

UZDOC 2.0

Furthering Quality of Doctoral Education at Higher Education Institutions in Uzbekistan

External Quality Report of the first year (January 2017 - February 2018)

Introduction

The first report is covering the activities of the Project in the period January 2017 - February 2018. In that period three main activities took place: job shadowing activity at Politecnico di Torino (WP. 2.7), the 1st Uzbek Local Coordination meeting in Tashkent (WP 5.3) and the Quality Assurance Consultation workshop & Training for supervisors and doctoral candidates in Tashkent.

Effectiveness, Quality and Efficiency

The Project has a bit slow start due to different technical issues and slow responsiveness of the Uzbek institutions. Although a new project was a continuation of the first UZDOC project which happen to be very successful and well managed by the local coordinators and local contact persons, the new Project has been slowed down due to internal changes within some partner institutions in Uzbekistan. One of the first issues appeared to be the language barrier as well as the not clearly defined roles of the local partners. The structural changes on the governmental level as well as the establishment of a new responsible Ministry, and a modification of the legislation, were additional hindering element at the start of the Project.

Impact

In this first phase of the Project it was hard to talk about the impact of the project, though it has been observed that probably the most significant impact was on a leadership, both on institutional and ministerial level recognizing a need to enable a clean start of the project bearing in mind that doctoral training needs full attention. Coincidentally, with the start of the project, there were some new changes in the system, asking actually to introduce and further develop a new scheme of doctoral education, and to preserve the old one. In other words, to keep a kind of dual system.

Sustainability

At the start of the project it was questionable how the sustainability will be managed and preserved. The fact that the system level went one step backwards, putting back in force the old system of doctoral education (i.e. as a model from the Soviet time) and being supported with more conservative academics and bodies in power, questioned pro-European change of doctoral education, making it more comparative to other systems in Europe and beyond.

Recommendations

I stress that despite the delayed start of the project activities due to the late signing of the Grant Agreement, the implementation is now progressing smoothly. I also want to emphasize the good work at the Uzbek Local Coordination Board, the cooperation within the Board and the spirit of a "network" of Uzbek partner institutions which has been created.

At the same time, I identify three challenges that the project consortium needs to overcome in order to increase the project effectiveness:

- the lack of involvement of Tashkent Financial Institute team members previously involved in UZDOC project, which means losing the opportunity to build on previously gained knowledge and an important dissemination channel;
- the absence of contact with and the lack of language proficiency of the Local Coordinator;
- the physical setting of the meetings which should stress the peer-to-peer, and not a lecturer-student relationship (in the future, less formal settings in big auditoriums and more interactive settings should be ensured).

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