

NEWSLETTER



Issue 5, June 2024



NEWS ABOUT PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The Annual Steering Committee Meeting of SMARTI Project

On May 5, 2024, a steering committee meeting chaired by Project Coordinator Gerard Cullen was held in Riga. During the meeting, Cullen outlined upcoming tasks and key issues, focusing on the development and publication of the EMI pedagogical manual, feedback from external evaluators, pilot courses conducted at EMI Centres in Armenian partner universities, and the accreditation of these Centres coordinated by the National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance (ANQA).

Meanwhile, the public relations officers of SMARTI's AIDA group discussed several important issues with Eduardo Cardoso related to the progress of actions outlined in the Dissemination and Sustainability Plans.



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

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EMI Study Visit to RTU

From May 7 to 10, Riga Technical University hosted a four-day training as part of the Erasmus+ SMARTI Project. The event was attended by 28 representatives from EU and Armenian universities and ANQA.

The workshop featured master classes on university internationalization, ECTS implementation, EMI curriculum development, and EMI methodology in Digital Humanities, led by experts including Karlis Valtins, Inese Kokote, Igors Tipans, Gundars Alksnis, and Marina Serpinska.

Key presentations included K. Valtins on European academic programs, I. Tipans on RTU's internationalization and student mobility, and I. Kokote on the "Technical Translation" course. Discussions covered MOODLE platform features, EMI curriculum development, and student assessment. E. Eizenia organized a tour of campus laboratories and a cultural tour of Riga's old town. The interactive meetings fostered the exchange of experiences and ideas, making them highly productive for all participants.

SMARTI Project Dissemination in the Board of Rectors

At the HEI Board of Rectors meeting on February 23, 2024, Khachatur Ghazeyan, Rector of PAARA, introduced the SMARTI Project. This initiative aims to enhance foreign language proficiency, particularly English, in Armenia to improve lecture delivery. Mr. Ghazeyan outlined the project's partners, objectives, and outcomes, emphasizing sustainability. He highlighted the importance of internationalization and mobility for universities, urging partners to share their projects to maximize impact. He also invited all interested stakeholders to join SMARTI's upcoming training sessions, promoting broader participation and collaboration.



SMARTI Project Dissemination in the Annual Education and Career Expo



The Public Administration Academy of RA participated in the "Education and Career Expo 2024," held from April 10 to 12 at the Demirchyan Sports Concert Complex, featuring over 120 educational institutions from four countries.

The PAARA pavilion, with its impressive design, provided information on admission, programs, additional education, student life, and discounts. As the Armenian coordinator of the SMARTI Project, the Academy presented SMARTI at the EXPO with banners, flyers, and T-shirts, attracting significant interest from young attendees.

COIL

Collaborative Online International Learning



COIL Meeting Held by the Students of TU-Dresden

On 29 May 2024, the students of TU-Dresden held a COIL Meeting on the topic “Student to Entrepreneur - Essential Skills and Tips on Producing a Business and Marketing Plan.” It was an enriching experience for all involved. The virtual meeting room was like a bustling marketplace of ideas, with students from TU-Dresden, Armenia, and Uzbekistan coming together to explore the journey from student to entrepreneur.

The audience consisted of Armenian and Uzbek students who, despite not having extensive knowledge and skills in business, were eager to immerse themselves in entrepreneurial strategic planning. The thought-provoking topics, namely Business Plan Development and Marketing Strategy, were at the core of the discussion.

The students of TU-Dresden were experiencing their first online presentations aimed to:



Present new approaches to the development of entrepreneurial skills, demonstrating how non-business students can learn to take measured risks in starting a business, with discussions on funding ideas such as crowdfunding. The team leader for this segment was Lisolotte.



Provide tips on making a Business Plan and a Marketing Plan specifically for non-business students, led by team leader Zhaleh Goldarani.

The presentations were followed by a Q&A session, peer feedback, and self-evaluation. All the participants were enthusiastic about sharing their insights and knowledge on the topics. Observing students from various cultural and educational backgrounds come together to develop and enhance their entrepreneurial skills was truly inspiring.



SMARTI Project Dissemination at SUSH

On May 29, Shirak State University hosted a public report presentation by the students and employees who participated in the Erasmus+ Program during the 2023-2024 academic year.

The students and professors of SUSH who participated in mobility and training within the framework of the Erasmus+ program (Heghine Isahakyan, Artak Hovhannisyan, Mariam Harutyunyan, Gayane Harutyunyan, Marine Grigoryan, Ani Sahakyan, Venera Zakaryan) had slide-show presentations about their work conducted in the partner universities of Romania, Spain, Portugal, Austria and Latvia.

Hovik Melkonyan, director of the Centre of External Cooperation's Relations of SUSH, briefly presented the current state of the SMARTI Project.

SMARTI TEACHING AND LEARNING



2nd Pilot Session at PAARA

The second piloting course under the ERASMUS+ SMARTI Project concluded on February 26 at the Public Administration Academy of RA. Participants attended sessions led by trainers Lusine Grigoryan and Vilen Khachatryan, focusing on interactive teaching methodologies in English to enhance educational outcomes, sustainability, and internationalization.

Lusine Grigoryan, from the Centre of International Cooperation and Development, conducted a session on analytical thinking in case studies. Her training in EMI Oral Teaching Skills emphasized the importance of improving analytical thinking for writing, with a case study on religious tolerance. Participants explored diverse approaches in English.

Next, Vilen Khachatryan, Head of The Chair of Administration, led a course on AI, sparking a serious discussion among participants on its positive and negative impacts. Both groups presented compelling arguments, concluding that time will reveal AI's true impact on humanity.

PAARA Rector Khachatur Ghazeyan expressed gratitude to organizers, supporters, and participants, foreseeing future courses taught bilingually in Armenian and English. He congratulated participants on their engagement and presented them with certificates of participation at the course's end.





2nd Pilot Session at ANAU

On February 2, 2024 the second pilot session launched at ANAU as part of the Erasmus+ KA2 SMARTI Project to improve the effectiveness, sustainability, and internationalization of education") in National Agrarian University of Armenia.

On February 16, ANAU hosted representatives from Liverpool John Moores University Amanda Mason and Casey Beaumont for an external assessment of the Modules 2 and 9.



SMARTI Project coordinator, and researcher-teacher Liana Vardanyan, introduced Module 9 "ESP/English for Special Purposes". She mainly focused on the importance of soft skills development in delivering lectures in English. The practical input of the training was a case study using the method of "6 thinking hats" which was really very interesting and interactive. The course took place in a very warm and active atmosphere.

Precision agriculture specialist Seryozha Karapetyan, with the module 2 "EMI Oral Teaching Skills" course presented the latest technologies used in the field of precision agriculture and their effectiveness. For practical input the trainer showcased agricultural drones to make the material more comprehensive.

Both trainers had an active and interesting discussion with the participants, divided them into groups, and immediately applied the techniques learned in the class. Participants' evaluation was also conducted during the session, and our SMARTI Project partner Casey Beaumont expressed great satisfaction with the Modules, Trainers and the Participants.



meeting with SUSH's Rector, Gayane Avetisyan, Head of the Department of Quality Assurance, and Hovik Melkonyan. The discussions centered around ongoing and future project activities.

On May 29, in the meeting hall of Shirak State University, Rector E. Serobyán ceremoniously handed over certificates to the participants of pilot courses of "Research Paper Writing Skills" and "Quality Assurance" modules. In his speech of greeting and congratulation, the Rector mentioned that the participation of the professors and students of the University in exchange programs and sharing the experience they have gained via public lectures is very important.



He expressed hope that due to the launch of the Foreign Language Learning Centre the University would have a wider geography for the participation in the Erasmus + program.

2nd Pilot Session at SUSH

The second round of testing for the "EMI Quality Assurance" and "EMI Research Paper Writing Skills" educational modules took place on February 15 at Shirak State University. The session was conducted by Hovik Melkonyan, the coordinator of the Erasmus+ program at SUSH, Hasmik Matikyan, a lecturer in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, and Karlen Manukyan, a lecturer in the Department of Mathematics, Physics, and IT.

The Rector of SUSH Yervand Serobyán greeted the participants of the workshop in the newly opened EMI Centre, particularly appreciating the role and the necessity of SMARTI Project for the University, and wished a productive workflow. He congratulated and awarded certificates to the participants of the COIL Program, coordinated by Dresden University under the SMARTI Project, from SUSH. The recipients were Artak Hovhannisyán, an associate professor in the Department of History and Jurisprudence, and third-year students of Translation Studies (English-Armenian) Ani Atoyán, Mariana Harutyunyan, and Aida Vardanyán.

Before the course commenced, external SMARTI Project experts - professors Amanda Mason and Casey Beaumont from the partner University of Liverpool - held a business

2nd Pilot Session at VSU

The second piloting course within the SMARTI Project at Vanadzor State University was held on February 14. VSU hosted this course as part of the Erasmus+SMARTI Project for university students and staff.

Before the start of the course, VSU Rector Rustam Sahakyan held a meeting with external experts of the SMARTI Project, Amanda Mason and Casey Beaumont from the University of John Moores, along with the Project's local coordinator, Lusik Vardanyan. The discussions centred around project-related issues and plans. The course instructors from VSU included Arine Danielyan, an assistant professor at the Chair of Foreign Languages and Literature; Armine Gevorgyan, Ph.D., a lecturer at the Chair of Economics, Law, and Management; Gohar Dokholyan, an associate professor at the Chair of Foreign Languages and Literature; and Nune Khublaryan, an assistant professor at the Chair of Mathematics and Informatics. They developed and improved the lessons based on the results of the first piloting evaluation of the following two ADL modules:

- Module 1: Communicative teaching approach implemented on the basis of student-centered and blended learning /ICT/ e-learning,
- Module 7: Assessment strategies for ADL students (formal and alternative assessment).



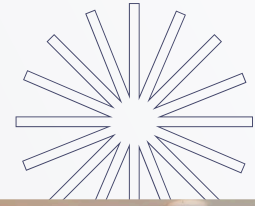
A. Danielyan presented the theoretical part of the 1st module covering “Student-centered learning and constructive learning theory, project-based learning/research-based learning/flipped classroom”. A. Gevorgyan focused on the practical aspect, discussing “Advertising in the restaurant business” using the “Flipped Classroom” method.

G. Dokholyan and N. Khublaryan presented the lesson entitled “Formative/summative/blended learning assessment techniques and strategies” of the 7th module. Dokholyan reflected on the theoretical aspects of formative/comprehensive/ blended learning assessment, presenting the advantages and disadvantages of these forms of assessment. During the lesson, Khublaryan and Dokholyan presented effective and innovative ICT tools for formative and summative assessment to the participants.



At the end of the event, the representatives of the EU expressed satisfaction with VSU's progress and encouraged them to continue their planned work.

2nd Pilot Session at GSU



In February-March, 2024 the 2nd Piloting of Module 5 (Pre-Modular Curriculum Development and Instructional Design and Module 6 (EMI Module Curriculum Development and Instructional Design) within the framework of the Erasmus+ SMART was held at the EMI Centre of Goris State University. 32 representatives of the academic staff and students from different faculties participated in the training. Two experts from the European partner university Liverpool John Moors University of the SMARTI Project Amanda Mason, and Casey Beaumont as well as representatives from ANQA were observing the lessons.

Naira Safaryan, Head of the Department of External Relations, Cooperation and Media, Local Coordinator of SMARTI Project, Lilit Atabekyan, Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, Engineering and Economics, Project Subject Teacher and Naira Mezhlumyan, Assistant Professor at the Chair of Foreign Languages, Project Language Teacher-the designers and trainers of the modules, were holding the training sessions.

The training covered the following topics:

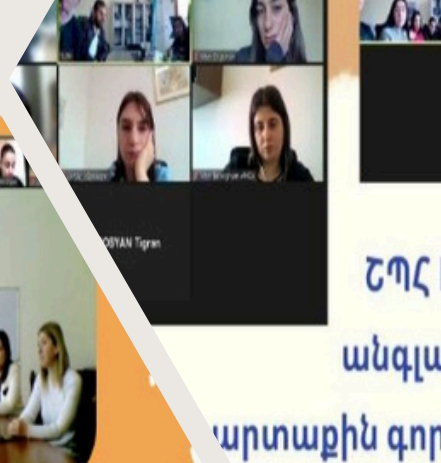
- *Curriculum design models-traditional,*
- *Backward, blended, hybrid and online and Descriptions of Academic Programs and Courses.*

The trainers provided an interactive atmosphere for the participants by posing questions, distributing handouts with activities for the consolidation of the material learned and the trainees were actively engaged in the process responding to prompts or questions proposed by the teachers.

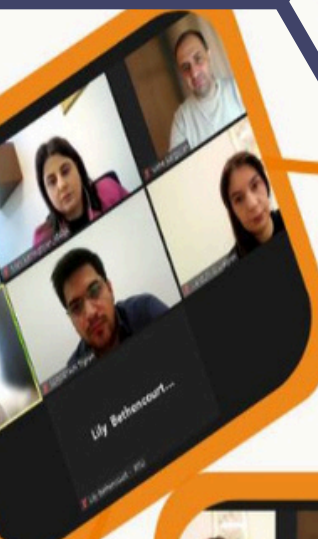
At the end of each lesson the participants were asked to go online and fill out the feedback survey for the evaluation of the EMI piloting sessions.

On 18 April the training was successfully concluded. The Rector extended gratitude to the trainers and congratulated the participants, presenting them with certificates endorsed by both GSU and the SMARTI Project. N. Safaryan expressed optimism for the continuity of such courses, emphasizing the importance of sustained engagement.

QUALITY ASSURANCE



External Review of EMI Centres and Modules as part of the SMARTI Project: the results summarised in expert panel reports



Within the scope of the Erasmus+ SMARTI Project, the EMI Centres of partner Armenian HEIs, along with the modules developed and piloted by the HEIs, have undergone external review. For that purpose, during March 1-7, the expert panel held online meeting discussions with the HEIs' rectors, coordinators, teaching staff, and trained participants of SMARTI Project and EMI Centre.

The coordinator of the external review process was ANQA. The EMI Centres conducted the self-evaluation and SWOT analysis of their activities and the two piloted English-language modules based on a relevant template, and then submitted them to the expert panel.

During the external review process, the expert panel focused on the following issues:

- EMI Centre's role in the fulfilment of the HEI's mission;
- EMI Centre's position in the organizational structure of the HEI, the scope and mechanisms for cooperation with other subdivisions;
- EMI Centre's role in boosting the attractiveness of the HEI and enticing foreign students, considering its favourable geographical location;
- cooperation with employers for further development of the EMI Centre and introduction of new English-language modules, policy for the introduction of English-language modules and the selection of professional directions;
- methodology and tools used in teaching English-language modules, mechanisms for evaluating their effectiveness;
- ways of ensuring the ongoing operation of the EMI Centre and the sustainability of the outcomes after the end of the SMARTI Project;
- quality assurance mechanisms for the achievement of the defined outcomes and the taught modules.
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The expert panel reports summarised the the results of the external review, pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of the EMI Centres and the two taught modules. The reports also contained recommendations on the areas in need for enhancement, highlighting the correlation between the EMI Centers' activities and the HEIs' strategic management, and ensuring the sustainability of the centres' activities.

Following the recommendations from the expert panels, the EMI Centres will prepare follow-up plans in the near future.

UPCOMING EVENTS

National Awareness Day & Training

From July 29 to August 2, 2024, the SMARTI Project will host a National Awareness Day and Training Event. This week-long event will include lectures, seminars, and training sessions, featuring both online and offline activities.

The event will kick off with a National Awareness Day in Yerevan on July 29th–30th. Attendees can anticipate seminars and workshops on cutting-edge teaching strategies, integrating technology, and using English for specialized academic purposes. These workshops will be led by specialists from Liverpool John Moores University, who will provide insightful commentary and useful resources.

On August 1st and 2nd, the event will continue in Vanadzor, with a focus on the case study technique. This course, taught by TU Dresden, will equip participants with the tools they need to create and utilize powerful case studies in their instruction.

Final Conference at ANAU

The Armenian National Agrarian University (ANAU) will host the SMARTI Project's Final Conference on November 26–29, 2024. This conference marks the culmination of the project's efforts to enhance English-medium instruction (EMI) in Armenian universities, fostering educational effectiveness, internationalization, and long-term sustainability.

A lively schedule of talks, workshops, and presentations is promised by the conference. Attendees can anticipate learning about the Project's successes and effects on higher education in Armenia, speak with specialists about EMI pedagogical best practices, and examine cutting-edge strategies, techniques, and resources for English instruction.

This is an important occasion for everyone concerned about the future of higher education in Armenia.



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