



Annex 2 – Tbilisi Study Visit Report

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Abstract An increasing number of expats proceeding from Georgia is expected to the CBSR, and it is important for the region to attract and retain the most talented ones. Through questionnaire survey, meetings and interviews with stakeholders, the study visit to Georgia allows exploring mobility perspectives, information availability and cooperation issues. It is recommended to disseminate more targeted and specific information with innovative communication tools and enhance the cooperation between universities in order to promote CBSR as an attractive destination for international talents.
Keywords soft departure, information, cooperation



Table of Contents

Background.....	3
Methodology	3
Information.....	4
Main findings and recommendations.....	5
List of institutions visited	7
About the Expat-project.....	8

Background

Georgia was set as one of the destinations for the study visits, due to the regions specific historical cooperation background with Georgia (as post-Soviet regimen country) and economic reasons leading to the intensive human mobility. According to the statistics, one of the main precedence countries of individuals mobility to Baltic States is Georgia (both student mobility and residence permits in general). Similar results are shown for other countries with historical links such as Russia, Belorussia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan etc. An increasing number of expats proceeding from Georgia (and other countries with similar historical links) is expected to the region, and it is important for the region to attract and retain the most talented ones. Study visit to Georgia allows exploring mobility perspectives, information availability and cooperation issues in order to set up the recommendations for the attraction of the international talents.

Methodology

Aim of the study visit was to check out the mobility perspectives, information availability and cooperation issues with Georgia in order to facilitate the attraction of the international talents to CBSR. Main focus was set to students' mobility and university cooperation.

The study visit to Georgia was implemented in 3 phases:

1. Preparation:

- a. Preparation of the questionnaire (for the interviews and distribution);
- b. Arrangement of the meetings with stakeholders;
- c. Interviews with local stakeholders;
- d. Quick-scan of the background information, existing agreements and regional statistics;
- e. Practical arrangements;
- f. Prior distribution of the questionnaire to the stakeholders in Georgia.

2. Implementation:

- a. On site study visit took place from 13th of June to 19th of June 2013.

3. Conclusions and follow up:

- a. Revision of the study visit outcomes and results;
- b. Preparation of the report and recommendations.

During the study visit following methods were used in order to assure the variety of the opinions and feedback from the target groups:

- Open discussions;
- Open interviews;
- Workshops;
- Questionnaires;

Information

As stated by the representatives of the target groups mainly general information is available on the particular countries of the CBSR, especially Estonia and Latvia. There is almost no information on the CBSR region as a whole. There is good knowledge on Baltic region and Europe in general between the university professionals and students with the more detailed information on particular countries, providing specific education and cooperation opportunities (e.g. Estonia, Germany, and Poland). Information is mainly acquired by personal contacts and family feedbacks, or university information and cooperation services, followed by the more targeted search on the internet and social networks. As of the municipality level, there is a strong role on existing and renewed historical cooperation links, providing base for new cooperation opportunities, exchange of the information and short term mobility and cooperation projects.

Service and information providers from CBSR countries are not widely represented in Georgia, limiting to the Embassies (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Sweden) and Honorary Consuls (Estonia, Finland, Latvia). Taking into account limited resources, these service providers mainly focus on the provision of the formal information and visa arrangements for the particular countries. This situation even more suggests that international cooperation with Georgia is mainly based on contacts and relations between particular institutions or sectors.

There is a number of other international service and information providers in Tbilisi (such as British council, Goethe Institute, IFF), which not only provide information on their countries but are cooperating with embassies and consulates in the international inter-institutional platform to implement joint cultural and cooperation projects. This platform can be used in the future also by CBSR institutions as a base to promote the region and focused international cooperation issues, but the outcomes will largely depend on the initiative and interests of individual organisations.

Main findings and recommendations

Georgia's political course at the moment of the study visit had a strong "pro European" focus reflected in the opinions of the target groups. Followed by the strong willingness to set up and renew existing cooperation links, the "pro European" orientation has resulted in the increasing need for the information on cooperation and mobility opportunities as well as strong motivation of the students and young professionals to acquire international experience and competitive education.

Georgian students are highly motivated to acquire good education, preferably abroad, but then return back to Georgia. Main factors impacting their choice in favour of one or another education offer are the quality of the education programmes and potential expenses (availability of scholarships). Overall impression on the CBSR countries is positive due to the family memories or personal contacts; however there is a lack of particular information on education systems, available study and scholarship opportunities. As the target countries students mainly consider the ones, where this kind of information is directly available or where are existing cooperation agreements between particular universities. CBSR countries have an opportunity to attract young talents from Georgia and create networks of "economic ambassadors" after they finish their studies, by elaborating and providing more targeted information using university networks, International education fair and social networks as focused information channels and facilitating international cooperation between universities and colleges.

Besides student mobility, representatives of Georgian universities expressed their interest in international cooperation projects weather under Ministry of Education of Georgia or university based such as developing exchange programmes (students and professors) or joint Master programmes involving multiple universities. Research topics of interest where international academic mobility and collaboration would be required include development of Baltic – Caucasian strategy, energy efficiency, ICT and security issues.

Cooperation projects and agreements on a municipality level, which are already present, are to be considered as another opportunity to highlight the information on CBSR within the Georgian society and to reach the potential target group of the skilled expats and students through less formal manners.

Taking into account the information gathered during the study visit following recommendations have been elaborated in order to attract skilled expats from Georgia to CBSR:

- *More targeted and more specific information is required in order to facilitate the mobility of particular target groups;*
- *CBSR should be promoted as an attractive destination for talented students, university professionals and researchers;*
- *Use of innovative communication tools and social networks as information channels;*
- *Cooperation agreements between universities are to be encouraged to increase students and researchers mobility.*

List of institutions visited

Institution	Methods applied
University of Georgia	Open discussion with students and representatives of students self governments
Institute of the Caucasian Economic and Social research	Open interview
Tbilisi State university	Workshop with students and representatives of students self governments
Caucasia University	Open discussion with university representatives
Caucasus Institute for Regional Security	Open discussion with university representatives
Georgion institute of Public Affairs	Open group interview with university representatives; Workshop with students; Students questionnaire;
School of Law and Politics	Open group interview with university representatives; Workshop with students; Students questionnaire;
School of Public Administration	Open group interview with university representatives; Workshop with students; Students questionnaire;
Embassy of Latvia to Georgia	Open interview
Ex Honorary Consul of Latvia to Georgia	Open interview
British Council	Open interview
Municipality of Tbilisi	Open interview
Municipality of Mtskheta	Open interview

About the Expat-project

Expat-project (2012-2013) was co-financed by EU Central Baltic Interreg IVA Programme 2007-2013. Its ultimate aim is to make the Central Baltic Sea Region a more attractive destination, a more welcoming region to settle in, and a home to stay for international talents.

Human capital is one of the decisive factors that contribute to the high competitiveness of the Central Baltic Sea Region. In an interdependency world economy today, the regions and cities need to cultivate its human capital and to best retain the international professionals available at place in order to maintain and to increase its global competitiveness.

While Europe is a relatively attractive destination for highly skill immigrants, the Central Baltic Sea regions are not benefit fully from the international talents moving in and living here – nor are the internationals benefit from the opportunities the region should have on offer. The Expat-project addresses the factors that hinder the expats' smooth arrival and good quality of life in the Central Baltic Sea Region and developed methods and solution to improve the identified challenges, serving this way the interests of both the expats and the region as a whole.

The Expat-project conducted various research activities, includes best practice of soft-landing service models in Hague, Amsterdam, Stockholm and Toronto; three field studies on soft-departure services available in sourcing country in Shanghai, Seoul and Tbilisi; an online questionnaire on the internationals' opinion of their quality of life and a pilot development of a virtual service platform for internationals. The project results are presented in a series of reports providing aforementioned benchmarking results, analysis and policy recommendations.

Expat-project partners:

- Uusimaa Regional Council, Finland (Lead Partner)
- Culminatium Innovation Ltd, Finland
- Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland
- Turku Science Park Oy LTD, Finland
- Regional Council of Southwest Finland, Finland
- City of Uppsala, Sweden
- Riga Planning Region, Latvia
- University of Latvia, Latvia
- Institute of Baltic Studies, Estonia
- eGovernance Academy, Estonia

More information:

www.expatriotproject.info

Terminology:

Expats refers to international knowledge workers, students and their families and spouses.

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