



## **Position Paper: Quality assurance in education – civil society perspective**

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### **Introduction**

Taking into account the importance of human capital for the development of democratic society and social market economy, the EU provides permanent support to the development of formal and informal education in the EaP countries (e.g. the budget for ERASMUS+ programme is 2.7 billion euro in 2018).

In their strategic development documents, all EaP countries underline education as one of the main development priorities until 2020:

- National Development Strategy "Moldova 2020": seven solutions for economic growth and poverty reduction,
- Sustainable Development Strategy "Ukraine 2020",
- Strategy of socio-economic development "Georgia 2020",
- National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus until 2020,
- Concept of the Strategy for Innovative Development of Armenia,
- Development Concept "Azerbaijan 2020: a glance into the future".

At the same time, national systems of education did not achieve (1) qualitative indicators, which ensure the balance of human resources and competencies in the labour market; (2) accessibility of lifelong learning programmes and recognition of their outcomes towards improving the quality of life in their home country and the reduction of willingness to emigrate; (3) attractiveness of education systems enough to reduce NEET indicators. Due to low level of wages in the education sector and poor material and didactic equipment of public educational institutions especially in rural areas, the level of personal, social and economic returns of national education systems is insufficient.

### **Civil society perspective:**

In order to promote affordable and quality education and training in EaP countries and ensure their compliance with Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG adopted in Yerevan in 2015), the following issues have been identified by civil society representatives:

1. Recognition and accreditation of diplomas of non-formal education (such as trainings, workshops etc);
2. Equal conditions of work and access to the education market for all education and learning providers, if they offer equal quality of services, including promoting tools to strengthen the role of providers of formal and non-formal education and training and their contribution to democracy building, development of competitive economy, improvement of quality of life in the Eastern Partnership countries, reduction of migration and restoring citizens' trust in governments;



3. Guarantees of access to quality education in rural areas, since for the moment rural schools are mostly employing teachers who are giving classes in several matters based on the same curriculum for several decades, by:
  1. better conditions, privileges/compensation for teachers willing to work in rural areas;
  2. professional development opportunities and increasing salaries of academics, teachers and support staff;
4. Civil society role as a watchdog of promoting quality education, especially given the region's legacy of lack of academic integrity (plagiarism, dishonesty etc);
5. Assurances of autonomy and self-governance of higher education establishments (free from political and ideological influences);
6. Lowering the EU projects co-funding threshold for NGOs working in the sphere of learning and skills. Right now it is 10% and because of the sheer size of the allocated grant this is often prohibitive and therefore potential applicants are not able to implement their projects;
7. Inclusive education with focus on seniors (especially fighting against "ageism"), persons with disabilities and minorities;
8. Perspective of instruments on monitoring/analysis/recommendations of quality assurances in education for non-AA countries, as the AA countries do it via the bilateral civil society platforms;
9. E-learning + digitalization as a tool in improving access to quality education, including lifelong learning;
10. Active participation of students in quality assurance procedures.

By addressing the above, the EU should therefore contribute to achieving:

1. qualitative indicators, which ensure the balance of human resources and competencies in the labour market,
2. accessibility of lifelong learning programmes and the recognition of their outcomes towards improving quality of life in their respective home countries and reduction of willingness to emigrate,
3. stronger attractiveness of education systems in order to reduce NEET,
4. higher levels of personal, social and economic returns of education systems through increased pay in the education sector and better material and didactic equipment of public educational institutions, especially in rural areas and conflict zones.

### **More Information**

*The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF, [www.eap-csf.eu](http://www.eap-csf.eu)) is a unique multi-layered regional civil society platform aimed at promoting European integration, facilitating reforms and democratic transformations in the six Eastern Partnership countries - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Serving as the civil society and people-to-people dimension of the Eastern Partnership, the EaP CSF strives to strengthen civil society in the region, boost pluralism in public discourse and policy making by promoting participatory democracy and fundamental freedoms.*