

Short report about the International Education Fair “Student 2012” in Tashkent

A two-day fair (October 13-14, 2012) that took place in the hall of “Grand Palace Hotel” in Tashkent, was aimed at informing interested candidates about study opportunities in abroad. The fair was officially opened by Norbert Jousten, Head of the European Union Delegation to Uzbekistan. About twelve different organizations participated and promoted their education mission at the fair. They were EU scholarships programmes, study in Germany, Cyprus International University, Diablo Valley College, Aberystwyth University, Kaplan International Colleges, Etudier En France, British Council, study in Latvia, Lazarski University, ProCAMP Swiss Adventure, and UCSI University of Malaysia.

Under the EU scholarships programmes, five Erasmus Mundus projects that involve Central Asian (CA) universities were promoted. These projects include: CASIA coordinated by Wageningen University (the Netherlands), TOSCA coordinated by the Adam Mickiewicz University (Poland), CANEM coordinated by the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Spain), MANECA coordinated by the Technical University Berlin (Germany) and the EuroAsian CEA project coordinated by the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia).

Ahmad Hamidov (Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Melioration) and Gulnora Kariyeva (Tashkent State University of Economics) officially represented the EuroAsianCEA project at the fair. Additionally, three more persons (i.e. Dr. Takhir Majidov, Dr. Tursunov Mehriddin, Mr. Husan Ganiev) who were involved in the EM project in previous years (i.e. alumni from Lot-8) assisted with the promotion throughout the fair. We distributed brochures to the interested candidates and obtained their contacts to inform about application acceptance. A list of people interested in participating at the EuroAsian CEA project is attached along with this letter.

During the discussions with candidates, it was obvious to observe that most people were young and primarily, interested in participating to obtain a Master’s degree. A few were interested about Bachelor’s degree. PhD and Post-Docs were least interested mobility scheme at the fair. It was also clear that most participants were interested in mobility scheme of Target Group 2, i.e.

candidates who have graduated from CA universities not involved in this consortium.

As for the thematic interests, most people asked about studies related to technical sciences (such as civil engineering, hydraulics, oil and gas, and electrics) and humanities (e.g. English language, history, philosophy, and so on). There were also few people interested in studying Master of Business Administration and general economics.

Meeting with Mr. Gutierrez from European Commission

EM project coordinators along with national coordinators had a chance to meet Mr. Gutierrez and discuss about challenges during EM implementation. He opened his speech informing that in the next 2013 call, there will be more support for CA. To be specific, €10 million will be financed by the Commission to implement four projects involving five CA nations. Apart from that, 1 project will exclusively be devoted to Uzbekistan with €3 million grant. This specific project targets at more than 100 people from Uzbekistan to be able to visit European partner universities. The main change in the upcoming call will be to restore the previous action, i.e. financing European students/staff to CA. Basically, European candidates will also have an opportunity to visit their CA partners.

Mr. Gutierrez also informed that from end 2013, Erasmus Mundus is over and the name will be replaced by “Erasmus for all”. Under Action I, there will be joint doctorate programmes from early 2014 onwards. All information will be available in the European Commission website.

The challenges discussed include:

- Lack of research capacities: Most CA students who participate in the mobility return to their home universities and face lack of funding for research activities. Mr. Gutierrez highlighted that EM is primarily for mobility purposes to stay in European universities and partners shall seek additional support from other EU projects such as TEMPUS and Marie Curie to support the research.

- ECTS credit recognition: Not all CA universities recognize European Credit System (e.g. Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan), i.e. the Bologna principles. This is very problematic with candidates going for Bachelor's Degree. Most students have to take one year academic holiday to visit European partner universities. Mr. Gutierrez seems to be aware of the case and suggested that national coordinators need to push their governments/ministries to help with the recognition. It was also mentioned by him that national coordinators may implicitly mention for candidates going for studying Bachelor's Degree about this shortcoming, i.e. taking 1 year academic holiday. If the candidate agrees, then it is alright to participate.
- Visa problems: Education and immigration issues are national priorities of each European country where EU has limited influential role, stated by Mr. Gutierrez. Thus, national coordinators shall seek support from their Ministry of Foreign Affairs to speed up the process. In this specific matter, EU can be least supportive.

A list of documents attached with this letter:

1. Names of candidates interested in the EuroAsian CEA project
2. A scanned copy of the programme
3. Selected pictures taken at the fair