

**Results Achieved within the Framework of the 2016-2020 Strategy
of the LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement**



In 2020, the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement completed its five-year strategic cycle. The strategic goals for this period are outlined in the Center's strategic document, which encompasses the Center's vision for enhancing education quality in Georgia, its purpose in this process, and explains the ways of achieving the strategic goals of the Center. This report provides a concise summary developmental progress and achievements during this period.

Strategic Goal 1 – to develop the Center's organizational management systems and resources, and enhance its institutional independence in alignment with state policy, government priorities, and international standards;

The following significant steps have been taken in this direction: Structural reorganization of the Center has been carried out and quality services have been divided according to the levels of education directions. A separate structural unit has been created to implement the evidence-based decision-making system. During the mentioned period, important work was carried out in the direction of introducing a system in line with international standards of internal quality management. In 2016, the Center received the recognition (Committed to Excellence) of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM).

To establish an effective decision-making mechanism involving stakeholders, the Coordination Council of the Center was established in 2018, which performed advisory functions at that time. In addition, there were plans to enhance the role and authority of the Coordination Council within the Center's management system, leading to corresponding changes was made in the provision of the Center. In order to improve financial independence, appropriate steps were taken and changes were initiated. The structural mechanism of accountability of the Center was strengthened. Increasing the degree of independence of the Center and strengthening the role of the Coordination Council takes an important place in the recommendations issued by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

Over the past years, the Center acquired significant additional functions, namely, quality assurance of vocational training-retraining programs, recognition of non-formal education and quality assurance of professional development programs for civil servants. Throughout this period, the Center constantly tried to develop services and introduce innovative approaches in its activities. Electronic application forms for citizens were created and processed in cooperation with the LEPL Data Exchange Agency; with the support of the Twinning project funded by the European Union, a user-oriented website of the Center was created, in which the electronic payment system for services intended for physical persons was integrated.

Strategic Goal 2 - to develop a result-oriented quality assurance system for educational institutions and programs and enhance relevant services

In the field of higher education quality assurance, the standards and procedures for the authorization of higher education institutions and accreditation of higher education programs were updated, aligning them with the quality assurance standards and guidelines of the European Higher Education Area (ESG-2015). Furthermore, the standards and procedures for authorization and programs accreditation have been aligned with the requirements set by the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME). The authorization and accreditation experts' pools were updated, experts attestation was carried out, and comprehensive evaluation of their activities was introduced. For the first time, international experts, employers, and students were involved in the evaluation process.

Flexible mechanisms for evaluation of education institutions and educational programs by the Authorization and Accreditation Councils have been developed, which are focused on the development of institutions and educational programs, scheduled and unscheduled monitoring mechanisms have been enhanced, quality assurance results have become more transparent, and experts' reports publicly available.

In 2018, updated standards and procedures for authorization of vocational education institutions were approved. Work-based learning approaches, including dual learning, were introduced. To enhance assessment tools for vocational students, a methodology for development of assessment tools was prepared. Competency-based teaching and assessment approaches (so-called modular programs) have also been introduced, completely replacing subject-based programs. It is important that the rules and conditions for integrating the learning outcomes of the secondary level of general education into the secondary vocational education program were approved.

The experts' pools of general, vocational and higher education were updated. A training program for expert certification was developed and the attestation/certification of the expert pool commenced in 2020.

Similar to European agencies for quality assurance, changes in the external mechanisms for the quality of education will be grounded in studies (thematic analyses) conducted using appropriate methodologies. Through the thematic analyses, the Center will analyze quality assurance policies and processes to improve them at both institutional and system levels. The methodology of thematic analysis was developed in 2020, within the framework of the EU-funded Twinning project "Strengthening capacities for quality assurance and governance of qualifications", by the international experts involved in the project. In 2020, work began on four thematic analyses.

Strategic Goal 3 -To develop education institution support services

For the education institutions (general, vocational, and higher), the Center organized support visits, training sessions, workshops, and consultations, including with the participation of local and international experts. Numerous training modules and textbooks have been developed. Recommendations were prepared for the institutions regarding quality assurance of e-learning. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a new category was added to the Center's website - "Support during COVID-19", which brings together useful resources for institutions related to quality assurance of online learning.

Strategic Goal 4 – To ensure the development of a qualifications system based on the principles of lifelong learning, using best international practice to optimize and improve education recognition services;

In this direction, it is noteworthy that we have introduced an external quality assurance system for vocational training/retraining programs, along with an updated system for recognizing non-formal education.

The updated National Qualifications Framework and Classifier of Fields of Study have been approved, aligning with the European Qualifications Framework and the International Classifier of Fields of Study. Furthermore, the rule on management, development and monitoring of the National Qualifications Framework and on the creation and administration of the electronic register for qualifications were approved. During the strategy implementation period, sectoral councils were created, existing sector benchmark was reviewed and updated, and sector benchmarks were created. Appropriate deadlines for bringing educational programs in line with the National Qualifications Framework and the Classifier were determined and self-assessment forms were approved.

Goal 5 – To raise awareness of Georgia in the educational sphere of Europe and promoting the internationalization of education.

It is crucial to raise awareness on the Center in the European education area and to promote the internationalization of education. Over the past years, the Center gained significant international recognition by the decision of the Council of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), acquiring the status of a full member of the ENQA for a period of five years. The Center was registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). In 2018, the Center received recognition of the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) for a period of 10 years. The Center became the member of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA). The Center actively cooperates with quality assurance agencies. The Center's partner agencies are: Estonian Higher and Vocational Education Quality Assurance Agency (EKKA), National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance of Ukraine (NAQA) and Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating of the Republic of Kazakhstan (IAAR).

To enhance the capacity for quality assurance and qualifications management, in cooperation with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Estonian Higher and Vocational Education Quality Assurance Agency (EKKA), the EU-funded Twinning project has been implemented in the Center since 2019. The Center participates in projects financed by the European Commission and ERASMUS +.

The National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement cooperates with the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG). Since 2018, the Center has been involved as a member in all three thematic experts panels of the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG). The Center co-chairs the Thematic Experts Panel on Quality Assurance and actively participates in projects implemented by the panel.



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