**Visit in Georgia of the Italian Team within the Hesdespi project**

In November 17th -20th , 2011 Roberto Righi and Stefano Grandi visited Sokhumi State University.  The main goal of the visit was familiarizing with introduction of European educational principles into the Georgian educational system and finding out at what extent Georgian educational programs correspond to the European standards. The visit also permitted to Italian team to know the level of development of the Project in Georgia and to have several meetings with public bodies and cultural institutions involved in the Project activities.

# 1. The socio-economic context

Georgia has a population of about 4.636.000 inhabitants, 1.152.000 (26%) of them live in the capital Tbilisi.

The data referring to the year 2007 show significant growing rate, with an increase of 12% of GDP and an economic structure that is still characterized by agriculture, which represent approximately 11% of GDP and where the 53.4% ​​of the workforce are employed. However, there is a growing weight of services which account for 65% of GDP but where only 36.3% of workers are employed.

Unemployment rate was 13,3% in 2007 and it increased in 2008 to 16,5%. Most of unemployed are concentrated in urban areas (unemployment rate in urban areas was 23,9% in 2007 and 28,9% in 2008).

Tourism is an increasingly significant part of the Georgian economy. About a million tourists brought US$ 313 million to the country in 2006. According to the government, there are 103 resorts in different [climatic zones](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C3%B6ppen_climate_classification) in Georgia. Tourist and cultural attractions include over 12.000 historical and cultural monuments, four of which are recognised as UNESCO [World Heritage Sites](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Heritage_Site) ([Bagrati Cathedral](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bagrati_Cathedral) in Kutaisi and [Gelati Monastery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gelati_Monastery), historical monuments of [Mtskheta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mtskheta), and Upper Svaneti).

The development of the tertiary sector and the necessity to raise a considerable cultural heritage imply a possible increase in employment opportunities in the management of cultural activities, with the consequent need to provide specific training courses as part of higher education, which is currently rather weak. In this framework study of the employers’ requirements will be a crucial contribution to the proper planning of such education courses, development of practical skills required for the professional work.

# 2. The Higher Education system[[1]](#footnote-1)

*2.1. Types of tertiary education programmes and qualifications*

The three-cycle HE system has been implemented in Georgia. Bachelor, Master and doctoral programmes have already been introduced in all accredited higher education institutions (HEI). Almost all students below doctoral level are enrolled in the two-cycle degree system (except for certain specific specialisations such as medicine).

Higher professional programmes have been introduced as a short cycle within Bachelor studies for students who are interested in acquiring practical skills. Upon completion of this type of programme they receive a qualification from a certified specialist. These programmes correspond to 120 to 180 ECTS credits. These credits can be recognised for Bachelor programmes if students continue their education.

*Bachelor* programmes cannot comprise less than 240 ECTS credits;

*Master* programmes comprise 120 ECTS;

*Doctoral* programmes comprise 180 ECTS.

*Certified medical specialists* (veterinary) educational program and residency – the first cycle of the higher medical education (including veterinary) is the educational program for Certified Specialist in medicine (veterinary) which is made up of 300-360 credits. Certified Specialist in medicine (veterinary) may enrol in Master Studies and/or continue his studies in residency or work under the limitations of Legislations of Georgia. Residency is the second cycle of higher medical education system which is available after taking the degree of Certified Specialist in medicine. After graduating from residency the student may enrol in Doctoral Studies under the limitations of the legislation of Georgia.

*2.2. Higher Education Institution in Georgia*

There are three types of higher education institutions (HEI) in Georgia:

*College* is a HEI that implements professional higher educational program and/or only the first cycle programs – Bachelor programs;

*Teaching University* is a HEI that implements higher educational program/programs – Bachelor and Master Programs, excluding Doctoral Programs. Teaching University has to provide the second cycle – Master educational program/programs.

*Research University* is a HEI that implements educational programs of all the three cycles of higher education and conducts the researches.

External quality assurance in Georgia is carried out through accreditation process. The state recognises the qualification documents issued only by an accredited or equalised thereto higher education institution.

Accreditation is conducted by National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, founded on 1 September, 2010 legal successor of National Center for Educational Accreditation.

The goals of the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement are:

a) promotion of the formation of internal mechanisms of educational quality assurance, implementation of external mechanisms and their further improvement in cooperation with educational institutions and other stakeholders;

b) creation of the integrated database of educational programmes of educational institutions, of the personnel implementing these programmes and persons enrolled for the programmes concerned;

c) promotion of free movement of school, vocational and university students and academic personnel with a view to ensure their participation in learning, teaching and research activities;

d) promotion of the integration of Georgian educational institutions into international educational space and improvement of confidence in them;

e) ensuring the reliability of credentials and interconnection between awarded qualifications and labour market;

f) assessment of the importance of learning outcomes of acquired education and their compatibility with qualifications, recognised by the state;

g) promotion of development of the Georgian language and establishment of a common scientific-technical terminology.

*2.3. Financing aspects*

The majority of HEIs in Georgia are funded through tuition fees. For public HEIs, tuition fees account for 70% of total income, while 30% comes from state subsidies, paid indirectly through state-funded grants to students and directly as a lump sum payment (block grant) to the HEI. Infrastructure grants from the government are provided to public universities for infrastructure projects where

necessary, from time to time. Private universities receive no direct funding from the government, but receive indirect subsidies through state-funded grants to qualified students who enrol in these institutions.

The funding model of HEIs has changed substantially in the last five years. The input based lump sum financing model of education has been transformed into per capita financing. Consequently, vouchers and grants have been introduced. This shift is primarily aimed at increasing efficiency and transparency of financing.

The voucher scheme takes the form of a government grant to students. Different grants are given to the students according to their performance in a national admission exam at the end of secondary education. Students with higher scores receive 100 percent while others receive only 70 percent, 50 percent or 30 percent of funding of the allocated amount. The grants are used to finance tuition fees, at both public and private HEIs. They are set differentially at 100%, 70%, 50% and 30% of maximum tuition fees in public universities. Many private universities charge much higher tuition fees, and voucher recipients may use vouchers to partially offset these higher fees.

*2.4. Curriculum content*

Curriculum development is fully under the responsibility of the HEIs, according to the principle of academic freedom. New study programmes must be approved according to the internal procedures of the HEI. The structure of curricula and proportion of compulsory and elective subjects are defined by programme leaders at the HEI. Most programmes have a modular and major/minor-based structure, except those for the regulatory professions (medicine, law and education). Currently more than 90% of HEIs have optional subjects in their curricula, and approx 60% have optional modules. Students can also take part in the development of individual study programmes (Law of Georgia on Higher Education, Article 43). The recently introduced National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and subject benchmarks influenced the curriculum content. Programmes were updated in order to correspond to learning outcomes, defined by the NQF and minimum academic standards.

National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was approved by a decree N120/N of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia on December 10, 2010. The document includes all the qualifications and different levels of general, vocational and higher education competences that exist in Georgia. The NQF is based on the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (LLL).

*2.5. Higher Education Qualification Framework*

Higher Education Qualifications Framework is a part of the National Qualifications Framework, providing for systematised qualifications of higher (academic) education existing in Georgia.

Higher education qualification is the learning outcome, attainable through successful completion of an academic educational programme and is certified by a diploma, issued by a higher education institution. The higher education qualifications framework ensures the description of higher education qualifications through learning outcomes.

It aims at:

a) Description of the interrelation between qualifications existing in the country; b) Making the existing qualifications easily understandable for students, employers, and an academic staff;

c) Assisting higher education institutions in the improvement of existing educational programmes and planning new ones;

d) Supporting quality assurance internal and external systems and enhancement of the quality of higher education;

e) Creating the basis for a student-oriented education system;

f) Ensuring the compatibility and comparability at the international level and promoting the process of recognition of qualifications;

g) Promoting and supporting student mobility;

h) Promoting lifelong learning.

The learning outcomes for each field of study are further specified by a sectoral standard developed on the basis of this document, which describes the competences of a holder of the qualification of relevant cycle and specialty.

Higher education qualifications descriptor defines the scope of knowledge, skills and values to be attained at a relevant level according to the following six criteria:

a) Knowledge and understanding

b) Applying knowledge

c) Making judgments

d) Communications skills

e) Learning skills

f) Values.

Based on the National Qualifications Framework and relevant sectoral standard and the mission of the higher educational institution concerning the learning outcomes of a specific educational programme are defined. The learning outcomes of an educational programme, or a study course or a module are described through field-specific and generic competences.

The cycles of higher education are described hierarchically according to learning outcomes. Each next cycle of higher education implies the attainment of additional learning outcomes based on those of the previous cycle.

The learning outcomes of the first cycle of higher education and a short cycle within the first cycle of higher education are based on the learning outcomes of general secondary education.

Learning outcomes relevant to the **short cycle** within the first cycle of higher education are as follows:

a) Knowledge and understanding – comprehensive and/or specialized theoretical and practical knowledge of the field of study; understanding of the possibilities (scope) of professional activities;

b) Applying Knowledge – ability to use a wide range of cognitive and practical skills for creative solution of abstract problems;

c) Making judgments – Ability to identify clearly defined problems; ability to identify and analyse relevant data for their solution using standard methods, also the ability to make sound judgements;

d) Communication skills – ability to communicate ideas and information structurally and coherently to specialists and non-specialists using qualitative and quantitative data; ability to comprehensively use modern information and communication technologies; ability to communicate field related information and make presentations in a foreign language.

e) Learning skills – ability to define own learning needs in different and unpredictable situations;

f) Values – Ability to evaluate and share own and others’ attitude towards values, characteristic for professional activity.

Learning outcomes relevant to the **first cycle** of higher education are as follows:

a) Knowledge and understanding – Advanced knowledge of the field of study, including critical analysis of theories and principles; understanding of complex matters of the field of study;

b) Applying knowledge – Ability to use field specific methods and also certain selected methods for the solution of problems; ability to carry out research and practical projects under predetermined directions;

c) Making judgments – Ability to select and interpret field specific data, also to analyse abstract data and/or situations using standards and certain selected methods, ability to make sound judgement;

d) Communication skills – Ability to prepare a detailed written report on ideas, current problems and solutions to them and to communicate information orally to specialists and non- specialists in the Georgian and foreign languages; ability to creatively use modern information and communication technologies;

e) Learning skills – Ability to evaluate own learning process in a coherent and comprehensive manner; ability to identify further learning needs;

f) Values –Ability to participate in the formation of values and strive for their establishment.

Learning outcomes relevant to the **second cycle** of higher education are as follows:

a) Knowledge and understanding – Advanced and systemic knowledge of the field of study, which allows for the generation of new, original ideas, understanding solutions to certain problems;

b) Applying knowledge– Ability to act in a new, unpredictable and multidisciplinary environment; ability to search for new, original methods of solution for complex problems, amongst them, using the most recent methods and approaches;

c) Making judgments – Ability to make judgements on the basis of critical analysis of complex and incomplete information (including recent researches); ability to synthesise innovatively based on recent data;

d) Communication skills – Ability to communicate own judgements, arguments and research methods to academic and professional community in the Georgian and foreign languages, with due consideration of the academic integrity standards and recent developments in the field of information and communication technologies;

e) Learning skills – Ability to independently manage the learning process, to understand the specificities of the learning process and make strategic plans a high level;

f) Values – Ability to evaluate own and others’ attitude towards values and contribute to the establishment of new ones.

Learning outcomes relevant to the **third cycle** of higher education are as follows:

a) Knowledge and understanding – Knowledge based on the most recent developments of a field/sub-field of study or an interdisciplinary field, what allows for further expansion of the existing knowledge and use of innovative methods (at the level of standards required for referable publications); understanding of the renewed scope of knowledge through re-analysis and partial re-evaluation of the existing knowledge;

b) Applying Knowledge – Ability to independently plan, carry out and supervise innovative research; ability to develop new research and analytical methods and approaches, which are oriented on the creation of new knowledge and are reflected in international reference publications;

c) Making judgments – Ability to critically analyse new, complex and controversial ideas and approaches, what promotes the development/enhancement of new methods; ability to independently make correct and efficient decisions for the solution of problems;

d) Communication skills – Ability to clearly and soundly demonstrate new knowledge in conjunction with the new one; also the ability to engage in thematic debates with international scientific community in a foreign language;

e) Learning skills – Readiness to further develop new ideas or processes stemming from knowledge, that is based on recent developments in the course of learning and professional activity, amongst them, in the course of research;

f) Values – Ability to research the ways of establishing values and develop innovative methods for their establishment.

Qualifications descriptor may be further specified or detailed though a respective sectoral document.

The title of a qualification of the **short cycle** within the first cycle educational programme includes the term “Interim Qualification” together with the specification of the direction or/and field/specialty.

The title of a qualification of the **first cycle** educational programme includes the term “Bachelor” together with the specification of the direction or/and field/specialty. A student is entitled to combine major (at least 120 credits) and minor (60 credits desirable) specialties in the following manner:

- Major and free components;

- Major, minor and free components;

- Major and two minors.

The title of a qualification of the **second cycle** educational programme includes the term “Master” together with the specification of the direction, field/specialty or/and sub- field/sub-specialty. A Master’s programme includes a teaching component and qualification thesis prepared on the basis of independent research. It is desirable for a master’s programme to include practical components as well.

The title of a qualification of the **third cycle** educational programme includes the term “Doctor” together with the specification of the direction or/and field/specialty. A doctoral educational programme includes learning and practical components. It is completed by the development and public defence of a qualification thesis prepared on the basis of independent research.

A regulated educational programme is oriented on training a student for relevant regulated profession. At least 75% of an educational programme is allocated for the development of competences that are necessary for a regulated profession.

*2.5. Dialogue with social partner*

The dialogue between the academic world and enterprises in Georgia is fairly weak, although 80% of HEIs report that they have cooperation agreements with private business. The main cooperation area is employability of graduates and traineeships for students. For this purpose, HEIs organise informational meetings with enterprises and present their programmes.

There is active cooperation in particular in the fields of business management, banking and law, as well as in sciences and humanities (although much rarer). Some universities (11%) also conduct labour market surveys in order to identify graduate demand. Eight HEIs offer special training programmes for the business sector. This initiative was welcomed by enterprises, and adult education programmes for specific target groups are quite popular.

Only 10% of universities cooperate with employers on curriculum design, and only six universities (all private) cooperate in the field of university management, inviting business representatives in governing bodies (boards of trustees, boards of consultants).

# 3. Visit to Sokhumi State University Agenda (17th – 19th November, 2011)

Objective of the visit of the project partners from Bologna University for getting acquainted with the implementation of the project Tempus HESDESPI activities and development of the study modules in accordance to the standards.

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| **Thursday 17 November** | | |
| Time | Subject | Where |
| 11:00 | Welcome from the Tempus project team | Sokhumi State University |
| 12:00 | Presentation of Bologna University to the students and staff of Sokhumi State University | Sokhumi State University |
| 13:00 | Meeting with the heads of departments at Sokhumi State University and discussion of the educational processes | Sokhumi State University |
| 13:30 | Meeting with the rectors of Sokhumi State University and Shota Rustaveli State University | Sokhumi State University |
| 16:00 | Meeting with the Head of National Tempus Office Georgia | Ilia State University |

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| **Friday 18 November** | | |
| Time | Subject | Where |
| 12:00 | Meeting at the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia | Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia |
| 13:00 | Visit to Art Museum of Georgia | Art Museum of Georgia |
| 16:00 | Visit to Kote Marjanishvili State Drama Theatre and Sokhumi State Drama Theatre; meeting with the directors and actors of the theatres | Kote Marjanishvili State Drama Theatre  Sokhumi State Drama Theatre |

On November 17 Professors Roberto Righi and Stefano Grandi met the Coordinator of TEMPUS IV Program of Sokhumi State University, Professor Indira Dzagania; expert Shorena Japaridze; project participants: Professors Shota Akhalaia, Manana Kuprava, Romeo Galdava; Doctor Irma Zakharaia; Masters Gvantsa Jichoshvili and Bakar Asatiani.

Discussion touched issues, connected with the TEMPUS Project and its Development in Georgia.

Syllabi for 5 study courses have been developed ("Intercultural Communications", "Human resources Management", "Use of New Information Technologies", "Project Management", "Culture Management"), which will be tested at the Master's program "Intercultural Communications" at Sokhumi State University. We got familiarized with the structure of the given master programme. The growth of humanity sciences’ competitiveness and intercultural communications are currently essential. Therefore, the existence and development of this kind of programmes is desirable.

Each course which is tested at the given master programme consists of 5-6 ECTS. Currently, two training courses are being tested - "Culture Management" and "Intercultural Communications". The remaining three courses will be tested in the second semester. The three primary types of the last three courses have already been taught at other undergraduate programmes, but some alterations and customizations are needed in accordance with the objectives of this particular Master's programme. The syllabi for the courses have been developed using new, modern scientific literature and include the themes and subjects that are important for the students in order to acquire deep knowledge of their specific area. Shota Rustaveli State University is testing the following study courses: "Use of New Information Technologies” (at all bachelor programmes) and "Human Resources Management" at the Faculty of Humanities. Batumi Art University already has an undergraduate programme “Culture Management”, which has been implemented successfully.

Developed study courses are based on modern Georgian, Russian and English teaching materials. Lectures are delivered in Georgian and Russian languages. Training methods are being paid great attention in order to make the learning process more successful. Different methods of teaching ("Project-Based Learning" [PBL], "Problem-Based Learning" [PBL], etc.) are used in the teaching process. During their work on project, students conduct thematic researches in accordance with their project topics. The project is a part of the curriculum and is evaluated at the end of semester. Seminars are held in the traditional method (questions - answers).

Testing and approbation of the study courses started at the existing Master's programme "Intercultural communications”. Currently two training courses are being tested - "Culture Management" and "Intercultural Communications", which will be completed at the end of the first semester. The remaining three study courses are planned to be tested in the second semester.

New developed study programmes are directly linked to the study programmes at the Faculty of Economics and Business: the study courses ("Culture Management", "Project Management" and "Human Resources Management") were chosen in order to increase students' employment opportunities.

The demands of the labour market were taken into consideration while developing new study programmes. The current situation and problems of the cultural institutions have been reviewed as their demands with respect to human resources. The requirements of cultural institutions have been taken into consideration in the selection and development of 5 study courses.

With the purpose of future co-operation agreements were concluded with the Georgian Employers Association, Sokhumi State Dramatic Theatre, Kote Marjanisjvili State Drama Theatre, NGO "Multinational Georgia for Strengthening Democratic Values", Touristic Agency “Sinop”, National Museum of Georgia and Association of Intercultural Relations. The agreement covers such issues as students’ internship and assistance in future employment at local organizations and institutions. Georgian Employers Association provides recommendations and information about the trainings conducted by the foreign specialists so students of Sokhumi State University can participate in them. The representatives of labour market participate in the development of thesis theme, preparation of the thesis and thesis defence process.

The structure and content of the study programme fully complies with state legal regulations.

Study courses were elaborated by the competent academic staff of Sokhumi State University, who has extensive experience in the teaching of the appropriate courses. Technical resources are profoundly used in the process of teaching (information technology, electronic resources sharing, etc.)

Professional standards are not yet developed in the field of humanities. They will be developed in the nearest future.

Sokhumi State University is a member of Bologna Process since 2005, which means that all the study programmes are assessed in ECTS. The documentations for the involvement in European Qualifications Framework (EQF) are being developed.

All project-related activities and project outcomes are published on the website and the newspaper of Sokhumi State University. The conferences held in the frames of the project were covered by different media.

After the discussion about the development of the Project, Roberto Righi had an interview at the First National Television channel of Georgia, in order to show the objectives of the Tempus project and explain the reasons of the visit at the Sokhumi State University of Tbilisi, made by the Italian delegation. Web link: <http://sou.edu.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=110&info_id=661>

Later Professors Roberto Righi and Stefano Grandi arranged presentation for students and academic staff about Bologna and its University. Special attention was paid to the University structure and Educational programs. Then some Italian practices and projects dealing with Hesdespi objectives were presented, in order to describe some successful examples on how to improve structures and curricula in higher education, to best meet the labour market needs.

The Rector of Sokhumi State University, Professor Joni Apakidze met with the guests. Participation of the University in the Project and importance of sharing experience was the main topic of the conversation. Parties agreed on cooperation between the Universities and as the first stage - on the level of Humanitarian Faculties.

This was also the opportunity to define together with the project Georgian coordinator, Prof. Indira Dzagania, a draft of collaboration agreement between the University of Bologna and the Sokhumi State University, that will be evaluated by the International Relations office of the Bologna University.

In the afternoon of November 17th Professors Righi, Grandi and the Georgian team participated to Tempus infoDay in Tbilisi. The event has been attended by more than 90 representatives of HEIs from Tbilisi, Telavi and Gori, as well as EU universities (UK, Germany and Italy). Welcome speeches have been delivered by the university rector, deputy-head of the EU delegation and head of HE department from the Ministry of Education and Science. The coordinator of National Tempus Office of Georgia, Lika Glonti, presented Georgia's progress in Tempus programme, Franz Steidele (EACEA) presented 5th call of proposals and Svitlana Shytikova (NTO Ukraine) presented collaboration possibilities between Georgian and Ukrainian universities. During the meeting the Hesdespi delegation could meet Mr Franz Steidele of EACEA and talk about the main issues of Project development directly with the Author of the observations provided after monitoring visit carried out by EACEA in Yerevan, Armenia (June 2011).

On November 18th Italian e Georgian delegation attends a meeting at Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. Tamar Merabishvili, Chief Specialist, Higher Education Development Division of the Ministry made extensive and detailed presentation of Higher Education system in Georgia, implementation of Bologna Process, quality assurance of Higher Education Institutions and funding of HE and research (see annex 1).

During the meeting the International mobility programs were described, together with the criteria for the selection of students who intend to make study experiences abroad, and for the assignment of scholarships.

Later it was possible to discuss with representatives of the Ministry some aspects of interest for the successful further development of the Tempus Project Hesdespi. In particular, the Ministry experts also believe that a greater involvement of social partners is very important in the definition of courses of study, while emphasizing the need to establish stable forms of cooperation in a context characterized by increasing autonomy guaranteed to the HEI.

An important step to improve the link between education and labour market systems is represented by the recent approbation of the National and Higher Education Qualifications Framework.

As an example of the proficient agreements made with important cultural institutions by the Georgian team, the day continued with the guided visit to the Art Museum of Georgia.

In the evening it was possible to visit the Kote Marjanishvili State Drama Theatre founded by a great theatre director and reformer of the Georgian theatre Kote Marjanishvili. The delegation visited also the Theatre Museum where are stored

interesting paraphernalia on prominent directors, playwrights and painters. The museum also preserves Kote Marjanishvili's private archive, which contains photographs and sketches of the plays staged by him.

Then the Theatre director Levan Tsuladze described the history of the theatre and presented its cultural value within the Georgian context. During the evening the delegation was invited to attend the play “Uriel Acosta”, written in 1847 by Karl Ferdinand Gutzkow and directed by Kote Marjanishvili.

On Saturday 19th November the team was involved in cultural activities, and guided to visit some important cultural monuments in the area, which can be important for a tourism exploitation. In particular the old town of Mtskheta, ancient Georgia capital between the III and the V century a.d., the cathedral Svetitskhoveli and the Jvari Monastery were visited by the delegation.



1. This relation result from the publication elaborated by EC TEMPUS “Higher Education in Georgia”, October 2010, and from the website of the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement of Georgia http://eqe.ge/eng/education/national\_qualifications\_framework [↑](#footnote-ref-1)