Lack of a guiding vision which unites operations and changes.
- 3) Lack of indicators of implementing goals and, as an outcome, operations not targeted at aims.
- 4) An incomplete involvement of external stakeholders in SP elaboration and QA procedures.
- 5) An incomplete provision of the system of governance with information on external environment.
- 6) Imperfections in separate phases of HR management process: planning, evaluation, training, progression.
- 7) Vagueness of research operations.
- 8) Centralized nature of financial incoming flows, dependence on mainly one source: tuition fees.
- 9) Lack of conditions for students with special needs.

10) Lack of integration of the IQA system with other infrastructures.

## **MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Mission and Purpose**

1. To formulate precise academic vision and challenges. Moreover, to formulate a unified comprehension of the mission by either internal or external stakeholders by means of regular meetings and brainstorming.
2. Rewrite the strategic plan 2017-2020 with clear links to the mission, SMART goals and objectives, KPIs and sub-indicators, action plans with deadlines and responsibilities in order to be able to measure its realisation in between and at the end.
3. Bring your existing mechanisms and procedure and your new ones together into a structures system of quality assurance and align it with the cycles of the strategic plan, its KPIs and indicators using underlying data as well as qualitative indicators.
4. Organize the feedback in a pro-active way and through the right communication channels so that it is useful in the measurement of the realization of the strategic plan and lessons can be learnt.

### **Governance and Administration**

5. With the aim of activating the participation of founders in policy elaboration procedures and ensuring a more constant presence of European values, either the role of the Board of Trustees should be activated or representatives of foreign founders must be involved in other cycles of management.
6. To elaborate codes of ethics and implement mechanisms of their provision with the aim of reducing the risks related to TLI operations.
7. To determine requirements to separate posts, in line with the peculiarities of the field and administrative functions with the aim of raising the effectiveness of leading the posts.
8. To foresee a mechanism of taking into consideration student opinions or conclusions in the procedures of decision making with the aim of enhancing student participation and interest in decision-making.
9. With the aim ensuring the effectiveness of the system of governance of the TLI, to elaborate indicators of evaluating the implementation of goals, as well as to implement mechanisms of evaluating the effectiveness of governance.
10. To make functions and responsibilities of infrastructures in the organigram precise.
11. To regulate procedures of information management, ensuring quantitative and qualitative analyses of incoming and outgoing information flows and environmental scanning.
12. To unify management system functioning in branches and to implement mechanisms ensuring information transfer to stakeholders.

### **Academic Programmes**

13. Conduct regular research in labour market and alumni employment by preventing preparation of professionals which are not demanded.
14. Diversify teaching and learning methods and introduce a clear-cut policy on their choice, ensuring consistent ILO acquisition and deepening of student-centred approach.
15. To make the policy of credit allocation precise, by making the latter in lie with IOLs.
16. To ensure measurability of ILOs and to ground the assessment system of the latter.
17. With the aim of ensuring continuous improvement of APs, to extend the list of institutions to undergo comparative analyses, to enhance the usefulness of feedback provided by employers



making the directions of revealing their needs precise, as well as to ensure implementation of analyses outcomes as a base for improving APs.

18. To foster the procedures of AP regular monitoring, evaluation of their effectiveness and improvement by enlarging the involvement of TLI stakeholders. Especially to make the AP accessible to learners enhancing their participation in operations aimed at AP improvement.

### **Students**

19. To regulate the procedure of organizing additional lessons and providing consultations, and to make the mechanisms of evaluating their effectiveness more precise.
20. To activate the operations of the Student Council with the aim of revealing academic and social needs of students and giving solutions to them, activating student life, and development of student autonomy. To improve procedures and mechanisms of revealing student needs and assessment procedures ensuring regularity and evaluating their effectiveness.
21. To encourage the Students Council to study opportunities to adopt best practices of other similar local or international bodies ensuring the effectiveness and targeted nature of its own operations.
22. To activate the working style and the scope of operations of the Career Centre, by directing said operations at researching labour market, study of alumni employability and provision of feedback with them. To add some information on the Centre with the aim of increasing the effectiveness of its operations.
23. To implement such mechanisms of involving students in research operations, which will enhance student involvement in research operations and will foster acquisition of research competences and skills among students. In this respect Student Scientific Union can have its say.
24. To create equal opportunities for students in part and full-time modes of study, as well as for foreigners so that they can make use of tuition reductions and internships.

### **Teaching and Support Staff**

25. To elaborate precise requirement to teaching staff per AP.
26. To implement and systematically carry out the multi-component system of teaching staff evaluation. To make mechanisms and toolkit of implementation precise, by enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.
27. To implement a system for regularly revealing the needs of teaching staff. With the aim of enhancing the development of pedagogical skills of teaching staff to carry out teacher training around such topics as are alignment of teaching and learning methods, organization of student-centred teaching, alignment of IOLs of disciplines and assessment system.
28. To make the policy of support staff selection precise taking into account the APs and their peculiarities. To regulate the functions of support staff by precisely determining rights and responsibilities.
29. To establish precise and regulated mechanisms of teaching staff promotion and progression.
30. To establish a precise policy on HR management which will take into account teacher involvement, retention, sustainability, provision of stability and will deal with the issue of minimizing teaching staff flow, as well as satisfying professional and social needs.

### **Research and Development**

31. To make research ambitions, interests, priorities and directions of the TLI precise.
32. To precisely plan, segregate and improve the content of short-, mid- and long-term aspects of research operations, to ensure their logical interconnection with the aim of effective planning and implementation of research operations at different time frames.

33. To implement precise mechanisms aimed at enhancing individual, joint, chair, inter-disciplinary or inter-chair research, underlining the commercialization of outcomes.
34. To implement precise mechanisms to ensure the link of research with the academic process. To adopt a precise policy, according to which scientific studies will turn into teaching/learning method ensuring the implementation of research or research outcomes in the academic process.
35. To carry out financial planning which will allow to allocate financial resources for research with the aim of creating favourable conditions for enhancing research operations and scientific works.
36. To implement precise mechanisms aimed at enhancing student and teacher involvement in research operations by considering perspective research outcomes as an important factor of having additional and stable financial flows. With the aim of ensuring student activeness, to regulate and intensify “teacher-student” and “teacher-teacher” inter-university and intra-university cooperation.
37. To elaborate and implement a precise strategy and policy on research operation internationalization, to enhance the implementation of joint research projects with other institutions and international publications. To activate the search of research projects at a chair or faculty level.
38. To activate research operations in branches by involving teachers and students in research operations.

### **Infrastructure and Resources**

39. To saturate auditoria and laboratories with necessary material-technical base, up-to-date equipment and didactic materials. To undertake steps to ensure necessary infrastructural resources for students with special needs.
40. To regularly analyse the applicability, accessibility and satisfaction with current resources by means of precise and holistic mechanisms.
41. To enrich, modernize and digitalize library resources ensuring membership to international library depositories.
42. To implement bottom-up resource planning system, ensuring revelation of stakeholders’ needs.
43. To adopt a policy on financial management, which will enhance the implementation of AP goals and provision of necessary means and equipment. To implement a policy on financial resource allocation and management, in line with TLI SP directions and priorities. To activate the operations to be undertaken as far as financial resource diversification is concerned. To regularly carry out analyses of effectiveness of expenses.
44. To improve the system of document flow and implement an electronic platform aimed at managing information flows.

### **Societal Responsibility**

45. To improve and extend the mechanisms ensuring accountability (vertical and horizontal) and periodically review the effectiveness of the procedure.
46. To improve the mechanisms and procedures of ensuring transparency of academic procedures.
47. To improve the feedback mechanisms with broader layers of society to ensure continuity and sequence of communication with the society, as well as to ensure the feedback on operations undertaken and the quality of education provided.
48. To implement precise mechanisms of evaluating and analysing the effectiveness of feedback.
49. To make the mechanisms of transferring knowledge and values to the society precise, regularly carrying out evaluation of effectiveness of procedure.

50. To bring to life the steps aimed at formulation of additional education, as foreseen in the SP. By means of corresponding studies to reveal the most demanded directions with the aim of organizing corresponding training.

### **External Relations and Internationalization**

51. Formulate a policy on external relations and the necessary procedures in order to structure the collaboration with the world of work and the international partners.
52. Work out the concept of internationalization at home making use of the presence of international students and English courses.
53. Undertake steps aimed at creating opportunities for teacher and student mobility implementing necessary policy and mechanisms.
54. Initiate and ensure implementation of international projects.
55. Insert windows of international mobility in the study programmes.
56. To intensify the local and international cooperation and evaluate the effectiveness of the collaboration with the local and international partners.
57. Create conditions for teachers and students to improve their foreign language acquisition.
58. To activate cooperation of branches with local employers and other organizations.

### **Internal Quality Assurance System**

59. Integrate the procedures and strategic objectives and cycles into one IQA system defining KPIs and measuring the quality of the realization of the plans with quantitative and qualitative data.
60. To regularly evaluate satisfaction with and effectiveness of human, material and financial resources allocated for QA operations.
61. To intensify the involvement of internal and external stakeholders in QA activities and structure the feedback from internal and external stakeholders by involving them as structural partners, The establishment of the Alumni Unit may promote the active involvement of external stakeholders in QA activities.
62. To make operations of data collection, analyses and dissemination more precise and regulate the latter. Organize consensus meetings to analyse the gathered data and formulate SMART enhancement plans.
63. To enhance the acquisition of academic QA competences in branches, especially through training and development of infrastructures.

### **PEER REVIEW FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EDUCATION INSTITUTION'S INTERGRATION INTO EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA**

The European Regional Educational Academy (EREA) was co-founded by some European universities in order to introduce and use the mission, strategies and policies that are used in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) resulting from the so-called Bologna process. The main features of Higher Education in the EHEA can be summarized by the goals and ambitions that have been subjects of specific actions since the start of the Bologna Process in 1999. These features of European HE are international (mobility), transparent for all stakeholders, using credits (ECTS), with (strategic) policies to realize high standards for an open-minded education that is at the same time helping society further with innovation and democratic citizenship as helping the individual development to well-being and responsibility, and last but not least quality guaranteed. In the context of this review Quality Assurance (QA), and more precisely Internal Quality Assurance (IQA), is addressed.

The principles of QA in the EHEA have been formulated in the European Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA (ESG) since 2005. In 2015 the ministers of the EHEA approved a new, revised version of the ESG on their ministerial conference in Yerevan. Part I of the ESG covers IQA and will thus be used to write the observations and recommendations in this international review below.

One of the tasks of the international expert is to assess the degree of the implementation of the ESG part 1, while at the same time touching upon the other features of HE(I)s in order to ensure that EREA can be called or become a rightful member of EHEA. This is even more the case with the EREA, as its name and mission refer to the European dimension.

The ESG 2015 (Part One), the expert's experience in External Quality Assurance gained in other countries and on the European level, and the degree of meeting the requirements of ANQA quality criteria have formed the basis for the assessment of the university's progress in the implementation of the Bologna Process solutions. However, it should be remembered that the observations and recommendations formulated herein have been made based on the documentation available in English and findings made during the site visit.

### **Observations (Numbers Refer to Esg Part 1)**

1. The ESG 1.1 links IQA with the strategic policy of the institution, and thus with its mission. ERA's current formulation of its mission is blurred with its strategy into one document. Unfortunately for a long time the ERA has not implemented any strategy, as it was not translated into KPIs. Only lately ERA has too quickly developed a strategic plan with some actions, although not yearly, and KPIs, although not on every subject. It was developed without systematically involving the stakeholders. The new rector and the management proved that another strategic plan 2017-2020 (bis) is being developed. The 3<sup>rd</sup> part of the mission of HE, namely the services or impact on society, should be addressed more systematically, as it may represent an added value for applied research and financial income.

Students and staff are involved in the governance of EREA in various ways and on various levels. Yet, there is a tendency to leave it to official representation. The real participation is living thanks to the short decision and communication lines of this small and rather flat organisation. So not many ideas and proposals come up through the official bodies and there is not a body of documentation on the changes as input in the IQA. External stakeholders, such as the alumni and employers, are only involved through personal relations, which are too less structured and documented, although the external stakeholders are willing to be structurally involved.

As previous plans were incomplete and too general, and the latest too recent, the link with IQA was unclear and not well-structured. IQA was still and incompletely measuring the implementation of the latest plan and so still in the phase of "doing", if not "planning", in the PDCA-cycle. This is happening with a reference to the strategy that is still too loose.

Among the teaching staff there is an implicit quality culture which drives them to doing their best and be committed to the institution. Financial resources and an absence of an explicit HRM hinder the drive and cause uncertainty, while yearly students' survey only concentrate on the teacher. The students as well as external stakeholders appreciate the institution's mission and practice to provide an education that is oriented towards the world of work. This is most appreciated both by the students as well as by the employers and alumni. This appreciation should be used to structure the relationships with the external stakeholders and engage them in activities as well as in governance, strategy and IQA.

2. There is a procedure for the design and approval of programmes. The responsibilities are clearly stated. Yet, before any change being proposed there is no international benchmarking, let alone a systematic and structured environmental scanning. Those are left to the individual's initiative of

the middle management responsible for the programmes themselves. As EREA's mission and name explicitly refers to the EHEA the international European dimension should be addressed.

There are programme learning outcomes, but the way they are formulated as well as presented differs among the programmes. Different formats are used to develop course catalogues on institutional and programme level. In which way the students' workload is taken into consideration is unclear. The main hindrances to actually implement a new programme are the financial and human resources.

3. One of the most important features of education in the EHEA is its attention, even focus, on the student. The student is not only identified as the major internal stakeholder, together with the teaching, research and management staff, but also as an active participant of his/her learning process. Due to the new transversal competences and attitudes recognized to be essential in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the ESG 2015 have introduced the new standard of student-centred learning, teaching and assessment.

EREA is conscious of the necessity to develop student-active teaching and learning. Reviewing the course catalogues it became obvious that this is a dimension that is being stressed, addressed and implemented. Yet, this is done in a non-systematic way and not guided by neither a policy nor educational guiding services. Sometimes student-active periods are well integrated in the teaching and learning activities, sometimes they are artificially added. Neither is the congruence between teaching and learning formats and methodologies and their assessment an explicit policy. In those study programmes in which the students are challenged to be active participants through projects, group or individual work; formative and summative papers, extra-muros activities and/or research, the summative assessment of the learners seems to be congruent. In others it is not (yet).

There clearly is a need of a pedagogical policy and guidance, as well as IQA on the implemented reality on programme and course level. Although teachers find each other also in horizontal, sometimes unofficial platforms, it would be a great help to develop them in a structured way in order to disseminate good practices and experiences, as well as national and international input and examples.

4. The students' life cycle from admission through progression involving recognition and certification is pre-defined in published procedures. Yet they are still incomplete, e.g. there is no recognition policy and practice for international mobility. The students' international mobility is limited to enrollment of foreign students and outgoing graduates. EREA does not seem to have a practice of internationally outgoing students studying for a period in a foreign country, except for foreign trips or extra-muros activities with international speakers (e.g. in tourism studies). Neither is there an explicit and developed concept of internationalisation@home, although there is a good opportunity with the presence of foreign students, who mostly take courses in English. Although the internationalisation officer is close to the students in order to present possibilities, the results are very low to almost non-existing and there is no real policy on this major activity within the EHEA, in which an equality between incoming and outgoing students is aimed at. The international network of EREA has declined since its foundation to mostly personal contacts and sleeping partners.
5. The teaching staff is well-motivated and even proud to be engaged with EREA, also thanks to its strict anti-fraud policy. The procedures of (re-)recruitment are known, but should be further developed and published in such a way that they are not hindered by finances or only based on students' survey. A real policy and practice on internal professional development for competence-development and update does not exist because of financial reasons, except for the offer of English courses for staff. Part-time recruitment does not seem to bother the management, on the contrary since this is experienced as being modern, performance-driven. On the other hand financial restrictions do not allow to pay for research-activities of most teachers within the institution and the programmes, except for successful projects such as SYNOPSIS. There is a good mix among

teaching staff and on individual level of academic discipline level and the world of work. This should and could be a major element of the future vision on “European” as far as EREA is concerned, which should be highlighted and made explicit. This is also most appreciated by the students, the graduates, the alumni and the employers. This appreciation of the external stakeholders, including the alumni, should be used to develop structured relationships with them and involve them in strategy, governance as well as in IQA.

6. There is a good start of learning resources and student support provided. The classrooms are neat and their sizes are appropriate to the number of students. However, modern equipment such as beamers, screens and internet, is not available everywhere. The library is the only place where students can work together out of class hours. It is small, but neat. The collection is useful, but too limited for further research. There are no subscriptions to research data bases. The limitations are clearly due to the limited financial resources. These should be addressed in the new strategic plan. Yet, the reanimation of a true international network could also help here.

The staff for student support is well-intended and committed. They work primarily through the short and personal communication lines. The health service and infrastructure, as well as the librarian’s and international information officer, are good practices.

7. The information management of EREA is weak. Due to the past and its small size there is no real culture of documenting information and certainly not by numbers. The main tool that is used at the moment is the website. Yet, the information that is gathered and published there is varied and incomplete. In the internal management and QA there is no tradition of working with quantitative indicators, neither as objectives nor as measuring tools. The fact that the latest strategic plan is insufficiently underpinned by KPIs is a proof. The writing of the SER seems to have been a start in gathering information, both qualitative and quantitative. The website as communication tool is not working as far as feedback is concerned both for internal and external stakeholders.
8. The public information on the programmes seems to be updated and upgraded since the writing of the SER. The information is readily accessible, but varies in format and content, e.g. as far as the programme catalogues are concerned. The needs to be a clear and streamlined policy and formats as far as public information is concerned. The website is an excellent tool for it, while it should be clear what is public and what is not. More information, also on the outcomes of IQA, is needed. The weakness on public information is clarified by the absence of a communications department in the organigram.
9. In fact there is no on-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes yet. The only IQA survey among the students deals with the teacher as person. There is no survey investigating whether and how the intended learning outcomes are understood and achieved. There is no structured feedback on the quality of the programmes which is then discussed in meetings with internal and external stakeholders in order to enhance.

The same applies with the IQA on strategic level. There is no direct link between the strategic plan and IQA for the moment. IQA works ad hoc and is still in its “planning” or “doing” phase on the PDCA-cycle. Although there exist a lot of procedures, some seem only to be discovered and/or developed during the writing of the SER, they are not linked, some are not implemented or living, while on certain crucial items they still do not exist.

10. A cyclical external quality assurance in the line with the ESG is offered by ANQA. Internally there are still no cycles defined and there is no link yet between internal and external cycles. Yet, by involving more and better-structured external stakeholders in the future IQA of EREA, the external eye could be healthy in the PDCA cycle. Employers could be asked to set as partners in advice councils, e.g. when revising the programme learning outcomes. In this way mid-term audits can be organized without the loss of the healthy external eye.

## Recommendations (Numbered Along the Observations and Esg Part 1)

1. A new ERA strategy 2017-2020 should be developed in which strategic goals, objectives and action plans, yearly actions, KPIs, deadlines and responsibilities should be clearly and explicitly stated. The new strategic plan should at least have one chapter on educational policy, i.e. what European qualitative teaching and learning means for the ERA. The institution's internal and external stakeholders should and seem to welcome to be involved. The aims and objectives should be realistic and translated into priorities. The assessment of financial risk of the HEI and its stability should form an essential part of the new strategy in the short as well as medium and long-term perspective. The 3<sup>rd</sup> part of the mission of HE, namely the services or impact on society, should be addressed more systematically, as it may represent an added value for applied research and financial income.

So the development of a procedure for the assessment of the medium- and long-term strategy is needed. IQA should be a part of the strategic plan and management, while at the same time measuring and analyzing its implementation in an independent way.

The implicit quality culture should be identified and addressed by means of an explicit vision and strategy oriented towards enhancement and facilitating policies on financial and human resources and professionalization. Internal platforms as well as external relations and attendance of external activities need to inform and address the staff better and make it possible to exchange (inter)national information as well as good practices and ideas.

2. The design of programmes should be linked to the institution's mission and strategy. In the preparation of a new or altered programme there should be an explicit, procedural environmental scanning with European institutions. The use of ERA's international founding partners and partners should be activated and structured into a platform for multiple cooperations, such as educational and applied research cooperation, student and staff mobility.
3. The strategy plan bis should explicitly state what the ERA understands by qualitative education and develop action plans on the institution-wide implementation of student-centred or student-active learning, teaching and assessment. IQA should measure and analyse its implementation as well as students' satisfaction with the courses and programmes in this respect. Teachers should be guided by educational services and be given a platform to exchange ideas and good practices as well as to organize seminars.
4. New policies and procedures should be developed and published in order to regulate students' life cycle from admission through progression to recognition and certification. Especially on the item of internationalisation and mobility of out-going students there is an urgent need of taking steps. Therefore there should be "mobility windows" built in each programme in order to facilitate international student mobility. Therefore the international network needs to be restructured from personal level to strategic level and needs to be re-activated. Although there needs to be result in the outgoing mobility during the studies, a concept and policy of internationalisation@home should be developed and implemented making use of the presence of foreign students, which should not be left into English programmes, but be mixed with Armenian students in several activities, both class and extra-muros.
5. A real HRM policy and practice should be developed covering not only the (re-)recruitment of teaching staff, but also payment of research, internal professional development and promotion. The assessment procedure is better not only based on the students' appreciation of the teacher, but also on his/her pedagogical and didactic work and could be extended by a 360-degree input. Horizontal platforms where teachers can meet and exchange good practices and ideas should be developed and structured, also with the organigram. The good mix of academic discipline and the world of work among the teaching staff collectively and individually should be raised from the

personal level to a structured level by engaging them both in activities as well as in governance, strategy and IQA both on institutional and programme level.

6. The new strategic plan 2017-2020 urgently needs to address the financial recourses as a priority. The allocation of the existing and future finances need to take into consideration the mission and the priorities that should be stated in it. (see 1) The way to allocate finances should also have an input out of IQA, certainly as far as learning and research resources, and student support are concerned. Re-animation and development of a true international network as well as structured relations with the local world of work may cause new resources, both financial and in kind (books for the library, pc and beamers for classrooms). The international ICT project SYNOPSIS and the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework project are very good practices in this way as well.
7. In the major needed step towards strategic management and an integrated QA system more documented information on the realisation of the strategic goals through KPIs, the profile of student population, their progression, success and drop-out rates and reasons, their satisfaction with the programmes (content and ways of teaching and assessing included), the learning resources and student support, and last but not least the career paths of graduates should be dealt with. In order to get feedback from internal and external stakeholders there should be well-developed surveys and well-structured relations with them through governance, learning and other activities, as well as IQA, instead of waiting for feedback via the website.
8. The ERA should develop a clear policy and practice on public information through its website and other means. In the rectorate there should be a department of communications implementing that policy in a well-structured and managed way under the responsibility of the rector. The items mentioned above (see 7), should be gathered and verified through a Total IQA system. Information, such as the programme catalogues, should be streamlined on institutional level.
9. The ERA is facing in this transitional phase an important step from a scattered and ad hoc IQA towards an integrated IQA system dealing with the quality of its programmes in the widest sense as well as with the realisation of its strategic plan. This means that new (KP) indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, need to be developed. New surveys need to be developed dealing with the central processes of the institution (education, research and services to society), as well as ERA's uniqueness and strategic choices of the words 'European', "professional education" and "international research". The understanding of these words should be made explicit in a vision underpinning and explaining the mission as well as the strategic plan. In this way the new IQA should become "total" covering all the activities of the institution.

The existing procedures should be looked upon and integrated as well as aligned with the existing practices and the new policies.

New qualitative meetings with the stakeholders concerned should be organized in order to set new objectives on the basis of measuring the realisation of the previous ones through analysing the results of the surveys. In this way a living and looped IQA can start.

10. While external cyclical QA is guaranteed by ANQA and the national EQA system and framework of Armenia, there are in fact no internal cycles defined. There is no link between the internal and external cycles. As the external stakeholders (as well as the internal one) may and should be more and better structurally involved in the IQA (e.g. through advice councils and QA consensus meetings on several levels) the healthy external eye could and should be kept in mid-term audits in the cycles of IQA.

## **Holistic Conclusion**

As international reviewer I have met an institution that is, once again, in full and needed transition. For too long things have not moved and being up-dated since its foundation and so a new leadership and



strategy is needed, making use of the good things that exist (implicit mission, international founding fathers, good relation with the world of work and appreciation of the students and staff) and not least the quality culture based on the implicit (European) elements of the mission.

In order to up-date EREA and improve its education, organization, student numbers, research and financial resources it is important that it strategically takes up the recommendations that can be summarized in 4 words:

- **EXPLICIT!** Make explicit what “European” means to you in a new vision, underpinning the existing mission and the new strategy. Make explicit (key performance) indicators along with the realization and action plans. Make explicit what “professional education” means to you. Make explicit an educational policy focusing on student-centred learning, teaching and assessment. Make explicit the intended learning outcomes in an institutional way. Explicit priorities in your plans.
- **STRUCTURE!** Structure your IQA. Structure your relations with your external stakeholders (employers, alumni, society). They are ready. Structure your course catalogues. Structure your international network into an active one on several dimensions (benchmarking, education, research, mobility, etc.)
- **ALIGN!** Align your mission with a new vision on the future of the academy. Align your strategic plan with the mission. Align your intended learning outcomes with the national qualifications framework. Align the IQA cycles with the milestones of realization of your strategic plan.
- **INTEGRATE!** Integrate your strategic plan into your IQA and the other way around. Integrate all the existing procedures in one system/handbook. Integrate your competitive HRM with horizontal team/colleague-like platforms of exchange.
- **DEVELOP!** Develop new policies and procedures where they are absent, such as international outgoing mobility for students. Develop a real HRM policy for promotion and professional development. Develop a total IQA linking it with the mission, the strategic plan, the education and research policy, HRM, infrastructure, finances, etc. Develop strategic priorities taking into consideration the finances and the contextual reality.

**14 December 2017**

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**Anna Hovakimyan**

Signature of the Chair of Expert Panel

## DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

### COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The external evaluation of institutional capacities of EREA was carried out by the expert panel having the following composition (find attached the Appendix 1. CVs of Expert Panel Members):

1. **Anna Hovakimyan:** acting head of Computer Programming Chair of Armenian-Russian Slavonic University, candidate of technical sciences, professor.
2. **Tigran Mnatsakanyan:** assistant in the Chair of Management of Armenian State University of Economics, candidate of economical sciences.
3. **Tigran Sargsyan:** associate professor in the Chair of Service of Yerevan State University, candidate of geographical sciences.
4. **Lucien Bollaert:** Member of AEQES, member of international resonance group to (meta-) evaluate the pilots of the new accreditation system in Flanders, academic postgraduate in Quality Assurance of Higher Education,
5. **Kamsar Gharakhanyan:** 2<sup>nd</sup> year student of the Faculty of Informatics of Armenian National Polytechnical University.

The activities of the expert panel were coordinated by Ani Mkrtchyan, senior specialist of Institutional and Program Accreditation Division, responsible for ANQA Internal Quality Assurance.

The translation was provided by Zaruhi Soghomonyan, Head of the Chair of Foreign Languages at French University of Armenia.

The recordings were formed by Srбуhi Michikyan, 2<sup>nd</sup> year student of YSU Sociology faculty.

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

All the members of the expert panel, including the translator and the coordinator, signed agreements of confidentiality and independence.

## PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

### **Application for State Accreditation**

The EREA applied for institutional accreditation by submitting to ANQA the application form, and presenting the copies of its license and its appendices.

The ANQA Secretariat checked the application package, the data presented in the application form, the appendixes and the ANQA electronic questionnaire completed by the Academy.

According to the decision on accepting the application request (31.05.2017), a bipartite agreement was signed between the ANQA and the TLI (9.06.2017). The timetable of activities was prepared and approved.

Within the deadline set in the schedule, the EREA presented the Armenian and English versions of its self-evaluation report according to the format set by ANQA and also the package of attached documents.

The self-evaluation was carried out by a team formed on the order of the EREA rector

### **Preparatory Phase**

ANQA coordinator studied the report with the aim of revealing its correspondence to the technical requirements of ANQA. Afterwards, ANQA secretariat sent the self-evaluation report to the expert panel the members of which were agreed upon with the academy and were confirmed by the director of ANQA.

Five training on the following topics were carried out (by Mrs. R. Topchyan and A. Makaryan) for the expert panel members with the aim of preparing the latter and ensuring the effectiveness of the activities:

1. RA Accreditation Regulation, Criteria and Standards.
2. Main functions of expert panel.
3. Preliminary evaluation as preparatory phase of developing expert panel report, the main requirements of writing the report.
4. Methodology of observation of documents and resources.
5. Techniques and ethics of conducting meetings and questions to be posed.

Having observed the self-evaluation and documents of the Academy, the expert panel conducted the initial evaluation. According to the format, the list of questions for different target groups and also the list of additional documents needed for observation have been prepared.

Within the scheduled time the expert panel summarized the results of the initial evaluation and formed a time schedule of the site-visit<sup>2</sup>. According to the ANQA manual on the expertise the intended meetings with all the target groups, close and open meetings, document and resource review, visits to different infrastructures and else were included in the time schedule.

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<sup>2</sup> Appendix 2. Time table of a site-visit aimed ERA institutional accreditation

## Preliminary Visit

The preliminary visit was paid two weeks prior to the site-visit (22.09.2017) by the coordinator, expert panel head, and the Head of the Department of Institutional and Programme Accreditation.

The plan-schedule of the site-visit was agreed upon, the lists of additional documents and participants were presented, discussions and mutual decisions were reached referring to organizational, technical, informative questions of the site visit. Questions related to the conduct and the norms of ethics of meeting participants were also touched upon. The rooms prepared for focus groups and expert panel discussions were also discussed, the issues related to the equipment and facilities were clarified

## The Site-visit

The expert panel site-visit took place from 02 to 05 of October 2017. According to the time-schedule, the activities of the site-visit were launched with a close meeting to discuss and agree upon the evaluation frame, the issues to be observed during the site-visit, the strong and weak points of the Academy according to criteria, the procedure of focus groups with the international expert, as well as to clarify further steps.

Afterwards, the members of the expert panel discussed the evaluation scale which has two levels: 1) **meets/corresponds** with the requirements of the criterion, 2) **does not meet/does not correspond** with the requirements of the criterion and the translator were present at the site-visit.

The site-visit started and was closed with the meetings with the rector. In order to clarify some issues, the representatives of the teaching staff, students, deans, heads of chairs, employers and alumni were selected randomly from the list provided beforehand by the University. All the meetings and class observations were implemented according to the schedule.

The coordinator of the accreditation process clarified that according to the Manual on the conduction of RA professional education expertise and with the aim to ensure the objectivity and substantiation of the expert panel evaluation, the members of the expert panel are authorized to require necessary documents and to give questions for the clarification of the given issue.

During the site-visit the expert panel conducted the observation of documents<sup>3</sup> and resources<sup>4</sup> and had meetings in different structural units of the Academy.

The information received during different meetings as well as the main outcomes of observations, including observation of documents, were summed up at the end of each day and during the summative meeting, organized at the end of the site-visit. The expert panel discussed the main results and came into an agreement on the accreditation standards and afterwards - on the issue of meeting the requirements of the criteria. The final conclusions on the satisfaction of the criteria requirements were made by all members of the expert panel through open discussion based on consensus.

## Expert Panel Report

The expert panel prepared the draft report based on the self-evaluation report presented by the Academy, the observed package of attached documents and the observations made during the site-visit as a result of regularly organized discussions. Based on the observations extracted after the discussions the Chair of the expert panel and the ANQA coordinator prepared the draft of the expert panel report which was agreed upon with the panel members. The international expert prepared his conclusion and

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<sup>3</sup> Appendix 3. List of reviewed documents

<sup>4</sup> Appendix 4. Resources observed by the expert panel

a separate document of peer review which were translated and handed over to the Chair of the expert panel.

The Chair of the expert panel and the ANQA coordinator were responsible for including the opinion and approach of the international expert into the report. The document of peer review was fully included in the report. The summed up preliminary report which had been agreed upon among all the local experts of the panel was translated and sent to the international expert. Based on the remarks of the international expert, the preliminary report has been re-edited and it reflects the main outcomes of the evaluation, considerations and recommendations.

The preliminary report was presented to the Academy on 17 November 2017.

**14 December 2017**

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**Ani Mkrtchyan**

Signature of the Coordinator

## EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

### BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

**HISTORY.** European Regional Educational Academy, Foundation was established based on agreements between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of the France (November 4, 1995) “For Cultural, legal and technical cooperation” and between the Republic of Armenia and the Federal Republic of Germany (24 July 1998) on “Technical Cooperation”, and between the governments for the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Italy (23 July 1998) on the “Promotion and protection of investments” agreements and approved on 15.10.2001 by the Government Decision No 978 of the Republic of Armenia.

At the beginning the Academy has been established as an IT institute, however currently, the Academy has been training specialists not only in IT, but also in the spheres of Economics, Management, Finance, Tourism, Law, International Relations, Linguistics, Psychology and Life-sustaining.

The mission of the Academy is to provide multi profile higher professional education with regional coverage, in accordance with European standards and international scientific education development as well as implement scientific –research activities.

EREA is guided by the 2017-2020 Strategic development Plan while implementing its activities. In the Strategic plan (SP) and SAR, the ambitions of the HEI are defined.

**EDUCATION.** Since 2009-2010 academic year, it carries out three-level (bachelor's, master's, postgraduate) education. At present, the Academy carries out 11 bachelor's, 10 master's and 6 postgraduate programs, where almost 15% of the students are foreigners, has 6 faculties, 8 specialized chairs, and four regional branches in Gyumri, Vanadzor, Gavar and Ijevan.

As a result of the trilateral cooperation between VivaCell-MTS, Synopsys Armenia and EREA, in 2011-2012 academic year, the Academy launched a Chair of Microelectronic Circuits and Systems of Communications.

In the mission, along with the other priorities, the academy emphasised the following strategic goals regarding education:

- To provide high-quality educational programs appropriate to labour market requirements, aimed at the improving the employability of graduates ,
- To enhance student satisfaction level with education in EREA

To reach its strategic goals the Academy has defined the following objectives:

- To implement structural and content modification of educational programmes, appropriate to the National Qualifications Framework and labour market current requirements
- To improve teaching, learning and assessment processes,
- To increase the efficiency of internal quality assurance system.

**RESEARCH.** Academy has defined the following goals regarding this field:

- To encourage the involvement of Faculty and students in research activities,
- To promote the expansion of academic cooperation and internationalization of research activities,
- Make postgraduate education standards compliant with European general requirements.

To reach its strategic goals the Academy has defined the following objectives:

- To promote the increase of research volume and involvement of faculty and student in research projects
- To develop Research cooperations with RA research institutes, universities and enterprises,
- To promote the internationalisation of EREA's research activities,
- To make EREA 3-degree higher education standards compatible with the Salzburg principles.

**INTERNATIONALIZATION.** Internationalization is the 9<sup>th</sup> strategic direction of the academy. It has the goal to promote ongoing processes of internationalisation at institutional and programme levels. As objective, the Academy has defined:

- To promote the development of EREA's internationalisation policy,
- To develop internationalisation processes in education field.

**QUALITY ASSURANCE.** The goals and objectives of the Internal quality assurance system have been defined in the "EREA Concept of Quality Assurance". The following is defined as major goals:

- To ensure high standards in all main fields of EREA activities,
- To ensure a regulatory and organised grounds for the academic programmes' external review and accreditation, to ensure a link between external and internal quality assurance activities,
- To promote continuous enhancement of education quality and development of quality culture in the Academy,
- To ensure the accountability of EREA to the students, employers, founders and financing organisations in regard to the quality,
- To contribute to the development of strong links with the national, regional and international QA agencies.

The following objectives have been developed to achieve the goals:

- To support the assurance of academic standards, quality of academic programmes through regulated and coordinated processes and promote the continuous improvement,
- To develop plans to implement self-assessment of academic programmes, thus undergoing external quality assurance and accreditation,
- To foresee procedures and appropriate activities for the accountability of quality assurance,
- To ensure the transparency of the QA procedures and activities, involving students, employers, alumni and external experts in it,
- To develop necessary provisions and mechanisms to continuously improve the quality,
- To ensure that all the stakeholders are satisfied with the quality of academic programmes, and the alumni have proper knowledge and skills.

To evaluate the Academy's capacities, the expert panel was guided by the principle "**fitness for the purpose**" and the above mentioned information was considered as the main ambitions and goals of the Institution.

## CRITERION I: MISSION AND PURPOSE

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

### FINDINGS

#### **1.1. The TLI has a clear, well-articulated mission that represents the institution's purposes and goals as well as is in accordance with the ANQF.**

The EREA was founded between the governments of Armenia, France, Germany and Italy, aiming at "Implementing European thorough academic system: preschool and secondary, vocational education, higher education, post-graduate education and training, aiming at implementing European experience, modern innovative programmes and European standards".

The TLI started its strategic planning back in 2008 first and foremost elaborating its 2012-2015 and 2017-2020 programmes. The TLI has a mission, aims and objectives ratified in the TLI Charter and in its 2017-2020 strategic plan on development (elaborated in 2016). As a mission the TLI has determined "multi-profile higher professional education, regional coverage, European standards, international scientific education developments, implementation of scientific-research activities".

The mission of the EREA clearly reflects the main characteristics of the TLI: multi-profile higher education, regional coverage, European standards, scientific-research developments, implementation of scientific-research operations. The Mission is not looped with a vision targeting the future and accepted by stakeholders. The Charter of the EREA states academic qualifications in line with which it has the right to implement corresponding APs and the latter are in line with the NQF.

Strategic priorities are not made precise in the **2017-2020**<sup>5</sup> SP, determined objectives and aims are not linked with the mission of the TLI. The further division of the aims in accordance with the steps to be undertaken has not found its reflection in the SP operations foreseen by the timetable.

#### **1.2. TLI mission, aims and objectives reflect the needs of internal and external stakeholders.**

Throughout meetings it became evident that certain elements of the EREA mission seem to be shared by most of internal and external stakeholders. To them "European" refers not only to education in accordance with European standards, but also to the way the institution is organized and the feeling of "freedom". The professional element is most appreciated by all stakeholders; both internal and external. The research part is still not conceptualized in the same way by all stakeholders. Internal stakeholders agree to embed research in Master and PhD theses, while external stakeholders look forward to applied research for their own benefit.

In the majority of cases internal and external stakeholders have not had their participation in the process of elaborating and reviewing the SP, though internal stakeholder, involved in collegial bodies, have participated in the process of ratifying the SP. The mechanisms aimed at revealing the needs of the latter are not yet made precise and have not been implemented. No analyses of the labour market have been carried out aimed at determining the main directions of strategic development.

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

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<sup>5</sup> The part was amended according to the discussion with the HEI representatives and experts. Before it was "Strategic priorities are not made precise in the SP, determined objectives and aims are not linked with the mission of the TLI".



There is no precise policy on evaluating the progress and the outcomes of the TLI mission of SP aim implementation. Precise mechanisms and tools aimed at assessment are also missing. The previous SPs have not been thoroughly implemented, there are evaluations on implementation outcomes and no lessons learnt except for the assertion of the TLI that the previous SP was not effective. The outcomes of implementation of the previous SP have not served as a basis for elaborating this new one. There are only few KPIs, even in the new SP. Notwithstanding the fact that there is a timetable of SP operation implementation, there is no indication on the impact of the said operations and KPIs, material resources. Moreover, only some infrastructures are indicated as being responsible for the implementation. What is more, responsibility delegation among them is not that clear, and is not made clear in other short-term plans of the TLI. The new leadership of the TLI and some members of administrative staff feel that certain changes need to be undertaken and in this respect they have initiated the elaboration of a new SP.

The link of strategic aims, mechanisms and procedures preconditioning TLI operations with the mission is not precise.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

Taking into consideration the fact that the TLI positions itself as an intergovernmental TLI with its mission and is aimed at providing education in line with European standards, the expert panel finds that the operations undertaken by the EREA are not in line with its mission. In particular, the TLI has an intention to provide education in line with European standards, yet, the reflection of the latter in the APs is quite weak, the research carried out is quite limited and research directions do not reflect the latest developments in either Europe or the region.

Both external and internal stakeholders, generally speaking, share the main elements of the mission. The strongest point is the professional character of the education. The notions of “European” and “research” are more vague. “European” refers to most stakeholder as European standards and values of education and research. The concept of “research” should be discussed and clarified.

The Mission is not finalized with a vision targeting the future and accepted by everyone, which would otherwise enhance commitment to the realization of the latter. The aims included in its 2017-2020 SP are not clearly linked with its mission, which does not guide towards mission achievement. The lack of precision of either APs or the aims provides enough evidence to state that the TLI needs to elaborate operations which will be systematic at an institutional scale, interconnected and continuous, since otherwise the academy will face such serious issues as are the decrease in the number of students and that of education quality. The fact that strategic aims are not yet separated and the steps aimed at their development and achievement are still missing, hinders the planned realization of strategic aims and realistic implementation of operations. The institution has no real practice of writing a strategic plan that is in one direction linked to its specific mission and in the other direction formulating goals and objectives in a SMART way (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely), so that it can measure its realization and learn lessons to elaborate and implement steps to improve. Many existing mechanisms and procedures on an array of operations are not linked to the strategic cycles and are not unified into one structured (QA) system.

Taking into consideration the fact that the TLI aims at preparing specialists in line with labour market demands, it is worrisome that no analyses of labour market demands have served as a ground for reviewing the mission, or else the participation of external stakeholders in the process has not been given due heed to. There is an impression that the SP has been written by a small number of people without external stakeholder participation (especially student and labour market representatives). The mission is very generic and can well be used by other HEIs of Armenia. The lack of mechanisms aimed at revealing the needs of internal stakeholders as well as the absence of their involvement in the procedures of elaborating or reviewing the SP endangers the thorough realization of SP aims.

The lack of a unified approach and precise, trustworthy mechanisms of assessing and improving the implementation effectiveness of the mission and the aims endangers the revelation of TLI operational achievements and drawbacks, transparency of operations, as well as precise planning of prospective operations. The lack of the link with the previous SP per se indicates the fact that the present one has been written in a hurry, without evaluating the implementation of the previous one. Because of certain drawbacks and indicators, there are different and often contradictory interpretations both on SP and mission. The elaboration of effectiveness indicators of strategic aims would allow to evaluate TLI achievements as an outcome of SP implementation. The incomplete elaboration of the system of qualitative and quantitative evaluation and that of mechanisms will result in a wrong overall picture of the situation, which will lead to a wrong decision-making on the part of the TLI. Moreover, the fact that budget planning is almost not carried out in line with strategic aims (allocations to research, internationalization) can result in quite serious issues, since the gap between the aims and operations undertaken will become wider.

**SUMMARY: Taking into consideration the fact** that TLI mission it is not perceived by all stakeholders in the same way, while carrying out operations all components of the mission are not being given equal attention to, the mission is not finalized with a vision and does not thoroughly determine set aims and implemented procedures, mechanisms, there is no evaluation of implementing aims and tools for improving the SP, the expert panel concludes that de facto operations of the TLI do not emerge from its mission and hence, the TLI **does not meet the requirements of Criterion 1.**

**CONCLUSION:** The correspondence of EREA institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 1 is **unsatisfactory.**

## **CRITERION II: GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

**CRITERION** The TLIs' 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 line with the TLI Charter, the Board of Trustees (hereinafter referred to as BoT), comprised of 8 members, and the Rector who hold the post for 7 years are considered to be the highest administrative bodies. The TLI administration is of the opinion that the members of the BoT could have had a bigger investment in the development operations of the TLI as far as a more active operations and improvement of assistance are concerned. Changes in the structure of the TLI and its organigram are being ratified in the BoT. There is a flat organizational structure. One and the same people are responsible for different procedures. In line with the organigram, the TLI has a vice-rector on academic-scientific affairs, yet, as far as its scientific operations are concerned there is no separate infrastructure or a person responsible for regulating scientific operations. Horizontal ties are ensured by means of scientific council, where the whole leadership is involved. Vertical ties are being ensured by means of accountability reports.

There are collegial bodies at different levels. In particular, except for Scientific Council and rectorate, there are Faculty Councils which are accountable to the former. These councils can make decisions related to administrative, academic and scientific fields. The TLI has documents regulating the operations of different infrastructures. In particular, management bodies are regulating their operations in line with regulations and procedures which refer to administration, academic services, research, international relations, QA, and spheres of cooperation with stakeholders. These regulations and procedures are mainly available online. Notwithstanding the fact that the TLI has documents regulating the functions of support staff and infrastructures (job descriptions), the reviewed documents and the functions of employees allow to state that the responsibilities and functions of employees are not clearly distinguished.

Notwithstanding the fact that the level of autonomy of Chairs is the same along different specializations, there are certain differences as far as resource allocation and document elaboration is concerned, since there is no institutional approach. The norms of ethics are not summarized in a separate document.

As is highlighted by the TLI itself, "...in the current administrative toolkit, evaluation and improvement tools are comparatively weak and as an outcome not all accountability reports received by different infrastructures contain evaluation on effectiveness of administrative decisions...." No analyses aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of the system of governance have been carried out hence far. With the aim of carrying out the academic process, the TLI allocates human and material resources. Material resources allocated to different infrastructures are done based on their regular demands and budget opportunities. In infrastructures responsible for distinct fields, there is but one employee – the person responsible for the field. Chair heads are also acting deans, yet they do not get any additional salary. The TLI does not carry out a systematic analyses of satisfaction level with human, material and financial resources.

The directors of TLI branches are also members of Scientific Council and participate in the SC meetings ensuring implementation of decisions in branches as well. In some branches, yet not all, there is a separate programme for development. The main incoming flows in branches are tuition fees.

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

In line with the TLI regulations, teachers and students must be given an opportunity to be involved in different levels of administration. In line with the said requirements student participation in scientific and faculty councils must be 25%. 10 students are involved in the Scientific Council. Out of the said number 5 are Student Council members. In the Academic Council of the TLI teaching staff constitutes the lion portion. The Student Council president is involved in the rectorate.

In accordance with the SER and site-visit observations, students, the prime stakeholders of academic process, involved in different infrastructures are rather passive as far as suggestions on improvement are concerned (though some changes based on the students' suggestions have been implemented). It became evident during the meeting with stakeholders that students do not fully realize their role in decision-making. This is partly due to the short communication lines between students, teachers and chairs.

Until now, no survey aimed at revealing satisfaction level with decisions directed at stakeholders has been implemented.

Branch teaching staff regularly participates in corresponding Chair meetings. Branch Student Councils, thought having ties with the Central Student Council, do not have any regulated mechanism aimed at participating in the administration of the branch.

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

The Academy carries out the planning in two levels: long-term planning (4 years) which is the SP, then mid and short-term operations plans.

In line with the assessment and review procedures of operational plans, the infrastructures must elaborate their mid and short-term operational plans. However, the TLI infrastructures have one-year operational plans, which are not linked with a long-term SP of the TLI. There is no mid-term planning as such.

The programmes lack indicators of goals' implementation. Accountability reports, which are not formulated in line with strategic aims, are viewed by the TLI as a monitoring mechanism.

Moreover, the TLI does not follow the interconnection of plans and mission, it also lacks mechanisms and corresponding analyses aimed at assessing strategic goals.

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

The TLI still lacks the implementation of precise tools and mechanisms aimed at environmental scanning, though the latter are determined in the QA Guideline. There is no systematic environmental scanning. There is no regular data-collection, there are no trustworthy data grounding decision-making. There is nobody/infrastructure responsible for data collection and analyses necessary for decision-makers. De facto observations are only conducted in line with the APs as far as revealing labour-market demands is concerned. Yet, the latter are not quantitative analyses and are carried out thanks to personal contacts and on the initiative of Chair heads. There is no institutional approach to the realization of the process.

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

The TLI has a procedure on assessment and review of operational plans. The TLI management states that the effectiveness of management system is not satisfactory, yet no precise indicators evaluating the effectiveness were presented.

In accordance with the information presented in the SER, infrastructures are still passive as far as the qualitative review of operational plans is concerned. Moreover, the suggestions in this respect are but scarce.

A considerable portion of procedures have been elaborated recently, in 2017. The rest was elaborated in 2008-2009 and no analyses aimed at the achievements and effectiveness of the latter **were presented to the expert panel**<sup>6</sup>. The operations are planned and partially implemented. The evaluations are but periodic (course evaluations, procedure of tuition fee reduction, policy on teacher recruitment), and the outcomes of evaluations are only seldom used for improvement. Operations aimed at improvement are not always grounded with reliable data. QA system is not integrated and not harmonious with the SP.

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<sup>6</sup> The part was amended according to the discussion with the HEI representatives and experts. Before it was "A considerable portion of procedures have been elaborated recently, in 2017. The rest was elaborated in 2008-2009 and no analyses aimed at the achievements and effectiveness of the latter is carried out".

The TLI lacks mechanisms regulating the transfer of best practices as far as improvement in the branches is concerned. There is only certain experience exchange at the level of inter-personal communication.

## **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.**

The TLI has a regulation on AP monitoring and Review, following which, one month prior the review process, the QA head sends a notice to corresponding Chair heads, informing the latter that the process of review is about to start. In line with the regulation, prior to the launch of the process, the Head of the QA Department organizes and implements certain consultation with the participation of representatives of corresponding infrastructure aiming to guide the latter as far as procedures of AP review, necessary documents are concerned and based on this discussions the timetable and people responsible are outlined. Yet, there are no qualitative and quantitative indicators as such, as far as the effectiveness of APs is concerned. Notwithstanding the fact that evaluation tools are indicated in the QA Manual, the latter have not been used yet and their trustworthiness has not been evaluated yet. Lesson observations are also viewed as mechanisms of data-collection, which are not always analysed. The TLI lacks workable mechanisms aimed at ensuring feedback with external stakeholders. In the majority of cases information on APs is provided in a non-official way based on personal contacts. The procedure is not carried out systematically, and there is no institutional approach to regulate implementation.

The TLI lacks data on the analyses of reliability of procedures aimed at data collection on the effectiveness of operations.

The electronic system of data-collection and analyses is not yet thoroughly implemented. As far as data-collection, dissemination and management of internal document flow is concerned, the latter is still carried out on paper format, which different stakeholders also consider non-effective. The methodology of data-collection and analyses is not yet precisely elaborated.

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

The website of the TLI is considered as a main tool of publishing information. One can find materials about the Academy, regulatory documents of academic process, information on APs and teachers involved. There have been no valuable contributions as far as the feedback provided through the website is concerned.

The TLI lacks qualitative and quantitative data on APs and degrees awarded. Correspondingly, it is not precisely stated what can be published and what not. The TLI lacks a regulation on information that can be published and the ones which cannot, as well as the information on internal use (confidential). The TLI also lacks precise mechanisms and tools evaluating publications.

The APs of the TLI are given for external review (to employers and other TLIs), and the feedback received is discussed in corresponding chairs.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

The existence of documents regulating the functions of administration bodies, infrastructures as well as those of separate posts, as well as the existence of sectorial regulations and procedures ensure the viability and operations of management bodies. The existence of collegial bodies ensures participatory approach to decision-making procedures. Notwithstanding the fact that the structure of the Academy and any changes to the latter are being ratified by the BoT, which supposedly was to ensure stability

of the structure, structural changes are quite frequent mainly accounted for limited number of human resources. The role of the Board of Trustees is extremely passive in the routine life of the TLI and as an outcome there is a rupture between the goals of founding the Academy and the present state of affairs. Since there is no regulated procedure on effectiveness evaluation of the management system and the operations of separate infrastructures, the TLI also does not carry out evaluation of efficiency with human, material and financial resources and is thus endangering the purposefulness of its expenditures. Yet the fact that material resources are allocated to different infrastructures based on their demands and the opportunities provided by the budget, ensures (to a certain extend) the existence of necessary material resources, yet does not guarantee the stability. 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 demands 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. Here, the Scientific Council has a big role to play, since it participates in almost all decision-making procedures. Another important player in these procedures is the Rectorate, with the Student Council President involvement. Yet, the factual participation of students in decision-making is quite passive. The TLI exercises no mechanism aimed at revealing the main reasons of this passive participation, as well as enhancing the activeness. The incomplete expression of student voice in decision-making considerably endangers the purposefulness of these decisions directed at student needs and student-centeredness in general.

As an outcome of non-rooted nature of mechanisms and tools of implementing the SP and the loose link between the short-term plans and SP, the SP does not serve as a document to plan and guide the daily operations of the TLI. The lack of indicators makes the process of assessing the effectiveness of operations undertaken difficult. Per se, the mechanism to ensure the transfer of aims into concrete operations are but weak.

Since the TLI does not foresee a regulated environmental scanning and it is not being carried out, decision-making is mainly based on the data presented in the accountability reports, that is to say, paying attention to internal factors. External environmental scanning is per se limited to the attempts to reveal labour-market needs, which, however, do not have a quantitative nature but rather are targeted at contextual improvement of APs.

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. Policies, although not always being documented, have been reviewed from time to time, yet, this has been carried out without a precise toolkit of assessing their effectiveness. As an outcome, the management of policies and procedures has not yet been carried out following the principle of quality management.

Notwithstanding the fact that there is the procedure on Evaluating and Reviewing Operational Plans, and the Regulation on AP Monitoring and Review, they lack logical continuity and link between the reasons and outcomes. Information on the effectiveness de facto is carried out only as far as the academic process is concerned, yet, even in this respect, there are no analyses and implementation mechanisms and tangible outcomes. There is no assessment of information collection and elaboration and the tools are not being improved. Pe se, the TLI is aware of the imperfection of its mechanisms. Even without assessing the effectiveness, no operations aimed at improvement are carried out. As an outcome, the purposefulness and grounded nature of improving all operations of the TLI is endangered.

The TLI does not carry out any regulated evaluation of published information, de facto not underlining the importance of the procedure, and does not enhance bilateral information flows due to its low level of activity.

**SUMMARY: Taking into consideration** the lack of regulated procedure on evaluating the effectiveness of operations of separate infrastructures, the fact that students are mostly passive and there is an incomplete voicing of their issue in certain decision-making processes, the fact that the SP does not act as a document guiding daily operations of the TLI, the lack of indicators assessing the implementation of aims, the lack of a regulated procedure on environmental scanning, the fact that the management of policies and procedures is not based on the principle of quality management, the lack of mechanisms aimed at evaluating the effectiveness and improving incoming and outgoing information flows, it can be concluded that the TLI system of governance, administrative bodies and their functions are not sufficiently targeted at carrying out the aims and their effectiveness is not ensured. Hence, the expert panel concludes that the EREA **does not meet the requirements of Criterion 2.**

**CONCLUSION:** The correspondence of EREA institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 2 is **unsatisfactory.**

### **CRITERION III: ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES**

**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 institution's mission and the state academic standards.**

The EREA carries out 11 undergraduate and 10 graduate APs. The studied APs are elaborated based on current state academic standards. The alignment of APs with the mission is grounded in the programmes, especially in the section of the *aims*. The APs also include description of the fields of employment. The TLI underlines the importance of preparing specialists especially within the qualifications that are demanded by the labour market.

The ILOs, described in the APs, are in generic terms, in line with the NQF, yet, the ILOs are not clearly segregated per separate components, and their measurability is not discussed and ensured in the TLI.

The ILOs are mapped per disciplines. Their contextual sequence is respected. There are no repetitions of contents between the BA and MA APs. Credit allocation policy is described, yet, credit allocation is not based on ILOs. The ties between foreseen student workload, de facto workload, and credit allocation are not ensured.

Certain elective courses are foreseen in the APs, yet the students do not get precise information about their significance. In the branches the students do not even have information about the elective courses (including senior students).

Course description have been elaborated for distinct disciplines. This descriptions include timetable, questionnaires and assessment rubric. Yet, the requirements to course description vary from specialization to specialization, or else, there are no course descriptions. There are course descriptions which are very precisely providing necessary information, yet there are also those which do not provide thorough information on the course.

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

Teaching and learning methods (hereinafter referred to as TLM) can be found in the APs and they have ILOs. Yet, in the majority of cases the methods are the same for all ILOs, there is no differentiation of methods for knowledge and skill acquisition.

By the way, teaching/learning methods are more directed at knowledge acquisition than that of competences and skills, which has been ascertained both by employers and alumni.

The TLI lacks a policy and grounds for teaching/learning method selection. At a long run the methods are being chosen by the teacher without any institutional approach. Lecturing can have different formats, mainly based on the choice of the teachers. In the majority of cases, the materials are being sent to students, and later the teacher introduces the topic by means of presentations and discussions, yet, alongside with this, lectures as dictations are also present, which is so typical to the branches.

Described and implemented methods are mainly teacher-centred, and lesson-observations came to prove this. They also revealed that the lessons are conducted in a participatory atmosphere, certain team-work elements are implemented, yet, in some cases they are not targeted at digesting this or that particular topic. Sometimes, no precise feedback is provided by the teachers. No assessment methods are exercised as far as the elements of team work are concerned. There are no opportunities for electronic interactive teaching/learning.

Nearly all stakeholders state that in the majority of cases internships are not successful. Alumni also finger-point the limited choice of internship venues. As a practical component of APs, students undertake certain attempts at writing SPs (within the framework of Management AP). The teachers indicate the shortage of didactic materials and the needs of the latter, as well as the need to have a unified system of information transfer aimed at internal stakeholders (by mean of mails). It's worth mentioning that the policy on internships differs as far as foreign students are concerned. In particular, for them the internship is either carried out at the TLI or not carried out at all.

Lesson-observations are viewed as a tool aimed at improving the methods, yet not all APs have a format of evaluating the outcomes of lesson-observations.

Generally, the teaching staff is well aware of a larger list of TLMs, than the ones exercised. In particular, an array of methods are stated in the monitoring report of Management AP (2016-2017), and an evaluation of their effectiveness is carried out.

Irrespective of the aforesaid facts, the employers still highlight the decent level of preparation of the alumni.

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

The assessment types, but not methods and criteria are regulated at the TLI. The grounded demand both at an institutional level and in general to align assessment methods with ILOs is missing.

The TLI has a multi-component system of assessment. There is no unified approach to assessment as far as separate disciplines are concerned, since the teacher has an opportunity to decide on the criteria to utilize. The grounded link between the ILOs, assessment and TLMs is missing. The assessment methods are in the majority of cases targeted as assessment of knowledge, rather than skills and competences.

The TLI has a procedure enhancing academic honesty and in line with the latter the exams are carried out anonymously, in envelopes which have passwords on them. There is an auditoria for meant for 140



people, where written exams are conducted. The written exams in the branches are carried out the same way: anonymously and with passwords on the envelopes. After the students familiarize themselves with the assessment notes of their exams, they are also given an opportunity to get acquainted with the comments the examiner has made on their writing. There are also oral exams. Course papers, graduation and MA theses are being checked via plagiarism checking on-line. Provided there is coincidence of more than approximately 15%, the work is considered unacceptable. The TLI has the requirements for theses defence per separate components, yet the observation of theses revealed that irrespective of requirements, not all theses compile with them, in particular, certain theses have a research and applied components, and some do not.

The procedure of appeals is regulated.

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

Certain (inter)national comparison of APs with other similar APs has been carried out. Some 5-6 TLIs, out of which 3-4 local, 1 Russian and 1 European TLI. The methodology and the format on comparative analyses are generally the same for all APs. As an outcome the strengths and the weaknesses of the programmes, areas in need of improvement and the steps to be undertaken in this respect are highlighted. Yet, even based on the comparative analyses no essential changes have been introduced in the programmes.

There are no joint APs with other universities. There are no student exchange programmes. Notwithstanding the fact that the APs do not hinder teacher and student mobility neither with their structure nor content, there are no established mechanisms to enhance the mobility, and mobility data are scarce. Both incoming students and the very few outgoing are through full-time enrolment and not for shorter periods of study as in Erasmus.

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

The TLI has a Regulation on AP Monitoring and Review. The APs undergo a regular expertise and the employers make suggestions for improving the APs. There is no set format for suggestions, they are being written in the way the stakeholders choose.

The students are very passive as far as programme review is concerned and their role is non-essential. Surveys on separate APs are conducted, yet there is no impact on APs. These surveys are not conducted in branches.

Data on alumni employability are received non-formally and they are not thorough and non-regulated.

Ongoing outcomes of implemented APs are regularly discussed in different infrastructures of the TLI: in the meetings of the Scientific Council and those of chairs.

Course descriptions are being reviewed in accordance with the ad hoc necessity.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

The structure and content of APs, which is based on state academic standards, ensures the preparation of professionals in line with current labour-market specialists. As a part of its policy, the TLI is trying to offer more attractive APs, yet, without decent studies some APs can be endangered and become outdated. The ILOs are formulated and there is mapping with disciplines, yet, even in this scenario, the rupture between the ILOs of the APs and their realization is evident, and there is a hazard of a considerable divergence between the intended and de facto outcomes. Moreover, as an outcome of this

rupture, there is a danger, that the formulations of the ILOs will be just formal, which, in its turn, can result in a non-precise distinction between the ILOs and credit allocation without taking into consideration the acquisition of ILOs nor the workload.

The listed TLMs serve as a guidance for teachers, yet the fact that they are not separated results in certain difficulties as far as acquisition of skills is concerned, which, per se, is the main concern of alumni and employers. The used methods are mainly teacher-centred, yet certain inclination towards student-centred approach can be traced. The teaching staff tries to implement certain modern teaching methods, yet, as an outcome of an incomplete implementation, methods can be revalorized and be dropped out, thus becoming but formal. At times, the teaching staff does not provide decent feedback, and as an outcome the students do not realize their mistake and do not correct it: hence, there is a huge percentage of incomplete information. Yet, generally speaking, the employers are quite contented with the knowledge and skills of the alumni, and hence, it can be deduced that the methods which are used de facto ensure the acquisition of ILOs to a certain extent.

The fact that there are no grounds for ensuring the alignment of assessment methods and ILOs, is first of all because the ILOs are not measurable. Nor are there underpinning indicators or criteria to make the degree of achievement of the ILOs measurable. As an outcome, there is a rupture between the assessment of achievements and ILOs. Moreover, skills, per se are not assessed. The lack of a pan-university approach to assessment criteria, can result in inconsistency between assessment outcomes of different disciplines, and diploma supplement will not reliably reflect the achievements of the alumni. The system of academic honesty is quite developed on account of precise formulations on academic honesty. The fact that there are certain criteria to assess graduation paper and MA theses, ensures the transparency of their assessment and honesty.

Notwithstanding the fact that the outcomes of the environmental comparisons have not yet been implemented, they are summarized and comprehended by the TLI. The TLI does not have any mechanisms enhancing outgoing mobility, yet, the APs are attractive for foreign students of the region. In this respect, the modest data on mobility is an outcome of limitation of resources and connections, and not that of programme content.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Regulation on AP Monitoring and Review has not yet been fully implemented, its existence can be considered as the first step of the TLI to review the APs in line with the quality culture. The feedback provided by the employers can be an important source for AP improvement, which, however, is being endangered, since current mechanisms do not encourage employers to provide feedback except via personal contact. The employers might be uncertain as far as their benefit and the direction of providing a feedback is concerned.

**SUMMARY: Taking into consideration** the structural coverage of the APs, their alignment with academic standards, the inclination towards student-centred approach, the implementation of mechanisms ensuring academic honesty, implemented comparative analyses and the first steps aimed at improvement of APs, the expert panel considers that the TLI has decently-elaborated APs, which are in generic terms in line with the operations of the TLI and hence, concludes that the EREA **meets the requirements of Criterion 3.**

**CONCLUSION:** The correspondence of EREA institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 3 is **satisfactory.**

## **CRITERION 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.**

Full-time and part-time student admission is carried out in line with the regulation on undergraduate and graduate admission. The undergraduate admission is organized based on the outcomes of centralized school-leaving exams. The applicants who have not undergone this system or have been left out from other TLIs are granted an opportunity to participate in entrance exams organized by the TLI. The written exams are being conducted in a special auditoria and it is possible to follow the whole process.

With the aim of attracting prospective students, the TLI representatives visit schools and present the APs and the regulation on admission, also having lectures. Days of "Open Doors" are being organized, informative and advertising announcements are broadcast by TV and in the official website of the TLI. Student who finish the preparatory courses, are given an opportunity to enter the university based on the final exams. The transfer of students from European college to the Academy is there, yet there are no criteria to assess the effectiveness of the procedure. Foreigners, who finish preparatory courses, are admitted to the first year studies after undertaking an English Language test. Before admission, preparatory courses are foreseen for the graduates of high schools.

Graduate admission is carried out in two formats: either as an outcome of specialization exams, or on the green light of the chair.

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

The TLI leadership and the teaching staff underline the importance of revealing both academic and social needs of the students and solutions given to the latter. The TLI has certain elements of the policy of students' needs revelation and corresponding institutional opportunities are provided. However, there is no systematic and regular revelation of the needs. There is a box of complains and suggestions. The students are generally passive in voicing their concerns. This may partly be due to the direct communication lines between students, teachers and chairs.

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

The TLI leadership and the teaching staff underline the importance of raising the attainment of students and undertake certain operations in this respect. In particular, there are shifts of teaching staff, with appropriate timetable aimed at organizing additional lessons and carrying out consultations. Consultation are obligatory before examination period. Throughout the semester, such operations can be organized on demand of the students. Regular consultations are being organized throughout individual works, course and graduate papers, as well as internship.

Throughout the meeting with the expert panel students highlighted that within the framework of an array of disciplines (including foreign language), additional and extra-curricular lessons have been organized. The Academy encourages student participation in such academic events as seminars, competitions and etc. Students are generally contented with these events, yet not all are informed about the latter.

#### **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 TLI is guided by ratified regulations when rendering assistance and guidance to students. The timetable to apply to administration is not yet made precise, and the meetings are but ad hoc in nature, provided there are certain issues. However, the students have not indicated any barrier to apply to administration: rector, chair heads, administrative and teaching staff and else. Mentors, teachers and the student council are the main chains uniting students and administrative staff.

The TLI has a regulated system of appeals. The administrative staff assists the students when they need to resit exams. There is a regulation on privileges or sanctions to be imposed on students.

Students indicated that in case certain issues had been voiced in front of administration, corresponding solutions were given. They are generally satisfied with the services rendered by the administrative staff. The TLI, in its turn, underlines the importance of improving said services, yet, there are no analyses aimed at its planning and effectiveness.

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

The issues related to students' career are being regulated by the Alumni and Career Centre, the functions of which are carried out according to a set regulation. The awareness on operations of the said centre is quite low amongst the student. No all students are contented with the services rendered. In generic terms the Centre does not yet carry out active operations, does not have a corresponding role to play in professional orientation of students, does not provide information on vacancies available, does not organize career days, meetings and discussion with labour market representatives. The potential of teachers, who are at the same time labour-market representatives, is thought to be a mechanism aimed at career (professional) orientation.

Anyway, Alumni and Career Centre cooperates with a number of local organizations, where the internship of EREA students is carried out and which are considered as potential employers for the EREA alumni (National Assembly of the RA, Synopsis Armenia, VivaCell and etc.). Students participate in career fairs. Information on the latter is provided by the EREA.

The link with alumni is loose and the TLI does not yet have an informative database of alumni and their employment. The TLI does not have an alumni union.

Certain lessons aimed at CV writing, and decent presentation in the labor market are organized for students.

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

Research operations of students are partially carried out within the framework of course and graduation papers and MA theses. Anyway, research and applied components, as well as elements of implementation are not universal (at times they can be traced in the works of students undertaking their studies following SYNOPSIS programme). Part-time students do not undertake any research operations.

Teacher-student joint research operations are weak, though there are some joint publications. Students get a reduction for publishing their articles in the journal of scientific articles of the EREA.

In line with the EREA regulation, the research operations of students, in the form of published articles, are being taken into account during the "Best Student" contest.

The TLI does not have a Students Scientific Union, student seminars and conferences are rarely organized.

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

The Student Council acts as a body in charge of student right protection. It carries out its operations in line with its statute, where the rights and responsibilities and the procedure of member elections are determined. However, the Students Council does not yet have an active involvement in revealing academic and social needs of students. The Student Council does not have any precise mechanisms of revealing student needs and analyzing the latter. The said unit has not yet voiced any issue of vital importance; including issues related to academic process. Yet, the issues that had been revealed, got their solution. For instance, in certain cases the teacher has been changed on students' demand, certain changes have been introduced in the timetable, the time of the start of lessons has been altered.

Once an issue is revealed, it is being discussed in the Student Council, then, on the initiative of the Council, the discussion of the said issues goes to higher instances; chair level and higher. Except for assistance received by Student Councils, students get certain assistance from mentors.

The Student Council is a member of ANSA (Armenian National Student Association), yet participation and cooperation in this platform are but passive. They lack the stable and effective link with Student Councils of other TLIs.

Student participation in the Scientific Council is 25%, which is ratified in the regulation. Yet, students are passive in voicing the issues they are concerned with and offering solutions.

In 2017 Student Manual has been elaborated, which, alas, does not have any reference to student rights.

In TLI branches there are local Student Councils, which regularly organise joint events together with the Students Council of the capital city. Yet, in branches their operation is mainly targeted at organizing social-cultural events without laying accent on the function of protecting students' rights.

The system of fee reduction does not evenly function in part-time and full-time modes of study. A student having high attainment but studying at a part-time mode has not been granted a fee reduction, unlike a student with the same results but studying full-time.

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

The TLI has elaborated a toolkit aimed at analysing and assessing academic, consultation and other services rendered, yet, the said toolkit has not yet been implemented and applied. That is why the TLI lacks analyses on its effectiveness. The only exception is assessment of teachers by students.

The APs are evaluated by Chair heads, who make a decision on whether the same APs must be used in the years to come. The system of QA of services rendered to alumni does not function, since there is no feedback with the latter. Certain complaints-suggestions on the matter have been provided by the alumni.

### **CONSIDERATIONS**

The expert panel evaluates positively the fact that undergraduate and graduate admission of students is regulated and is carried out following a precise procedure. This results in ensuring the effectiveness and objectivity of student recruitment, which, in its turn, is one of the most important tokens of society's trust. Praiseworthy are the efforts of the Academy aimed at ensuring the objectiveness and transparency of exam procedures and eradicating corruption risks.

The lack of effectiveness analyses and assessment of students' need revelation, does not yet allow to formulate an overall idea about the effectiveness of implementation. Yet, based on the facts and observations it can be concluded that implemented operations are not regular and systematic, and as an outcome the TLI does not have a real idea about the real needs of the students. The passive attitude of students towards issues concerning them, may, most probably, be considered as an indicator

towards the procedures highlighted above and their effectiveness. On the other hand communication lines between students, teachers and chairs are short and are mostly taken up.

The expert panel considers that the procedures of organizing additional lessons and providing consultations are grounded and regulated and they enhance the effectiveness of academic process, and preparation of students for the exam period. In this scope, the attention of corresponding infrastructure heads to the attainment of students, which is being fostered by concrete mechanisms of academic assistance, is praiseworthy.

It can be concluded, that students, in generic terms, are free in addressing the issues they are concerned with directly to the administrative and teaching staff of the Academy. This can be considered as an evidence of the atmosphere of trust in the Academy and the presence of constructive cooperation between the leadership and students.

Irrespective of the existence of Alumni and Career Centre, and certain operations the said unit undertakes, generally speaking the operations of the said Centre must still be evaluated as unsatisfactory. The data indicated in the SER, as well as the clarifications that were received throughout the site-visit come to prove, that student awareness about the centre and the level of satisfaction from the services rendered are not yet at a decent level. Yet, in the meanwhile, it should be highlighted that Alumni and Career Centre can have a core role in professional orientation of students and in the process of ensuring effective link with the labour market.

The TLI ties with its alumni are not yet active. Yet, throughout the meeting with the alumni, the expert panel got the impression that the alumni are contented with the education they got in the Academy and are ready to ensure ongoing link and cooperation with the Academy.

The expert panel evaluates student involvement in research as unsatisfactory. Research activities of students in many instances are limited with certain research component in graduation papers and theses, which is a necessary, and yet not sufficient precondition to ensure research motivation, activeness and interest of students.

The existence of a Student Council, which carries out its operations based on a precise statute is praiseworthy. Yet, the participation of the said body in the process of revealing the needs of students and trying to give solutions to them is not sufficiently effective; they lack necessary mechanisms and leverages. The activation of Students Council operations must be considered as an important tool for revealing academic and other needs of students, providing effective solutions to the latter, establishing of student autonomy and formation of trust.

**SUMMARY: Taking into consideration the fact** that the TLI has a regulated system of student recruitment and admission, there are certain mechanisms of students' right protection, corresponding assistance and consultation is rendered to students aimed at ensuring effective academic environment, the expert panel concludes that the EREA **meets the requirements of Criterion 4.**

**CONCLUSION:** The correspondence of EREA institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 4 is **satisfactory.**

## **CRITERION 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 TLI has policies and procedures promoting recruitment of a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff capable of ensuring programme provisions.**

Recruitment of teaching staff is carried out in line with the “Regulation on Teaching Staff Recruitment” which states the procedures of recruitment. The vacancies are filled either by means of open competitions or invited teachers. For every specialisation the candidates must have corresponding qualifications, have certain research undertakings in corresponding field, have scientific publications. The selection is made based on competition outcomes, yet cases of inviting teachers are more common. Selection process is transparent. Yet, the effectiveness of recruitment mechanisms is not yet evaluated. Working relations with the teaching staff are being regulated by means of contracts, where the rights and responsibilities are stated.

The overwhelming majority of teachers work part-time. They are full-time workers in other TLIs or organizations. The same applies for those working in branches, who, in the majority of cases, teach in other TLIs of the city.

The EREA has the mechanism of teaching staff categories, and corresponding functions. For every category (professor, invited teacher, associate professor, assistant, teacher) the rights and responsibilities of involving in corresponding academic processes are stated. The TLI has teacher recruitment regulation meant for exceptional cases, as well as a regulation of awarding titles. The Academy terminates the contract with a teacher in the scenario when the latter gets a negative result from his/her attestation.

The EREA has a support staff: referees of Chair heads, library workers, employers in the Deans’ offices, administrator of computer networks, people in charge of technical support. The TLI lacks precise mechanisms and procedures aimed at recruitment and dismissal of support staff. The functions and responsibilities of these employees are not segregated.

Notwithstanding the fact, that the TLI fully realizes the importance of teaching and support staff efficiency, it still does not yet have an effective policy on HR management. Moreover, the TLI does not undertake HR planning.

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

The TLI underlines the importance of involving teaching staff with high professional qualifications and practical skills. The general qualitative requirements to the teaching staff are presented in AP descriptions. Professional qualification in the field is a mandatory requirement, scientific degree or title, and publications are encouraged, and so is the experience in pedagogical and corresponding scientific-production sphere. Yet, until now there are no requirement to the professional qualities per separate AP. This can be proved also by AP observations. The TLI does not yet foresee review of requirements to professional qualities per AP. Moreover, the operations aimed at evaluating the alignment of teaching staff competences with qualifications awarded (per AP) are not yet carried out. The data for the last three years come to prove that the percentage of teachers having scientific degree increases as compared to the ones who do not have any. Yet, the teachers having a scientific degree are not evenly distributed in all APs.

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

Teacher evaluation is conducted once per 3 years in the format of teacher attestation. While doing so the outcomes of student evaluation, the outcomes of analyses of lesson-observations conducted by chair heads and teachers, characteristics of Chair heads and Deans, scientific operations of teachers

and the effectiveness of the former, their participation in training and new achievements are taken into account. In the scenario when the teacher does not comply with the set qualifications, the contract with him/her is terminated.

Students evaluate professional qualities of teachers. Analyses on survey outcomes have not been handed over to the expert panel, so have other grounds on decisions made based on the evaluation.

Lesson-observations are regarded as a tool for teacher operation analyses and evaluation. There are lesson-observation timetables with an indication of the discipline, teachers to be present and hours in accordance with the timetable. Yet, the format of lesson observation, assessment criteria and scales are not regulated. There are no registers and registration of lesson-observations. The TLI lacks documents of analyses, decisions made and consultations provided. Moreover, there are no minutes of either chair or Scientific Council meetings. Yet, there are some mechanisms of informing the teacher of evaluation outcomes, which help the teachers rectify the drawbacks revealed.

During teacher evaluation and attestation, the KPIs of plans on individual works and individual development of teachers are not taken into account.

The system (based on quantitative and qualitative scales and applicability of research outcomes) of evaluating the effectiveness of scientific operations undertaken by teachers is not yet regulated.

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

The TLI has not yet implemented a precise policy on teacher training and professional development. Certain steps, aimed at teacher training have been implemented, in particular, training plans and timetable of teacher training have already been elaborated in the chairs. Notwithstanding the fact that Chairs have singled out the main directions and spheres of teacher training, the latter are not dictated by the needs to increase the effectiveness of AP implementation. Teachers are often the ones who initiate a training. The training are not periodic in nature and they are being carried out in the scenario when the teachers need new innovative methods or professional training as far as teaching this or that discipline is concerned.

Financial allocations for training or professional development constitute 1% of the budget. The Academy does not have an institutional infrastructure for organizing training and professional development courses. Teachers undergo training in other HEIs and organizations of the Republic. As an outcome of training, new disciplines, in line with labour market needs, are included in APs. As far as courses are concerned, certain up-to-date topics are included there. Innovative TLMs are implemented, new approaches are manifested.

Due to the efforts of the Chair of Linguistics, an English Language training has been organized (only once though).

Yet, as it is stated in the SER training operations are not regulated. No precise mechanisms, aimed at revealing professional needs of teachers, are used. The TLI lacks analyses of the effectiveness of training and teacher achievements. The system of assessing and developing professional qualities and teaching skills is not implemented.

The teaching staff of branches, has not participated in any training organized on the initiative of the TLI within the last three years. Only inter-chair, non-formal training have been organized.

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

With the aim of carrying out its APs, the TLI underlines the importance of involving high quality teaching staff. As it could be traced in the documents and was grounded during the site-visit, the



overwhelming majority of the teaching staff is comprised of teachers working part-time. The TLI encourages this situation, highlighting that those teachers who are the representatives of the labour market are well aware of labour market demands, which fosters the review of academic programmes and disciplines and preparation of high quality specialists for the field. There are also teachers from other universities. It became evident throughout meetings, that the majority of the latter would like to be full-time employees, yet the TLI does not render its assistance in this respect. There is a sound working atmosphere in the EREA. All teachers are the devotees of their works.

The workload of teachers is mostly formed from his/her academic workload, no hours are allocated to research operations. The workload of Chair heads is also heavy. The Chair head is also an acting dean.

The TLI lacks a policy of revealing the needs of teachers; moreover, financial allocations for satisfying the revealed needs are scarce. One of the same teacher conducts up to 6-7 courses. The TLI lacks analyses on internal, external flow of teachers as well as elaboration of policy aimed at improving the current state of affairs. The TLI lacks a policy on recruitment and involvement of young teachers, the works to be undertaken with starting teachers are not determined.

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

The TLI does not yet implement a precise policy and procedures aimed at ensuring professional progress of teachers. By saying *professional progress*, the TLI understand only professional training. However, there are certain means of encouragement; including monetary encouragement, gratitude letters, and etc.

The TLI lacks statistic data on mobility enhancing professional progress and precise mechanisms enhancing mobility. The TLI lacks analyses on professional skills of new teachers, as well as procedures and functions insuring their progress. There are certain mechanisms aimed at assisting the progress of PhD students. Their wish to become a teacher is encouraged. There is an aim of elaborating policy and procedures aimed at implementing the research-scientific outcomes and practical acquisitions in academic process with the aim of enhancing AP implementation.

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

The TLI has adopted certain policy to ensure recruitment of administrative and support staff. The rights and responsibilities of this staff are not determined in the Charter of the Academy, its internal disciplinary rules, contracts, job descriptions. Currently, there are almost 20 support staff members. Throughout the last three years there have been a decrease in the said number, and there is need to analyze the reasons. It is foreseen to have 1 administrative/support staff for 20 people (teachers, students, researchers).

In the meanwhile, the distribution of the said staff in different APs is not precise. Irrespective of AP peculiarities and the number of students, each Chair has one referee. In certain chairs the referents are on their maternity leave, and the chairs do not have substitutes. Chair heads are also acting deans and teachers.

As have been revealed by the expert panel and is stated in the SER, administrative and support staff mainly renders its assistance to academic operations and to a lesser extent to other spheres highlighted in the SP: scientific-research, internationalization, QA, implementation of issues related to societal links.

The operations of the library and those of the archive are regulated, yet, the Head of these infrastructure, so different from one another in terms of their nature and functions, is one and the same person. The library, which foresees a huge amount of work as far as library fund enrichment and digitalization is concerned, does not have necessary workforce.

8 computer labs are being served by one and the same person, who carries out the technical service of computers in a decent way, acts as a network administrator, regulates the issues with software. The laboratories do not have assistants with corresponding professional education.

The TLI does not yet have mechanisms for analysing the operations of the support staff, their evaluation and QA. However, daily checks are being carried out, working sheets are being filled in, accountability reports with an elaborated format are being written, and surveys are conducted among teachers and students. Certain monetary encouragement, letters or gratitude serve as evaluation of the works undertaken by the support staff.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

Underlining the importance of having teachers with high professional qualities, the TLI carried out the recruitment either on competitive basis or having invited professors. Notwithstanding the fact that the TLI does not carry out evaluation of effectiveness of teacher recruitment and selection mechanisms, both students and administration are contented with the teaching staff. Teacher recruitment is carried out based on requirements put forward to each category, yet the latter are very generic and are not described per different APs.

The existence of precise requirements to the professional qualities of the teaching staff will allow for evaluating the alignment of teaching staff to APs and will safeguard the acquisition of ILOs. It's worth mentioning that the Academy has adopted a policy of working only with part-time teachers, 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. Throughout the meeting with the teaching staff it became evident that they would like to work full-time, yet they do not have this opportunity.

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 (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. This means, that in case one teacher decides to quit the job or falls ill, the realization of APs will be endangered. Since there is no precise HR planning and there is no policy of HR retention, the risks become higher. The Academy faces a problem of teacher stability which accounts also for low salaries, the nonexistence of the policy on revealing their needs and scarce financial investment to satisfy the said needs. Part-time work can also hinder as far as research operations and development is concerned. Yet, at the same time it can enhance the implementation of best practice in scientific-pedagogical and research fields. In all faculties the Chair head is also the acting dean. This embeds risks, since it is quite difficult and non-effective to combine scientific, and academic operations foreseen by the post of the Chair head with the administrative functions and responsibilities of the dean.

The TLI has certain mechanisms of analysing and assessing the effectiveness and the quality of operations undertaken by teaching and support staff. Some of the aforesaid mechanisms are surveys conducted among students by means of rating leaflets, lesson-observations and discussions. However, either surveys, or lesson-observations are not carried out systematically and regularly, and the tools need review and re-elaboration. Lesson-observations and discussions of the outcomes are carried out by the Chair head and teachers of the same chair, yet, it would be more effective if teachers from other chairs also participated. This would considerably enhance interdisciplinary ties, as well as formulation and implementation of forward-looking teaching methods.

After studying the outcomes of teacher evaluation by students, it can be stated that the outcomes cannot be considered reliable, since the methodology is not precise, data-collection mechanisms are limited, the principle of analyses is not comprehensive. There are no deep analyses of such kind of evaluations, which would otherwise give an opportunity to reveal the main achievements and imperfections. The fact that no self-evaluation and peer evaluation mechanisms are being used makes

it difficult to get an overall picture of the procedure. The implementation of multifaceted evaluation would allow for grounding decision-making with reliable data. Especially given the fact that as an outcome of student evaluation certain teachers have been dismissed.

The Academy realized the importance of professional development, yet, either financial resource allocations (1% of the budget) or operations undertaken are but limited. Undertaken training are mainly on account of personal ties of teachers or on their own initiative. Notwithstanding the fact that necessary training topics have been suggested by teachers and the corresponding training plan has been elaborated there are no serious achievement in this respect, and the role of Academy as far as corresponding topics are concerned is limited. Though just once English Language courses have been organized for teachers, the latter did not have continuous nature. Until nowadays, no enough attention has been paid to revealing the needs of teachers, yet, the latter is an important process to understand AP hazards from the prospective of AP effective implementation and ensuring the natural flow of the process. The TLI must implement precise mechanisms for revealing the needs of teaching and support staff and trying to find solutions for the latter. It is necessary to create preconditions and conditions aimed at enhancing professional qualifications of the teaching staff not only to follow the directions offered by teachers and to organize them at a decent level but also to assist the professional development which foresees postdoctoral theses writing, defense, award of a scientific degrees, promotions.

There are no scientific conferences or seminars organized at the TLI. They would be considered as effective platforms for exchanging scientific, pedagogical achievements. The TLI lacks mechanisms to enhance participation in local and international conferences presenting corresponding reports.

Teacher mobility aimed at improving his/her professional skills, leading experience exchange, for the realization of which the TLI has aimed at elaborating a policy and determining precise procedures, also enhance professional progression.

The TLI has certain mechanisms of encouraging teacher and support staff (publications in scientific journals of the Academy, monetary encouragement), yet, these mechanisms must be developed from the prospective of enhancing professional development of the staff. It is also important for the TLI to enhance publication of research outcomes in other local and international journals.

Financial resources allocated for satisfying the social, professional, research-scientific and pedagogical training needs of teachers and support staff, as well as the ones related to their progression are not sufficient and stable, which can endanger staff stability and enhance staff flow. The TLI must find alternative sources of financing and exercise efforts to diversify financial flows, or otherwise the procedures aimed at carrying out strategic goals and objectives within the said time-frame can be endangered.

**Taking into consideration** the fact that due to its policy on staff recruitment, the TLI has teaching and support staff saturated with up-to-date knowledge and necessary qualifications to carry out its APs and is ready to rectify highlighted imperfections and surmount risky factors, the expert panel concludes that the EREA mostly **meets the requirement of Criterion 5**.

**CONCLUSION:** The correspondence of EREA institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 5 is **satisfactory**.

## **CRITERION 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 for promoting its research interests and ambitions.**

The EREA has determined its research interests in its 2017-2020 SP. 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 SP, their formulations are generic and do not reflect concrete research interests. Not all objectives have indicators to assess the progress. Strategic research priorities of the TLI are not segregated and grounded. There are no budget allocations for the implementation of research-scientific operations, development and stability. No tangible steps to find financial means, aimed at enhancing research are being undertaken. Research directions find their reflection in chair annual operational plans. In certain cases the members of the teaching staff are involved in research thematic groups at a chair and infrastructure levels. Scientific seminars are scarce at the TLI.

#### **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 SP is regarded by the TLI as a long-term research strategy. PhD topics and the ones of the chair are viewed as mid and short-term research plans. In the documents handed over to the expert panel, one could find a programme (ratified by the Rector) on mid and short-term scientific research to be carried out in infrastructures. The said documents also had indications of research groups and topics. The time frame for the latter is 2014-2018. The allocation of research topics in the chairs is carried out with certain retention of proportion.

Notwithstanding the chair programmes, research directions are not always clearly determined. Long and short term programmes are not linked and do not always emerge from strategic priorities. The TLI has not yet carried out monitoring of research programmes and analyses of outcomes.

The Academy, being an intergovernmental TLI, which has undertaken to provide education in line with European standards, has not yet carried out research emerging from issues revealed or in line with recent developments.

When talking about the scope of research, research-scientific operations undertaken by graduate students are also involved here.

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

The research operations of the TLI are being regulated by the Vice-rector of Academic Affairs, there is no infrastructure and body for that. The TLI does not yet have a precise policy and procedures of implementing research and developing the latter. Neither the research carried out in PhD studies, nor the outcomes of other research activities conducted in the TLI are commercialized. Theoretically and at a long run, research outcomes are viewed as income and source of additional financial flow, yet in practice this is not the case. The TLI still lacks a policy on publishing research outcomes. The free of charge publications in the journal of the university are regarded as a pan-university enhancement mechanism. Publication of articles and research undertaken in other TLIs are viewed as research operations, yet this is undertaken on the initiative of teachers. There are almost no scientific

conferences organized by the TLI. Research with student participation are also scarce. The Student Scientific Union, the main infrastructure responsible for enhancing, organizing and guiding research activities of students, is missing. No inter-chair and interdisciplinary research activities are carried out.

There are only computer labs. There is need to have other laboratories; for instance that of criminalistics. There is a best practice of enhancing research operations and innovation as far as the IT AP is concerned; within the scope of cooperation with Synopsys. Notwithstanding the fact that the TLI has implemented Plagiarism check on-line programme with the aim of boosting academic honesty and struggling against plagiarism, the TLI states that it is not possible to reveal plagiarism when it comes to texts written in Armenia. The study of graduate theses revealed that the approach to their realization is different in different APs. Certain theses do not have scientific value and an innovative component, some have the research component.

In the EREA branches no research operations are carried out.

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

The TLI underlines the importance and the necessity of internationalizing research, yet, no planned and effective steps are undertaken in this respect. Internationalization of research is mainly limited with publications of teaching staff in international journals, which, alas, are carried out on the initiative of teachers. The TLI does not yet carry out any cooperation with international research centres or bodies. There are no joint research projects. Notwithstanding the fact that there are certain best practices as far as research operations and participation in scientific conferences at an inter-university level are concerned, they are often carried out on the initiative of teachers. The cases of teachers and students having reports in international scientific conferences, as well as their participation in exchange and international research projects are utterly limited.

Within the scope of ERASMUS+ and DOCMEN projects, the staff of the IT AP has participated in international conferences and seminars.

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

In its regulating strategic documents, the TLI underlines the importance of ensuring the link of research and academic process. Yet, at the same time graduate and postgraduate theses are indicated by the TLI to be the mechanisms ensuring the aforesaid link.

In the rating system of assessment at graduate and postgraduate levels the research component is involved.

The TLI does not have inter-chair or interfaculty research operations.

The IT students, having certain interest in undertaking research operations are involved in distinct research directions of “Synopsis Armenia” company. Teachers involved in international projects assist students in their research operations. The role of the said organization in linking research and academic process can be summarized as elaboration of curricula in line with modern research developments of the IT field, suggestions of theses topics and supervision.

Notwithstanding the fact that the TLI does not have precise mechanisms of linking research operations and academic process, research outcomes of teachers are formally involved in academic process, are reflected in course descriptions and used in the form of printed materials as a manual or a course book. Yet, no studies and analyses aimed at revealing the link between research operations and academic process have been carried out.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

The expert panel considers that the reflection of research operations with objectives and steps of realization in the Academy's 2017-2020 SP praiseworthy. Yet, for the sake of ensuring the effectiveness of research operations, the elaboration of precise indicators and mechanisms aimed at solving the issues highlighted is of prior importance, yet this is still incomplete, which would otherwise ensure the measurability and concreteness of intended outcomes.

At the same time worrisome is the fact that the TLI lacks a vision on research operations and a holistic strategic document reflecting its precise grounding. This would otherwise allow to ground better and regulate research operations that are undertaken, as well as to highlight and ground the targeted directions of their prospective development and strategic priorities. Within the scope of the said strategy the policy on implementing research operations and different procedures would be made precise. That's true that certain separate elements of the latter are not available, yet they are not connected with one another and are not systematic.

The expert panel considers that human resources aimed at implementing research operations and regulating the latter are not sufficient, which has a negative impact on the effectiveness of academic process.

Per se, the TLI lacks effective and targeted financial allocations to research operations of the TLI. Currently the scarcity of financial sources and that of stable financial flows cannot be a thorough justification, since a more targeted and effective planning of current resources could have been a way out. Grant projects can be additional financial sources aimed at research-scientific operations. The TLI realized the necessity of attracting new sources, yet the steps aimed at practical implementation and the outcomes still need improvement.

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.

Expert panel is of the opinion that planning and implementation of research operations in different time frames are not yet effectively implemented. Short and mid-term research operational plans of infrastructures include mere topic headlines, simple enumeration of people responsible and timetable of implementation, do not reflect the phrases of their implementation, anticipated ongoing and final outcomes, as well as anticipated publications, which will reflect the outcomes of research. Based on what has been enumerated above, one cannot have a precise and thorough idea about the existence of short- and mid-term research plans and about the process of their implementation. In addition to what has been stated, accounted for by the fact that short- and mid-term research plans are not linked with the long-term research strategy, their logical integrity and interrelation is distorted. The latter can be considered as an important token of carrying out effective, regulated and targeted research operations, which, at present, must be considered as an important objective of the TLI.

Generally, research operations undertaken are not yet sufficient to carry out the ambitions of the TLI to become a scientific-academic centre with a regional coverage. Notwithstanding the fact that the content diversity of APs endows vast opportunities to develop interdisciplinary and inter-specialization holistic research, the operations undertaken in this respect must also be considered insufficient. Yet, it must be kept in mind that interdisciplinary and inter-departmental research operations ensure the efficient utilization of research potential, revelation of new opportunities and fields of joint works, acquisition of required, competitive and applicable outcomes, unity and viability of research system and infrastructure. The lack of interdisciplinary and inter-departmental research hinders the proportional development of the Academy and dissemination of best practice.

The fact the TLI teachers have an opportunity to publish their articles in the EREA scientific journal can be certain encouragement, especially for those researchers who are at the very start of their

research operations, yet, this cannot be considered as a holistic mechanism to enhance research operations.

From the analyses of documents and the impressions during the site visit it can be deduced that the TLI underlines the importance of research internationalization. At the same time teaching and administrative staff representatives fully realize and do not reject the necessity to intensify the operations undertaken in this respect, especially taking into consideration the transnational nature of the TLI. The transnational nature of the TLI offers interesting opportunities, but also imposes higher demands on the Academy, which, currently are only partially ensured and met. In particular, internationalization of research is but unilateral, concentrating attention on participation of separate employees in scientific conferences and their publications in international journals. Yet, there are no publications in such international scientific depositories as Scopus, Web of Sciences, to which EREA has not even subscribed. In this respect the TLI is passive, in contrast to employees, which somehow manage to ensure internationalization of their research making use of their scientific-academic opportunities and personal ties. This fact can have a negative impact on the establishment of research rating at local and international levels. It will also have adverse influence as far as effective and targeted utilization of research potential is concerned.

Other aspects of internationalizing research operations; participation in international research programmes within the scope of inter-university cooperation, integration in modern European research cooperation networks and platforms are not yet developed (with exceptions in the field of IT). Hence, it is not possible to form an overall idea about internationalization of research operations. The works undertaken are mostly fragmented and non-systematic. It is impossible to talk about research internationalization and recognition of research activities, preconditioned with the lack of systematic and regular implementation and institutional approach.

The necessity to undertake more active and practical steps aimed at ensuring harmonious ties between research and academic operations and continuity can be felt. Graduate and postgraduate research, which are presented as examples of linking research and academic process, are necessary yet not sufficient and do not witness any considerable success registered by the TLI in this respect. The TLI lacks effective, regulated and stable platforms and toolkit aimed at student involvement in the research field, research cooperation between teaching staff as well as teachers and students. On the one hand, the existence of the said platforms would enhance research activity of employees and students, and will reveal the opportunities of internationalization of the other hand.

The passive attitude and indifference of students towards research can also be accounted for the absence of a Students Scientific Union. The foundation of the latter does not foresee serious financial expenditures and organizational difficulties. The fact that teacher-student joint research are scarce, and the initiative of students is limited endangers the acquisition of research skills and competences of students. From the prospective of the link between research operations and academic process, the fact that certain teachers use the outcomes of their research as printed materials; manuals or course books (IT, Law, International Relations, Tourism) is positive. The stable cooperation between the TLI and "Synopsis Armenia" is also an example of best practice. However, it would be possible to make certain judgement on the ties between research operations and academic process only based on corresponding studies and analyses, which have not been carried out yet. At the same time, the said procedure would be more effective and systematic if there were corresponding procedures and mechanisms, which the TLI currently lacks.

**SUMMARY: Taking into consideration the fact that the TLI still lacks mechanisms and corresponding infrastructures aimed at continuous implementation and development of research operations, their implementation and development, provision of effective links with the academic process and internationalization, financing and commercialization, the expert panel concludes that the EREA does not meet the requirements of Criterion 6.**

**CONCLUSION:** The correspondence of EREA institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 6 is **unsatisfactory**.

## **CRITERION VII: INFRASTRUCTURES AND RESOURCES**

**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.**

In its Strategic Plan, the TLI foresees ensuring the academic process with necessary resource base, to create favourable teaching/learning atmosphere. For the implementation of three APs, the TLI has necessary material-technical base. There are comfortable and well-equipped auditoria. However, the auditoria are not adapted to implementing interactive methods and organizing different role-plays, the number of auditoria with smart boards, computers and projectors is limited.

The TLI has a special auditoria for conducting written exams. The auditoria has necessary conditions to organize exams in an objective way. It has a screen, where the parents of students can follow the process of the exams.

The TLI has 8 laboratories equipped with up-to-date technology and internet coverage. The computers have been acquired within the framework of DOCMEN programme and on the support of SYNOPSIS company. Computer labs are saturated with necessary software packages aimed at carrying out the academic process. The laboratories have an intranet, yet the WiFi coverage is not accessible everywhere. There is a lack of laboratories necessary for implementing certain APs. For instance, as far as the AP on Law is concerned, there is no laboratory on criminalistics equipped with tools, materials and exponents for the effective implementation of the corresponding AP. The linguaphone cabinet foreseen for the implementation of the AP in a foreign language does not have necessary saturation.

The TLI has a conference hall meant for meetings, round tables and discussions.

The TLI has an official website, containing necessary information on TLI operations. However, there are no analyses and evaluation as far as the effectiveness of the website, information on visits of internal/external stakeholders, satisfaction with the information posted on the website are concerned. The website does not serve to ensure feedback.

The library has just been formulated. The library has a literature base and electronic literature which are quite limited nowadays and need augmentation. The same applies for the libraries of branches. Some portion of the library is donations. The approach that has been adopted by the TLI “one book or manual per two students” is followed. In many cases, there is but one sample of this or that particular book. The electronic base is limited, and certain operations aimed at enriching the latter are foreseen. The stock and the reading hall occupy one and the same area. Every single table in the reading hall has a computer and a table-lamp, yet it is not very convenient for paper books. The hall has a corner aimed for group works.

The library does not have any ties with other libraries of Armenia. The TLI provides membership to the National Library to make use of its resources throughout two weeks. There is no membership to library networks and international library depositories neither to research databases.



The TLI has a buffet-canteen with necessary staff. There is an open-air sport arena, which is just a venue without and sport equipment. There is no closed sport hall.

It is stated in the SER that not all teachers and students are satisfied with current infrastructures and resources, yet the reasons for dissatisfaction are not analysed.

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

With the aim of creating effective academic and research atmosphere, maintaining and developing the latter, there are allocations in the EREA budget for saturating the libraries with technology and enriching the library fund. 6.5% of 2016-2017, and 5.9% of 2015-2016 academic year budget goes to the operations aimed at improving the infrastructure. The TLI has financial issues as far as resource enrichment is concerned, yet the last investment in this respect is sufficient.

However, resource allocation is not linked with the directions stated in the SP. No priorities are set, and the grounds for resource allocations are not analysed. The issues related to enriching the library are mainly being solved via donations. Computer labs have been saturated within the framework of DOCMEN project and by means of certain investment undertaken by SYNOPSIS company. New investment is foreseen in computer labs. The TLI still lacks an institutional approach and initiation aimed at attracting additional financial 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.**

Notwithstanding the fact that there is a procedure on management and monitoring of financial means, the TLI has not yet adopted a unified policy aimed at financial resource formulation, allocation and management necessary for the implementation of APs. Financial allocation is carried out on annual basis at the beginning of the academic year. The main budget allocations are for salaries, enrichment of technical equipment and library base, publications, training of the teaching staff. The Academy does not yet have an implemented stable system of diversifying financial resources; as allocations from state budget, grant projects, investment by different external stakeholders. The budget is mainly formulated on the account of tuition fees.

Budget allocation is not carried out per strategic directions. They are allocated per ad hoc priorities and there are certain allocations per lines. Budget allocations are transparent and they are being discussed in the Board of Trustees. Yet, there are analyses of effectiveness of resource expenditures.

There are financial allocations for separate APs taking into consideration the written document presented by different infrastructures re their needs. TLI financial resources are allocated for purchasing equipment and development of infrastructures. Yet, human resources do not have sufficient financial support. In the new SP the planning of financial resources has not changed. The driving force for people is their enthusiasm. In particular, all chair head are also acting deans with no increase in salary.

## **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.**

The TLI carries out no systematic analyses of effectiveness indices of SP goal implementation and assistance in academic procedures. The TLI only discusses issues related to financial resources and discusses the issue of their diversification. In particular, certain prospective of getting state financial

allocations, grant projects, paid services, investment made by internal and external stakeholders are being discussed. These are mostly wishes and plans and their effectiveness and realistic nature should also be discussed. From the aforesaid sources, of current existence are only DOCMEN project and SYNOPSIS investments.

As far as resource efficiency is concerned, the latter is higher when it comes to APs and not the implementation of the SP.

3 APs are mainly ensured with necessary resource base, which has also been revealed throughout the site visit. There are computer labs and laboratories in the Academy which have up-to-date computer technology, software packages and an ever internet connection. Every student in the library has a computer. In 4 laboratories equipped by modern technologies (done so by SYNOPSIS) only the students /30/ and teachers /20/ of that particular AP have access to the said programmes.

There is scarcity of professional literature meant for the implementation of APs; 3000 paper-based books and approximately 400 electronic ones. There is a goal to enrich the library and ensure large accessibility to electronic books. Not all APs have necessary academic manuals.

The library used to have an agreement with the National Library, and in the scope of the said agreement the students can get certain literature for a certain period of time. The library does not have any membership with international library networks. There are no separate halls meant for reading, discussions and group works. In the branches of the Academy there is certain amount of resource base, one computer lab, a library with a small number of books and journals, a reading hall for some 8-15 students.

Currently, the APs carried out in the Academy have necessary teaching staff with professional qualifications, as well as administrative and support staff for the successful implementation of the academic process.

Moreover, the Academy considers enrichment of material-technical base aimed at ensuring continuity and stability of its APs and SPs as an important objective.

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

Documentation and document flow is being carried out by means of ratified regulation; either in paper, or electronically. Document flow is carried out only via General department. The TLI has regulations on document formation, horizontal and vertical document flow, safeguarding documents, incoming and outgoing documents, time frames aimed at discussing written documents and decision-making. The TLI realizes itself the necessity of developing an electronic system of document flow.

All current employees are computer literate. The computer of every employee is connected to the intranet, which allows concentrating all documents in one place and making them accessible for all infrastructures and employees. Newly elaborated documents have their electronic versions, which facilitates the process of internal information dissemination between infrastructures, their publication and presentation to external world. However, there is no precise policy on publishing external information. There is an issue with document publication and accessibility on the website. Important documents created in the past have not yet been digitalized. There is a regulation on archiving the documents.

The TLI lacks mechanisms (based on up-to-date approaches) aimed at managing information demanded by student, teachers and others involved in the academic process. There are no student portals, no system of electronic academic resources and document management (MOODLE, Classroom and etc.).

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

The TLI has an infrastructure in charge of ensuring the safety of teachers, students and other employees. There are certain budget allocations to ensure the operations of the said unit.

There is a medical centre, where one can get first aid. The centre has necessary amount of drugs and equipment. Yet, no social packages are involved. The TLI has a holiday house, yet, there is no regulation on making use of it.

There is a service of providing nutrition. For carrying out physical education of students, there is an open air arena, without any conveniences.

The Academy has a system ensuring the safety of students and employees. All buildings and the whole venue of the TLI has cameras installed, the entrance and the exit have watch-points, the safety of employees is ensured by a staff with corresponding qualifications. There is an evacuation scheme. Safety system is monitored, certain steps aimed at its improvement are being undertaken.

Currently, the TLI lacks means to ensure the safety of students and teachers with special needs. Moreover, the operations aimed at assisting them are not elaborated.

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

Resource planning is carried out in accordance with APs and the opinion of students and teachers is heard.

In the SER analyses of applicability, accessibility, effectiveness and mechanism of evaluating resources refer only to financial resources. The Academy carries out an external audit of these resources, yet internal audit is missing.

Throughout different meetings it became evident, that internal stakeholders are contented with resources. Resources foreseen for the implementation of APs under study; computers, numerous applied software packages, library depository are accessible to teachers and students and allow to effectively organize the academic process. Chair heads indicated that there is a regular monitoring of used resources with participation of both teachers and students. Oral surveys are conducted, issues are revealed, which are being discussed during chair meetings and actions are being undertaken to solve these issues.

However, there are no precise mechanisms and toolkit aimed at assessing resource applicability, accessibility and effectiveness. There are no elaborated formats for questionnaires, there are no data of effectiveness and outcomes of analyses, there are no documents reflecting observations and suggestions, planning aimed at resource improvement. The TLI lacks evaluation undertaken by external stakeholders as far as resource accessibility and applicability enhancing academic process is concerned.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

The expert panel evaluates positively the efforts of the Academy aimed at saturating academic process with necessary resources. 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, which results in traditional, teacher-centred education. The library also needs enrichment, and digitalization. Membership to international library depositories will give teachers and students an

opportunity to carry out research and academic operations in line with recent developments. The expert panel finds it more purposeful to have separate venues for carrying out discussions and group works. The TLI lacks student portals, which would be an effective tool for student online communication, group works and organization of student-centred learning. There is no electronic systems of managing interactive teaching/learning which would otherwise enhance the organization of academic process in distance and acquisition of additional skills among the students.

With the aim of creating academic and research environment and maintaining the latter, the TLI has certain budget allocations for improving infrastructural resources. The expert panel considers worrisome the fact that resource base enrichment is mainly carried out within the scope of either international grant projects or donations. The TLI lacks an institutional approach and initiative as far as the involvement of additional financial resources is concerned. The TLI does not yet have a precise policy and procedures aimed at material-technical resource allocations.

Studies have revealed that the current material-technical base is sufficient for carrying out APs, yet they are not sufficient for implementing aims and objectives reflected in the SP. This is also acknowledged by the Academy. As has been highlighted throughout the site-visit, previous SPs have not been implemented because of scarcity of resources.

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. The existence of a precise policy of financial management can enhance effective realization of investment policy by involving partner organizations and external stakeholders, as well as encourage effective implementation of strategic goals. Financial allocation is not carried out in line with strategic directions that is why certain aspects of strategic importance receive almost no allocations, which endangers the implementation of strategic aims and mission. It is only by means of correct planning and allocation of financial resources that the TLI can ensure progress. The evaluation of effectiveness of expenditures would have given an opportunity to the TLI to understand how effective and targeted allocations were, to study the dynamics of achievements as well as indicators of financial stability.

Document flow is carried out in line with regulations. An electronic system of document flow has been implemented. The expert panel welcomes the efforts of the TLI to digitalize documents and post them on the website. The fact that there is intranet, which together with the mails is used for internal document flow facilitates horizontal cooperation between different infrastructures and decision-making procedures. However, a unified approach to information management and implementation of an electronic document flow will allow for systematic data collection and analyses, correspondingly enhancing the effectiveness of the system of governance.

The Academy ensures safe and secure environment, and there is security system implemented. The expert panel considers that creation of necessary conditions for students with special needs, as well as saturation with necessary resources can enhance a sharp increase in the number of students. The expert panel encourages to keep the concerns of students with special needs under meticulous attention, to follow their involvement, progress and assistance, especially given the fact that the Academy has such students.

The expert panel highlights, that irrespective of the fact that there is no precise policy on resource planning and management, mechanisms and procedures aimed at assessing the effectiveness of used resources are not thoroughly implemented and used, internal stakeholders are generally contented with resources. Resources foreseen for the implementation of APs under study; computers, myriad software packages, library fund are accessible to teachers and student and allow for effective organization of the academic process. The TLI lacks analyses of effectiveness of accessibility and implementation of material, financial resources and the ones enhancing academic process, there are no evaluation by either internal or external stakeholders, which would otherwise give an opportunity

to stakeholders to voice their opinion. At the same time, the Academy would have an opportunity to reveal best practice and drawbacks as far as myriad operations are concerned.

**SUMMARY: Taking into consideration the fact that** the current resource base of the TLI is sufficient for carrying out APs, ensuring effective teaching and learning environment, enhancing continuous improvement of academic procedures, internal stakeholders are contented with resources, the expert panel concludes that the EREA **meets the requirements of Criterion 7.**

**CONCLUSION:** The correspondence of EREA institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 7 is **satisfactory.**

## **CRITERION VIII: SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**CRITERION VIII: 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 clear policy on institutional accountability.**

The accountability is carried out by means of implementing the procedure on stakeholder involvement, which states the mechanisms of implementation. Accountability reports of the heads of different infrastructures are considered to be some of such mechanisms. In the accountability report of the rector, one can find the problematic issues of the previous report and the operations undertaken in this respect aimed at their rectification. Deadlines are also foreseen. Yet, the interest towards accountability report is not high among the stakeholders. In this respect the need of implementing a more effective and targeted accountability system is fully comprehended and the TLI foresees undertaking certain steps in this respect.

As far as hierarchical accountability is concerned, a vertical not horizontal-inter-faculty system is functioning.

There are still no precise policy and mechanisms aimed at ensuring accountability of external stakeholders. No analysis aimed at the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms have been carried out hence far.

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

The Academy, underlining the transparency and accessibility of its procedures and operations, implements an array of mechanisms: annual reports, website, facebook page and etc. Certain marketing events; in particular days of “open doors”, announcement in mass media, certain leaflets containing information are being distributed.

Information on procedures is being given to external stakeholders mainly by means of accountability reports of the rector and infrastructural units. Annual financial reports are also made accessible for the public via the website.

Currently, the operations undertaken on the website are considered to ensure the ties between the society and the Academy. Transparency of procedures and operations are important mechanisms of

ensuring the accessibility to the society. Certain documents are posted as far as different aspects of TLI operations are concerned. Moreover, there is certain amount of information addressed to applicants and partners (announcements, information on APs). Yet, certain drawbacks are also visible; from technical prospective the website is not yet accessible to wider public, there are frequent ongoing changes, there is a weak dissemination of information on the main operations of intra-university life. The SER also rightly states that the website fails as a feedback mechanism.

The TLI still does not carry out deep evaluation of effectiveness and targeted nature of information dissemination operations.

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

The TLI SP has the aim of developing ties with the society and raising societal responsibility with necessary and possible steps of implementation. Yet, there are no criteria evaluating the effectiveness and progress of aim implementation.

No holistic evaluation of effectiveness of policy and mechanisms ensuring feedback is carried out yet. Yet, from the SER and clarifications provided by the staff it can be deduced that feedback mechanism is not yet implemented effectively and is weak. Stakeholders often are not motivated as far as communication and feedback provision are concerned. Feedback is often carried out based on personal ties, acquaintances and personal initiatives. The link between the TLI and alumni is often weak or is not there. There are non-formal or non-documented mechanisms of feedback.

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

There is no policy on knowledge transfer to society as such. Certain separate articles can be found in the SP, within the framework of developing the system of additional education. Yet, small amount of operations are undertaken as far as additional education is concerned. From the prospective of organizing events both TLI infrastructures and structural infrastructures are still passive. Weak is the study of societal demands.

Regular visits to schools and other HEIs by employees and students, free of charge excursion for schoolchildren are viewed as operations aimed at knowledge and value transfer. Training of guides and school olympiads have been carried out by the faculty of Tourism. Students volunteer in organizational and support operations of different seminars and conferences. However, generally, there is no institutional approach to procedure systematization. Moreover, dissemination and adaptation of best practice of other faculties does not yet have broad coverage.

No holistic evaluation of mechanisms of knowledge and value transfer to society is carried out. Only oral information and facts are presented as far as operations undertaken are concerned.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

The expert panel evaluates positively the facts that the TLI has a set regulation on accountability. However, there are still a lot of things to undertake; in particular, as far as increase of effectiveness of accountability at vertical-hierarchic and horizontal levels, increase of interest towards accountability reports, improvement of mechanisms at external stakeholder accountability and feedback are concerned. This will allow for raising the accountability procedure to a new level from qualitative and quantitative prospective by rendering the latter more effective and targeted. Moreover, the attempts to perceive accountability as a formality or an aim per se will be eliminated.

Positive are steps undertaken by the TLI to render its operations accessible and transparent for the society. This can have an important role in formulating societal trust towards the TLI and formulation

of a positive image, especially in the context of modern competitiveness and developments in the sphere of higher education. Provision of transparency of operations is regulated by corresponding documents (Regulation on Accountability Policy, SP). Yet, an array of different opinions as far as the effectiveness of the website as an important tool for carrying out the said operations, and in particular, the highlights as far as its improvement is concerned finger-point the necessity of undertaking targeted operations in this respect.

The TLI has complaints and suggestion box, which insures free expression of internal stakeholder opinion (students and employees).

From the prospective of feedback stability and provision of effectiveness, there are still many undertakings. Administrative and teaching staff does not neglect this fact. At the same time, endeavours exercised in this respect also need to be activated. Weak intensiveness of feedback is explained by certain peculiarities of “national mentality” and the readiness of stakeholders to provide or reject providing feedback. Deep analyses of the policy and mechanisms ensuring feedback would have allowed to reveal possible imperfections and the causes, at the same time highlighting possible directions of reforms and targeted aims.

The expert panel is worried with the non-existence of alumni union, trying to find possible reasons in either TLI or alumni passive attitude. In the meanwhile, such union would not only ensure stable mechanisms of ties with alumni, but would as well create broad opportunities aimed at “employer-TLI-alumni” multifaceted communication, and organization of supplementary operations and programmes.

The necessity to activate practical steps aimed at activating the system of additional education is obvious. Different additional courses, regular training programmes will serve as an additional push to activate academic life of the TLI and foster the stable academic image and trust.

Expert panel evaluates positively the fact that the TLI undertakes certain steps aimed at raising the awareness of the society and transferring knowledge and values. Moreover, the involvement of students in the aforesaid activities is positive. Fostering the ties between the TLI and the society will also enhance student professional preparation and enrich their experience. In raising the effectiveness of the said operations, effectiveness analyses and evaluation of knowledge and value transfer, benchmarking with other Armenian are important.

**SUMMARY: Taking into consideration the fact** that the TLI has elaborated accountability mechanisms, the TLI ensures transparency of the education provided and operations to stakeholders and society and exercises endeavour to ensure stable feedback with the society, the expert panel concludes that the EREA **meets the requirements of Criterion 8.**

**CONSIDERATION:** The correspondence of EREA institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 8 is **satisfactory.**

## **CRITERION IX: EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION**

**CRITERIA:** Through external relations the TLI encourages the exchange and the development of the best practice which contributes to the internationalization of the institution.

## **FINDINGS**

### **9.1 The TLI has policies and regulations encouraging the establishment of external relations in order to create exchange, development and internalization fostering environment**

The mission of EREA from local viewpoint (professional labour market) as well as from international viewpoint (European, international academic developments) has external orientation: in all its procedures and cultures it fosters external relations on the whole. The importance of enhancing ongoing procedures of internationalization and the problems deriving from them are reflected in 2017-2020 strategic development plan, albeit without real indicators. An operational plan is developed based on the latter. However, the given enhancement has not been reflected in the clearly developed policies, procedures and processes.

Clear cut policies and procedures, aiming at creating an environment of exchange and development of best practice for fostering the establishment of external relations, have not yet been developed. Notwithstanding the fact that EREA underlines the importance of creating best practice exchange environment, the study and the localization of international practice, the aforementioned have not been defined in the form of clear cut policies and procedures.

The TLI lacks precise policy, procedures and mechanisms of enhancing student and teacher mobility, based on which the latter will be sent abroad within the period of their studies, or will recognize the credits awarded. Notwithstanding the fact that the atmosphere targeted at internationalization is very positive as far as student and staff exchange are concerned, mobility cases are almost entirely limited to incoming students. From structural viewpoint, as far as outgoing students are concerned, the latter mostly continue their education abroad (after graduation) on their own initiative. Under such circumstances, the TLI lacks corresponding mechanisms and procedures of internationalization, thought there are corresponding conditions. There is almost no staff mobility, which is also accounted for teaching staff working on hourly-paid basis.

Apart from the international publication of research results (with professors' personal initiative and on their expenses), in fact, there are no other procedures and policies.

There are no financial allocations to internationalization processes. TLI annual budget and expenditures do not have an article aimed at internationalization.

The new leadership, as well as some representatives of the administrative staff realize that the external relations should function effectively, as the overwhelming majority of the current contracts, cooperative networks and international partners are latent/inactive. Operational plans for different processes are still missing.

### **9.2 The TLIs infrastructure of establishing external relations and internationalization guarantees regulated process.**

The establishment of external relations and internationalization are mainly carried out in the frames of the infrastructure subdivision on Quality Assurance and External Relations. The main aim of the subdivision is to foster external and local cooperation as well as to ensure the implementation of international programs and exchange opportunities. Nevertheless, a responsible is appointed who carries out their activities mainly with their personal initiative both in local labour market and internationally. As for establishing external and international relations no regulated process is included either in academic or research field. Subdivision functions are not clearly distinguished. The processes aimed at internationalization of academic and research activities are carried out in an unregulated way. Joint research or educational programs are not implemented in the Academy, the number of international grant projects is very limited (DOCMEN) and the impact of programs outcomes on the improvement of APs and on the quality of other service is not assessed. Little initiative is shown as far as elaboration and submission of international grant projects is concerned. There are no grounds on faculty or administrative staff involvement in international networks or associations.



Although the improvement of internationalization-related activities is not yet being assessed, accountability reports are annually submitted.

There are no clear cut policies, regulations and mechanisms enhancing student and teacher mobility following which students will be sent abroad throughout their studies or else, their credits will be transferred.

Although the ambiance towards international relations is rather positive, when it comes to students and staff exchange programs they are limited to incoming students only. From constructive viewpoint, what refers to outgoing students, they mainly go abroad to continue their education. Under such conditions there are no internationalization mechanisms and procedures in the TLI, although there are relevant/appropriate conditions. There is almost no staff mobility which is also conditioned by the fact that the faculty is part-time.

Although some courses are conducted in a foreign language and people from different countries are involved in them, no distant education is yet implemented where students and the faculty would attend internationally recognized professors' lectures and trainings.

### **9.3 TLI efficiently cooperates with local and international institutions and organizations.**

Being one of the RA transnational educational institutions, EREA was founded on the agreement signed by the Republic of Armenia, France, Italy and Germany. Initially the academy closely cooperated with the founder institutions on both matters: education organization and implementation. Later the connection was cut and the cooperation halted. Currently the TLI has partnership agreements and memoranda with a number of local and international organizations where the parties' obligations and responsibilities are stipulated. The TLI has a successful cooperation experience with the local labour market representatives. There is closer collaboration in terms of internships, theses papers and research programs. At branch level the cooperation with local organizations is limited to internships only.

International cooperation is mainly not effective with the exception of personal meetings and SYNOPSIS project. International agreements, memoranda of understanding and other networks do not result in best practice exchange, the improvement of AP, staff training or other type of cooperation. There is only one instance of awarding double diploma.

The efficiency of local and international cooperation is not evaluated in terms of their impact on the quality of APs and other services.

There is a lack of clear cut policies and procedures also in terms of implementation of benchmarking. Although a comparative analysis is carried out with a number of educational institutions, gaps for improvements are identified, no significant improvements are made to this end. Environmental scanning is carried out mainly on personal initiatives.

No specific steps are taken in the Academy towards proliferation of the best practice.

### **9.4 The TLI ensures the appropriate level of language knowledge of internal stakeholders to increase the effectiveness of internationalization.**

To enhance the scope of internationalization activities as well as to conduct the APs in a foreign language the academy prioritizes the Faculty's and students' knowledge of a foreign language. During the recent years the number of faculty and administrative staff mastering a foreign language is steadfast. The academy organizes foreign language courses and courses in English for incoming international students. Nevertheless, when it comes to the staff, similar courses have been organized for them only once so far and there is no policy on the aforementioned. There are no mechanisms

ensuring the continuity of such courses. Also, no study has been carried out on the efficiency of the implemented courses in terms of language proficiency improvement.

## CONSIDERATIONS

Inspired by its mission the academy prioritizes the international relations both with local market and international partners. The establishment of external links and internationalization is one of its strategic directions, although the internationalization policies and procedures have not yet been clearly developed which would lead to the clarification of actions and activation of cooperation, would foster students and faculty's mobility, such as "internationalisation@home" and "international windows" in the curricula. The presence of foreign students has not led to a policy of "internationalization at home". Neither is there a policy to build structural "international windows" in the APs to facilitate student and staff mobility for periods shorter than an academic year.

The expert group assesses positively the existence of external relations subdivision, however the functions of the latter need to be clarified. The absence of financial resources for promoting international cooperation, almost no participation in international grant projects hinder the cooperation between local and international institutions and organizations, which, in its turn, limits the functioning of the academy and the internationalization of APs.

The academy's initiative to find new financial resources and to get involved in international grant programs may foster international cooperation and enhancement of students and faculty's mobility. The panel of experts is concerned that TLI, being a transnational HEI, has very limited number of international student and staff exchange cases. It also lacks mechanisms encouraging mobility, as its presence would give the opportunity to explore the best international practice and, consequently, will improve the academic process. The panel of experts encourages the inclusion in international grant programs as it will give the opportunity to the TLI to enhance the cooperation scope and will lead to the continuous improvement of APs and other educational services. The absence of tangible outcomes of the academy's internationalization processes gives grounds to conclude that the activities are not systematized, regulated and targeted.

Though conducting courses in foreign languages, the academy does not implement distant learning which limits the opportunity for students and the faculty to sit internationally recognized professors' lectures, trainings, to exchange the good practice and to develop.

The cooperation with the local organization is effective which has been assured throughout discussions with employers. The cooperation with the labour market, which is rather intensive and welcomed, is a significant achievement for the Academy.

The outcomes are effective in terms of excursions, visits, internships and theses papers. The proof of the aforementioned can be found in internship, thesis and research programs. A generic line that can be drawn is that everybody seems to share the opinion that the labour market should be included in thesis papers and programs, and the policies and procedures meant for this end can systematize and assess the given relationship.

Nonetheless, there are no evident policies or procedures of cooperation. The cooperation is mainly based on personal initiatives or networks. The absence of cooperation efficiency evaluation mechanisms and analysis hampers the clear and real planning of further actions and their implementation.

Notwithstanding the international ambiance, the international cooperation is not effective with the exception of SYNOPSIS project. International relations are mainly inactive, there is no real evaluation of international relations. There is no inner-university internationalization concept and realization of activities. Likewise, worrisome is the absence of clear correlation between academic and

internationalization processes. And due to the lack of international cooperation there are very limited cases of best practice exchange and localization, and the best practice exchange is very weak.

To promote internationalization the TLI realizes the importance of ensuring appropriate level of foreign language acquisition. To this end foreign language courses are organized for incoming students and the staff. However, staff training has been carried out only once and it is not clear whether such courses will be organized again or not and whether they have contributed to the efficiency improvement of the staff. No sustainable and tangible steps are taken in terms of improving language proficiency which would contribute to the efficient implementation of internationalization processes of the academy.

**SUMMARY: Taking into consideration the fact** that the Academy encourages external relations establishment and development in its culture, operations and organigram, effectively cooperates with the labour market and has best practice in this respect, carries out activities aiming at improvement of students and faculty language proficiency level, the expert panel concludes **that EREA meets the requirements of criteria 9.**

**CONSIDERATION:** The correspondence of EREA institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 9 is **satisfactory.**

## **CRITERION X: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE**

**CRITERION:** TLI has internal system of quality assurance which contributes to the continuous improvement and high quality of all the activities of the establishment.

### **FINDINGS**

#### **10.1 The TLI has quality assurance policies and regulations.**

The policy, goals and objectives of the internal quality assurance of EREA are set out in the EREA quality assurance concept ratified on July 18, 2014 and in different chapters of 2017-2020 SP. Although the TLI has a number of procedures, they are yet not finished (e.g. internationalization) and are not a part of common QA policy and QA system. On the basis of the latter the Academy's quality assurance guidelines were developed in 2017. The guidelines do not clearly define how the Academy perceives the quality assurance, instead, they describe the functions of the National Quality Assurance Centre, data on the culture of quality assurance of other HEIs and there is no reference to the regulation of the Academy's internal quality assurance processes.

Although the guidelines include tools, they are not being used. As main mechanism for QA the Academy conducts surveys which are not regular and systematized. Moreover the reliability and effectiveness of the toolkit have not been evaluated. Comprehensive analysis of the assessment results are not carried out. The causes and the consequences of problems are not being studied. The improvements are not always the result of evaluation outcomes. The academy has not yet developed KPIs.

The academy underlines the importance IQA has, but it does not yet have IQA operational plan.

The academy does not implement workable mechanisms for revealing and disseminating the best practice.

The considerable portion of the documents to be studied throughout the site visit were prepared some days prior to the expert visit.

## **10.2 The TLI provides human, material and financial resources to manage the processes of Internal Quality Assurance.**

The QA Centre was founded in EREA in 2014. In the department of External Relations there used to be a post meant for Responsible for the Quality Assurance, which later became a separate centre. The functions of the centre are systematized. An office is provided to the centre and it is equipped with the necessary furniture and facilities. According to the job description of the Centre (elaborated on May 30, 2017) the responsibilities/functions and qualitative characteristics of the director have been defined. However, while studying the reports of the centre, it became clear that the latter do not comply with the functions of the centre and mostly relate to external relations functions. The centre had one employee.

There is no QA responsible at AP level. Likewise, no responsible in the Student Council. In some branches one of the administrative staff is responsible for the QA and collaborates with the TLI QA Centre, but in other branches there are no bodies engaged in quality assurance.

There are no clear cut professional requirements for recruiting staff for the Centre. In job descriptions the following requirements are mentioned-higher education, language acquisition, computer literacy and some soft skills. It is worth mentioning that there are no mechanisms for evaluating employee's performance and identifying their needs. A training has been organized for an employee at National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance. Apart from salary there are no other allocations for the implementation of QA operations.

The IQA of the Academy is in the development phase and the analysis of the effectiveness of QA operations is missing.

## **10.3 Internal and external stakeholders are included in the quality assurance process**

Students' involvement in QA activities is limited to their participation in the evaluation of professors' performance/qualitative characteristics. However, the surveys are not always carried out in systematized and planned manner. Mostly they are carried out ad hoc and do not refer to all the fields of TLI. The effectiveness, validity and reliability of the toolkit are not evaluated. At the end of courses planned evaluations are not carried out among students in branches. There is also an anonymous complaint and suggestion box. Students' opinions can also be voiced via student council. Nevertheless, students are rather passive.

Communication links between students and faculty/mentors/chairs are rather straightforward, that is why the suggestions are immediately processed. Structural involvement in this process is either weak or not present at all.

The staff is not structurally involved in QA operations with the exception of middle and higher cycles responsible for the particular AP.

External stakeholder involvement is carried out on the personal initiatives and networks. The labour market representatives' opinions on students and program quality are gathered during internship evaluation. Sometimes data collection goes through telephone calls to graduates. The external stakeholders are encouraged to provide their feedback through the website, but it seems not to work, though during expert visits, after meeting with both labour market representatives and graduates, it became clear that they both want to be involved and would like their voices to be heard. Both parties stated that the website was not the best means for feedback.

## **10.4 Internal quality assurance system is regularly reviewed.**

The IQA has not yet been reviewed as it is rather young and is still in the development phase. There are no IQA review policies and regulations. Although there are relevant concepts, principles and guidelines, there is no hands-on practice. Quality assurance current monitoring and evaluation systems have not been implemented yet, consequently there is no effectiveness analysis. PDCA circle is not yet closed completely. Most operational plans are in the planning phase or are partially unfinished and are not cyclically connected with the SP with the exception of students evaluating professors' performance.

#### **10.5 The internal system of quality assurance creates satisfactory ground for the external assessment processes of quality assurance.**

Internal quality assurance is reflected in the policy and procedures but it does not use qualitative and quantitative indexes, with the exception of the students' evaluation of the professors' performance. The new SP of 2017-2020 is the first document comprising some indicators which are not comprehensive yet. Although self-analysis report was developed in compliance with the ANQA criteria, still it lacks some data to measure the process implementation. Because of the lack of data, the report is more descriptive rather than analytical notwithstanding the fact that it is written in quite a self-critical tone. There are some discrepancies in the Armenian and English versions of the report. The required data and the provided ones did not comply in terms of some criteria. There is no comprehensive, university-wide approach to data collection, analysis and implementation.

#### **10.6 Internal quality assurance ensures the TLI functions transparency by providing data on activities' quality to internal and external stakeholders**

Rector's annual report and website are deemed as the mechanism to ensure the transparency for internal and external stakeholder. Nevertheless, the newly developed internal quality assurance system does not ensure the transparency of the quality of main processes. Although the overwhelming majority of information on TLI operations and activities is posted on the website of the TLI, no attention is given to the qualitative characteristics of the information provided. The website is wrongly used for feedback provision and so fails in this function. Personal and systematized feedback constitutes a small proportion in IQA system as it does not cover all the fields of activities yet.

### **CONSIDERATIONS**

The IQA system of the TLI is rather young, is not sufficiently integrated in the processes and is not implemented in a systematized manner yet. Despite the policy, including some principles and guidelines, the existence of many processes, the lositic IQA is not yet formed. Although the academy has a number of procedures, they are still unfinished (e.g. internationalization) and mainly do not constitute a part of a common QA policy and system.

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 not segregated per cycles and are mixed. Common internal evaluation system, which would systematize all the structures and procedures, is missing. The TLI has not yet developed the tradition of working with data. Similarly, there are no traditions of cyclical assessment and of reform. 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 structural involvement, the young IQA system is not viable and the loop of cycles is not closed. 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. No data has been collected on the quality of the institutions functioning, and naturally, it has not been published. Nowadays the IQA system is too young and sectorial to consciously evaluate the existing positive culture. Despite the healthy and robust academic culture for providing high-quality education and research, the IQA system does not cover the aforementioned culture as it is too much concentrated on the procedures ignoring the improvement evaluation.

The expert panel has noticed that the TLI allocates human resources for manage IQA operations of the TLI, yet the scope of responsibilities and functions of the latter need to be clarified. This is alarming in the sense that it can be a serious obstacle in terms of managing the QA processes and further development. Although recently the TLI has appointed two part-time employees for IQA, the provision of resources is not enough to undertake *checking* and *acting* cycles. The fact that for the implementation of quality assurance processes no financial recourse is allocated, can lead to untargeted implementation of operations as a result of which the efficient implementation of academic process can be endangered.

IQA system and procedures are not systematized and linked and are still in the planning phase. IQA does not promote/generate continuous improvement yet. Thus, it is expected that reliable mechanisms and tools will be developed whereby the required grounds will be ensured for internal analysis and external quality assurance. Moreover, it needs to have more indicators and feedback to identify its strengths and weaknesses, and to develop a follow-up. It should be linked to the SP phases and address the existing positive quality culture.

**SUMMARY: Taking into consideration the fact that** IQA system is not sufficiently integrated in the academic processes and is not systematized, it lacks quantitative and qualitative indicators and feedback to move on to another cycles of the PDCA, the continuous improvement is not yet encouraged, the expert panel concludes that **EREA does not meet the requirements of Criteria 10.**

**CONCLUSION:** The correspondence of EREA institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 10 is **unsatisfactory.**

## EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERION	CONCLUSION
<i>I. Mission and Purpose</i>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
<i>II. Governance and Administration</i>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
<i>III. Academic Programs</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>IV. Students</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>V. Faculty and Staff</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>VI. Research and Development</i>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
<i>VII. Infrastructure and Resources</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>VIII. Social Responsibility</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>IX. External Relations and Internationalization</i>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<i>X. Internal Quality Assurance</i>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>

**14 December 2017**

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**Anna Hovakimyan**

Chair of the expert panel

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1. CVs OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

**Anna Hovakimyan:** in 1975 graduated from Yerevan State University, majoring in “Applied Mathematics”. In 1992 was awarded degree in technical sciences. In 2008 she became an associate professor. Since 1975 she has been working in the Chair of Algorithmic Languages, then in the Chair of Programming and IT as an assistant, associate professor. Currently she is the acting head of the Chair of Computer Programming at Yerevan State Slavonic University. The scope of her research includes testing, and QA of programme packages, parallel and dispersed programming, neurone technologies, not precise logics, and etc. She is an author of around 60 published works; including scientific articles, methodical manuals and else. Has participated in an array of grant projects, conducts professional training courses. From 2017 has been involved into ANQA expert panel as a Chair.

**Tigran Mnatsakanyan:** in 2008 graduated from Yerevan State University, majoring in Management. In 2001 was awarded a scientific degree of the candidate of economic sciences. PhD theses topic was “Economics of Economy and its Branches”. The scope of his research interests includes public management, strategic management, risk management and else. Started from 2011 he is an assistant in the Chair of Management of Armenian State University of Economics, throughout 2008-2011 he has been the president of Student-Scientific Union of Armenian State University of Economics. Has articles published in management theory, public management history, on modern objectives of public management and methodology of evaluating the effectiveness and boosting the latter, objectives of local self-governance. Has participated in the conference of the ANQA dedicated to issues related to HEIs. From 2013 has been involved into ANQA expert panels as an expert.

**Tigran Sargsyan:** in 2004 graduated from Yerevan State University, Faculty of Geography (undergraduate studies) and in 2006 underwent his graduate studies with the same major. Throughout 2006-2009 academic years he has been a free researcher in the Chair of Social-Economic Geography, Yerevan State University. In 2010 he was awarded the degree of a candidate of geographic sciences. In 2014 he became an associate professor. Started from 2009 he has been working in the chair of Social-Economic Geography, then in the Chair of Service, first as a teacher, assistant, and currently-associate professor. The scope of his academic interests includes economic geography, the concept of stable development, stable development of cities, tourism and ecotourism, and else. He as an author of more than 35 printed articles: scientific articles, methodical manuals, course books meant for TLIs. He has participated in an array of professional international professional training and exchange programmes. Since 2017, has been involved in the ANQA expert panel as an expert.

**Lucien Bollaert:** in 1973 graduated from Ghent University as a candidate of Germanic Philology. Afterwards, he continued his professional education in Berkeley University (USA), majoring in Postgraduate studies of Sociology of Creativity, and at Ghent University-Licentiate (Master) in Germanic philology. Later on he underwent certifications in the spheres of internationalization, QA of education, management and audit. Started from 2015 till present he has been invited professor in myriad universities (Brussels, Antwerp), a member of myriad committees/councils (member of coaching commission of 2 PHD students on QA at the Free university of Brussels, Board member EQ-Arts, member Policy and Standard Committee of QQI, Board member AEQES, member of international resonance group to (meta-)evaluate the pilots of the new accreditation system in Flanders, executive Board of NVAO, Board of ECA, Steering Committee of EQAF, E4 group ESG 2005, etc.). He is a critical pre-reader in diverse organizations (Centre for Higher Education Governance Ghent at Ghent University, Van Kemenade & Vermeulem). Member of EURASHE. Throughout 2008-2017 was vice-chair of EQAR Register Committee. Is an author of more than 20 works, has participated in many scientific conferences as a key-note speaker.

**Kamsar Ghazaryan:** In 2016 was admitted to Armenian State Polytechnic University, the Faculty of Informatics, majoring in “Informatics and Computer Science”. He has participated in 3-month training course “Student-Expert Training” organized within the framework of “Student Voice”. He has also participated in courses of web programming.



## APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE-VISIT

02.10.2017 – 05.10.2017

02.10.2017		Launch	End	Duration
1	Closed Session of Expert Panel	9:00	13:00	240 minutes
2	Lunch, Closed Sessions of Expert Panel	13:00	13:45	45 minutes
3	Meeting with the Rector of the Academy	14:00	14:25	25 minutes
4	Meeting with the Self-Assessment Implementation Team	14:30	15:15	45 minutes
5	Meeting with Vice-Rectors, the Head of the Financial and Admin Service Division and Staff Members Responsible for the Development of the Strategic Plan	15:30	16:45	75 minutes
6	Observation of Resources (Library, Technical Maintains, Computer Labs, Gym, Health Care Centre, Auditorium, Meeting Hall)	16:45	17:30	45 minutes
7	Review of the Documents and Closed Sessions of Expert Panel	17:30	18:30	60 minutes
03.10.2017		Launch	End	Duration
1	Closed session of Expert Panel	9:00	9:15	15 minutes
2	Meeting with the Head of Educational Methodological and Supervision Departments and deans	9:15	10:45	90 minutes
3	Meeting with People Responsible for the 3 Academic Programs (AP) Submitted in the Self-assessment, Heads of Chairs Implementing these APs, and People Responsible for the Development of these APs	11:00	11:45	45 minutes
4	Meeting with full time and part time teaching staff (10 representatives)	12:00	13:00	60 minutes
5	Lunch, Closed Sessions of Expert Panel	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
6	Meeting with Representatives of Employers	14:15	15:00	45 minutes
7	Observation of Resources (Chairs, Laboratories)	15:00	16:00	60 minutes
8	Review of the Documents and Closed Sessions of Expert Panel	16:00	18:00	120 minutes
04.10.2017		Launch	End	Duration
1	Closed session of Expert Panel	9:00	9:15	15 minutes
2	Meeting with Representatives of Student Council (8 representatives)	9:15	10:00	45 minutes
3	Meeting with Students (Full-time BA and MA; 8-10 representatives)	10:15	11:00	45 minutes
4	Meeting with students (Part-time BA, MA and Foreign students; 10 representatives)	11:15	12:00	45 minutes
5	Meeting with the Representatives of Alumni	12:15	13:00	45 minutes
6	Lunch, Closed Sessions of Expert Panel	13:15	14:15	60 minutes
7	Meeting with the Heads of Structural Units (HR Management Office, Career Development Centre, International Relation and QA Department, Accounting Department...)	14:15	15:00	45 minutes
8	Meeting with the Quality Assurance Staff	15:15	16:15	60 minutes
9	Review of the Documents and Closed Sessions of Expert Panel	16:30	18:00	90 minutes
05.10.2017		Launch	End	Duration
1	Closed Sessions of Expert Panel	9:00	9:15	15 minutes
2	Class Observations	9:30	11:00	90 minutes
3	Open meeting	11:15	12:00	45 minutes
4	Break, Closed Sessions of Expert Panel	12:00	13:00	60 minutes
5	Meeting with People Chosen by Expert Panel	13:00	13:45	45 minutes
6	Meeting with the Rector of the Academy	13:45	14:15	30 minutes
7	Closed Sessions of Expert Panel	14:30	18:00	210 minutes

### SCHEDULE OF THE SITE-VISIT IN BRANCHES

<b>25.10.2017.</b>		<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Departure from Yerevan to Gyumri	8:00	9:30	90 minutes
2	Meeting with the director of the Branch	10:00	10:15	15 minutes
3	Meeting with the administrative staff	10:20	11:00	40 minutes
4	Meeting with the representatives of teaching staff (10 people)	11:15	12:00	45 minutes
5	Meeting with the representatives of the students (10 people)	12:15	13:00	45 minutes
6	Observation of resources (library, IT centre, Computer labs, sport hall, health centre, classrooms)	13:00	13:30	30 minutes
7	Lunch break	13:30	14:15	45 minutes
8	Departure from Gyumri to Vanadzor	14:15	15:30	75 minutes
9	Meeting with the director of the Branch	15:45	16:00	15 minutes
10	Meeting with the representatives of the students (10 people)	16:00	16:45	45 minutes
11	Meeting with the representatives of teaching staff (10 people)	17:00	17:45	45 minutes
12	Meeting with the administrative staff	17:45	18:30	45 minutes
13	Observation of resources (library, IT centre, Computer labs, sport hall, health centre, classrooms)	18:30	19:00	30 minutes
14	Departure from Vanadzor to Yerevan	19:00	21:00	120 minutes

### APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

N	Name of document	C/S
1.	SAR and Annexes	
2.	SP of development of previous years	1.1
3.	Management Concept (Approved on 29.09.2017)	1.3
4.	Scientific Council Composition	2.1
5.	Operational plan on elaborating follow-up plans aimed at improving institutional capacities	2.3
6.	Procedure on financial management and monitoring	2.6
7.	Summary of analytical report "EREA academic link with the labour market with the eyes of stakeholders"	2.4
8.	Samples of operational plans of infrastructures, chairs, departments	2.5
9.	Samples of annual accountability reports of infrastructures	2.5
10.	Minutes of consultations rendered by the QA Centre in the process of reviewing academic programmes	2.6
11.	"Service", "IT", "Management" MA APs	3.1
12.	Diploma supplement per UNESCO CEPES for degrees awarded for "Service", "Management" APs /BA, MA/	3.1
13.	Sample of internship diary, plan an accountability report. Sample of internship contract	3.2
14.	Statement of grades for 3 APs /part-time, full-time, 2013-2017/	3.2
15.	Registers /2013-2017, part-time, full-time/	3.2
16.	Format of lesson observations, analyses of outcomes	3.2
17.	Student individual works: papers, course papers (2 per specialization with excellent and unsatisfactory marks), groups work materials	3.3
18.	Graduation papers: theses, diploma works (6 per specialization: 2-satisfactory, 2-excellent and 2-unsatisfactory marks)	3.3
19.	Theses of international students	3.3
20.	Reviews of the said theses	3.3
21.	Requirements of theses preparation	3.3
22.	Assessment criteria of theses	3.3
23.	Regulation on theses defence	3.3
24.	Within the framework of 3 APs, the topics of course papers, graduation works and MA theses within the last 3 years	3.3
25.	Within the framework of 3 APs, the minutes of final attestation committees within the last 3 years	3.3
26.	Exam questions	3.3
27.	Samples of exam tests	3.3
28.	Data on student admission-graduation within the last 3 years.	3.3
29.	The essence of the system on credit accumulation and transfer, the main definitions, legislative field	3.3
30.	Grounds for AP benchmarking	3.4
31.	Analyses of alignment of APs of EREA with other institutions	3.4
32.	Toolkit and questionnaire of AP monitoring	3.5
33.	Report on AP monitoring	3.5
34.	Mechanisms and procedures of involving internal and external stakeholders in the process of AP elaboration and assessment	3.5
35.	External opinion of APs and changes undertaken based on the outcomes of reviews	3.5

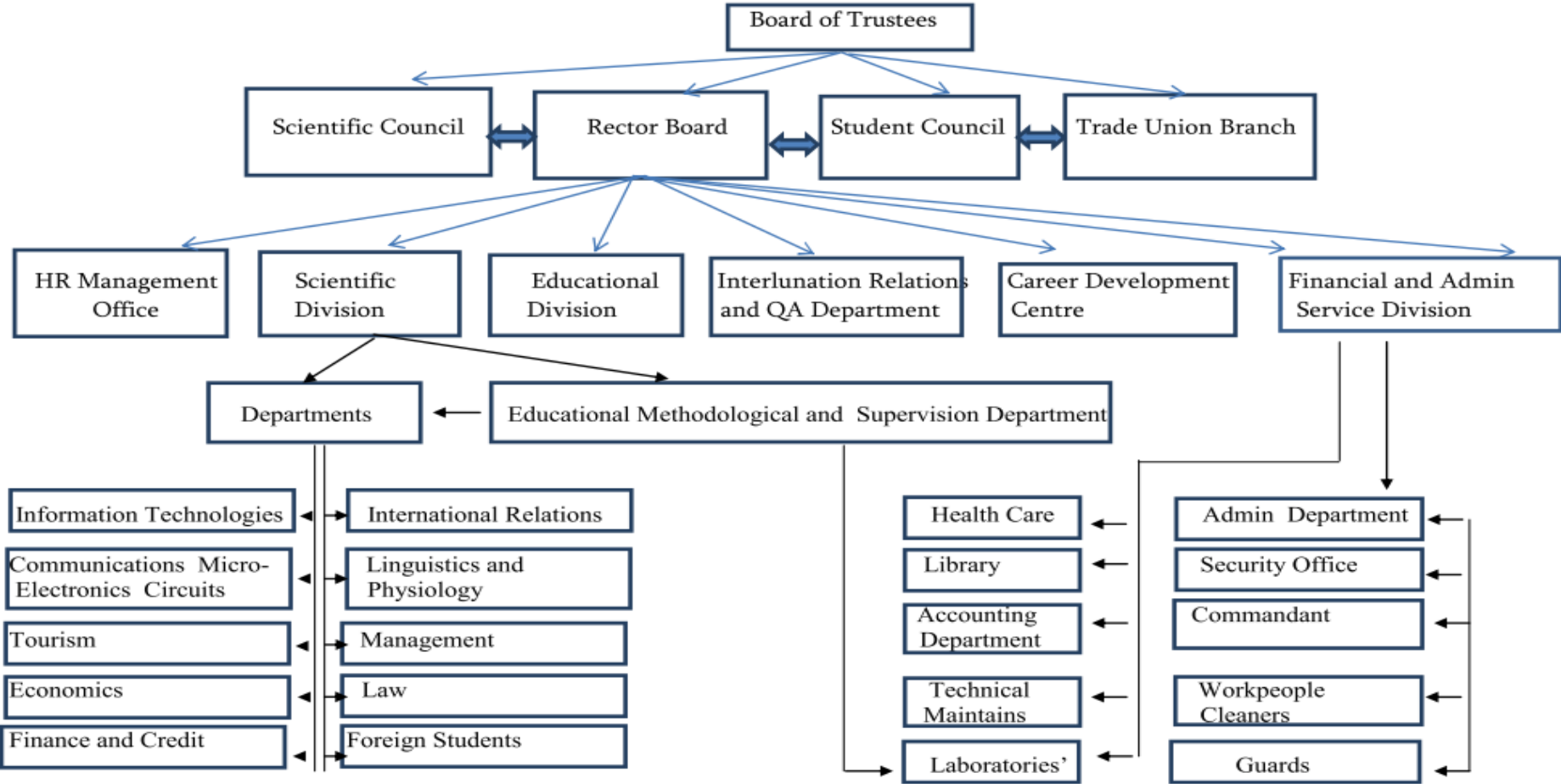
36.	Student relocations from full-time to part-time throughout the last 5 years	4.1
37.	Regulation of partial reduction of students tuition fees	4.2
38.	The percentage of students making use of scholarships	4.2
39.	Mentor's operational plans List of current events, outcomes	4.2
40.	Functions, operational plans, annual accountability reports of Career Centre	4.5
41.	Samples of contracts signed with employers	4.5
42.	Sample of a contract signed with a student	4.7
43.	Student manual	4.7
44.	Strategy on competition requirements aimed at teaching staff recruitment	5.1
45.	CVs of teachers (3 APs)	5.1
46.	Operations individual development plans of the teaching staff	5.1
47.	Functions, job descriptions of support staff (laboratories, Methodists, librarians and etc)	5.1
48.	Samples of contracts signed with teaching and support staff	5.1
49.	Procedure on teaching and support staff recruitment and dismissal /ratified on 29.09.2017/	5.1
50.	Filled-in questionnaires of teaching staff assessment and analyses of the latter /by students/	5.3
51.	Format of lesson-observations and surveys	5.3
52.	Minutes of chair, faculty, rectorate meetings where certain disapproval and suggestions have been made.	5.3
53.	Concept of professional training of the teaching staff/ ratified on 29.09.2017/	5.4
54.	Payroll	5.5
55.	Topics of seminars, meetings and their timetable /18.08.2017, 05.09.2017, 01.09.2017/	5.5
56.	MEMOs of cooperation	5.5
57.	Outcomes of the research topic "Core issues of nature protection and utilization of natural resources"	6.1
58.	Any work, undertaken via Intel, IBM, ST microelectronic toolkit	6.1
59.	Programme on research operations /ratified on 29.09.2017/	6.1
60.	Agenda on republican, inter-university conferences	6.4
61.	Conclusions of an independent audit 2014-2016 /financial/	7.2
62.	Rectified budget with separate lines /for the last three years/	7.2
63.	Table of financial flows: with the indication of articles	7.2
64.	Samples of commercial booklets	8.2
65.	Operational accountability reports of the QA Department /for the recent 3 years/ Accountability reports of the Vice-Rector on External Relations and Academic Improvements	9.2, 10.1
66.	Samples of cooperation contracts with local and international TLIs/bodies	9.4
67.	Job descriptions of QA responsables	10.1
68.	QA Department accountability reports for the last three years	10.4
69.	2015-2015 Strategic Plan of EREA Gyumir branch	1.1
70.	Annual plan of EREA Gyumir branch	1.1
71.	Budget and expenditures of EREA Gyumir branch	7.2

## **APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED**

1. Classrooms
2. Chairs (IT, Tourism, Economics and Management, Linguistics, Synopsis)
3. Educational Affairs
4. Cabinet-classrooms (Lingophone)
5. Division of technical support
6. Computer Labs
7. Structural Units
8. Cafeteria
9. Library
10. Doctor's room
11. Open air sport hall
12. Meeting room
13. Examination room

APPENDIX 5. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Structure (diagram) of the Institution Management



## **APPENDIX 6. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

- 1. ANQA** - “National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance” Foundation
- 2. AP** - Academic Program
- 3. ECTS** - European Credit Transfer System
- 4. EHEA** - European Higher Education Area
- 5. EQA** - External Quality Assurance
- 6. ESG** - European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance
- 7. EREA** – European Regional Educational Academy
- 8. HRM**- Human Resources Management
- 9. IQA** - Internal Quality Assurance
- 10. IQAS** -Internal Quality Assurance System
- 11. IT** - Information Technologies
- 12. KPIs** - Key Performance Indicators
- 13. MoES** - Ministry of Education and Science
- 14. NQF** - National Qualifications Framework
- 15. PDCA** - Plan-Do-Check-Act
- 16. QA** - Quality Assurance
- 17. QAC** - Quality Assurance Centre
- 18. RA** - Republic of Armenia
- 19. SAS** - Scientific Association of Students
- 20. SC** - Student Council
- 21. SCO** – Student Scientific organisation
- 22. SP** - Strategic Plan
- 23. TLI** - Tertiary Level Institution
- 24. TS** – Teaching staff