

Strengthening integrity and combatting corruption in higher education in Armenia

Risk analysis of issues affecting the integrity of the Armenian higher education system

Working together to improve quality of higher education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Executive Summary essentially comprises a repeat of the Recommendations from the thirteen main Sections of the Report.

The Report begins with an opening **Section 1**, which provides an **‘Introduction, including General Approaches, Methodologies and Use of Previous Work’**.

The Report then considers a number of themes, and these provide the basis for Sections 2 to 12, as follows:-

Section 2 - Issues with the Overall Number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) – including the Number of Private HEIs, and the General Position on Private HEIs

Section 3 - The Legal Framework and Governance Issues for the HE System, including the Overall Relationship between National Government and the System

Section 4 - The Position of ANQA (The National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance)

Section 5 - The Funding of HE

Section 6 - Research and the HEIs

Section 7 - HR/Staffing Approaches and Issues in HE

Section 8 - The Teaching and Learning Relationship between Students and Staff (and Associated Issues)

Section 9 - Issues with Student Admissions to HE

Section 10 - Student Participation in HE Governance

Section 11 - Ethical Codes in HE and Legal Frameworks

Section 12 - Anti-Corruption Strategies of Government and HEIs

The Report then concludes with a final **Section 13** on **‘Conclusions, and Next Steps for the Project’**.

The Recommendations from all thirteen Sections now follow (of course, these also appear at the appropriate places in the main text):-

Recommendations from Section 1 on ‘Introduction, including General Approaches, Methodologies and Use of Previous Work’

Recommendation 1(a):

Dialogue between the Council of Europe, and the Armenian Government and Higher Education (HE) community, should be based on the broadest approach to achieving integrity in education through the commitment of all actors to positive ethical principles and ethical behaviours, rather than only focusing on a narrower ‘deficit’ approach based on top-down, mechanistic regulatory measures.

This dialogue around integrity should move beyond the consideration simply of ‘anti-corruption’ issues to related issues on the fundamental and wider quality of the education system.

However, in the short to medium term, focused discussion with the Armenian Government and other stakeholders will be required on more mechanistic and regulatory measures to set the framework for the longer-term achievement of integrity in HE based on ethical principles and behaviours.

Recommendation 1(b):

The Armenian Government should ensure that the fullest consideration is given to achieving coherence across its interaction with the many externally funded interventions of international organisations in its education system, specifically here the HE system. In particular, this consideration should look to achieve the widest and most sustained impact, avoiding any inappropriate repetition between projects and ensuring significant ‘added value’ in new projects.

Recommendation 1(c):

International organisations, such as the Council of Europe, should similarly give the fullest consideration to ensuring that new projects build on previous project activities and findings, avoiding inappropriate repetition with previous projects, and producing significant ‘added value’ from previous projects. This is particularly important when such projects are all drawing upon the same funding source, e.g. the EU.

Recommendations from Section 2 on ‘Issues with the Overall Number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) – including the Number of Private HEIs, and the General Position on Private HEIs’

Recommendation 2(a):

The Armenian Government should undertake a fundamental review of the number of public Universities within the HE system. Such a review should give full consideration to the potential for enhancing quality and easing funding shortage pressures which may follow from a reduction in the number of public universities through amalgamations and closures.

Recommendation 2(b):

The Armenian Government should also undertake a fundamental review of the private HEI sector. Such a review should explore whether the current number of private HEIs is appropriate, if fully-robust licensing and quality assurance approaches are being applied which match contemporary European standards (including on criteria for University status, where this is being claimed).

Recommendations from Section 3 on ‘The Legal Framework and Governance Issues for the HE System, including the Overall Relationship between National Government and the System’

Recommendation 3(a):

A new primary Law on Higher Education in Armenia should be developed.

This Law should confirm fully that HEIs have appropriate autonomy, including the separation of Government from the governance of HEIs, especially in relation to membership of HEI governing bodies. The Law should also address legal issues around giving HEIs greater economic and financial operating freedom, e.g. in relation to the current Law on State Non-Commercial Organisations (SNCOs) and the possible move to foundation status (see Recommendation 5(b) below).

This Law should also include an explicit reference to the guaranteed autonomy of the National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance (ANQA), thus guaranteeing autonomy to the accreditation process for HEIs (see Recommendation 4(a) below). The Law should also endorse the Standards developed by ANQA as the 'national Standards' for Armenian HE. The Law should also produce a clear and detailed position on the licensing of HEIs, and the relationship between accreditation and licensing. This should include considering whether any separate licensing process can be as transparent as simply linking the issuing of a licence to the completion of the ANQA institutional accreditation process.

This Law should also include clear statements on the criteria for the different types of HEI in Armenia. In particular, consideration should be given to whether terms other than University continue to be appropriate, and to the future position on provision of 'third cycle' doctoral qualifications as a criterion for University status. Consideration should also be given to whether ANQA documentation should in future be the core source for such criteria statements, rather than national Law.

This Law should also consider any necessary inclusions which may follow from subsequent Recommendations below, especially: Recommendation 7(b) on HEI staffing issues; Recommendations 8(a) and 11 on ethical codes in HE; Recommendations 10(a) and (b) on the position of students.

Recommendation 3(b):

In developing a new Law on Higher Education, the principle of appropriate autonomy for HEIs should lead to the minimal inclusion in either the primary Law or in secondary legislation (Government and Ministry Decisions and Orders etc.) of detailed matters which should more appropriately be covered in HEIs own regulatory frameworks, or in the documents of other organisations, such as ANQA.

Recommendation 3(c):

The Armenian Government should consider these Recommendations on a new Law on Higher Education alongside any recommendations for a new Law from the EU Twinning Project on 'Empowerment of the Tertiary Level Education of the Republic of Armenia for European Higher Education Area (EHEA)', which they are intended to reinforce.

Recommendation 3(d):

The Armenian Government should respect the appropriate autonomy of HEIs not only when producing new legislation, but also in its ongoing follow-up political activity. The Government should be encouraged to view this not as a reduction in the importance it attributes to HE, but as a way of responding to appropriate European approaches on these matters. The Government should be encouraged to demonstrate the importance it attaches to HE in other ways, e.g. through funding provision (see Recommendation 5(b) below).

Recommendations from Section 4 on 'The Position of ANQA (The National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance)'

Recommendation 4(a):

Building on the existing positive achievements of ANQA should be a priority for the Armenian Government and HE community in strengthening integrity within Armenian HE.

Recommendation 4(b):

In particular, the Armenian Government should take all necessary measures, including through a new Law on HE, to establish transparently and unambiguously that ANQA will enjoy the independence required to meet the criteria for full membership of ENQA (The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education).

As already implied in Recommendation 3(a) above, this should include final decisions for accreditation resting with ANQA, rather than ANQA simply making recommendations to the Government. It should also include recognising that ownership of the national Standards for HE rests with ANQA, and that these Standards effectively become the 'State' Standards. It should also involve ensuring that the Governing Board of ANQA is independent of Government, in terms of membership and appointment to membership.

Recommendation 4(c):

The Armenian Government and HE system should give the fullest support to ANQA in developing a financial model which ensures its long-term financial sustainability, consistent with ANQA also being fully independent. This should include consideration of the HEIs paying significant ongoing subscriptions, beyond simply the costs of particular accreditations; the HEIs commissioning staff development from ANQA as a required part of institutional staff development programmes; and the Government either directly commissioning national HEI staff development programmes from ANQA, or indirectly providing funds to HEIs to underpin commissioned ANQA staff development in institutions, and institutional subscriptions to ANQA.

Recommendation 4 (d):

All Armenian HEIs should ensure that they commit fully to developing the systems of internal quality assurance and enhancement necessary for the most positive interaction with ANQA's external quality systems.

Recommendation 4(e):

As an important part of the strengthening of integrity in Armenian HE, ANQA should make maximum use of the current criteria relating to integrity within its Standards when evaluating institutions and programmes during accreditation. ANQA should also consider the further development of integrity dimensions within its Standards. Addressing integrity issues within institutional and programme accreditation should become a powerful tool for strengthening integrity within Armenian HE.

Recommendations from Section 5 on 'The Funding of HE'**Recommendation 5(a):**

There should be maximum public transparency on the funding relationship between the central Armenian Government and public HEIs, and on the use of funds by HEIs. This should include the Government detailing explicitly and fully how the policy thinking in its recent Higher Education Financing Strategy is being translated into practice.

Recommendation 5(b):

The Armenian Government should recognise the priority need to address under-funding of public HEIs. In identifying strategies in this area, full consideration should be given to appropriate freeing-up of public HEIs to engage more fully in commercial activities, borrow money etc., e.g. as involved in possible moves to foundation status. As discussed in Recommendation 2(a) above, full

consideration should also be given to the potential funding benefits of reducing the number of public HEIs through amalgamation or closure.

Recommendation 5(c):

The Armenian Government should not regard the current level of reliance by public HEIs on student fees to be appropriate or sustainable. The Government should give immediate priority to developing funding models which significantly reduce the current level of dependence on student fees. This should certainly include full consideration of a model which completely removes student payment of fees at the points of access and delivery of HE, e.g. even if this involves the introduction of a student loans system rather than simply financing HE through general taxation.

Recommendation from Section 6 on 'Research and the HEIs'

Recommendation 6:

The Armenian Government should move to the full integration of academic research activity into the University sector. Government funding models should reflect this, including the removal of any legal impediments, such as those which may currently be associated with the Law on SNCOs and the Law on Scientific and Scientific-Technical Activities. The Armenian research community should accept that this reconfiguration of research activity may involve the disappearance of scientific institutes as these have traditionally existed.

Recommendations from Section 7 on 'HR/Staffing Approaches and Issues in HE'

Recommendation 7(a):

Much work has already been undertaken in identifying staffing issues in the HR environment of Armenian HEIs, and in raising awareness of these.

Key issues already identified include: lack of transparency and objective, open competition in appointments processes, including for election to senior posts; inadequate salary levels; lack of ongoing professional development opportunities for staff; inadequate systems for effective staff evaluation and appraisal; problems arising from the standard use of five-year contracts of employment; significant inconsistencies on HR approaches between HEIs.

Future activities should concentrate on developing effective responses to such issues, and not on further research to repeat confirmation of what seem already to be well-recognised issues.

Recommendation 7(b):

In developing effective responses to the HR staffing issues identified in Recommendation 7(a) above, the Armenian Government and HE community should engage in a full dialogue over the balance between Government and individual HEI responsibility and action here.

While the future importance of HEI autonomy has already been stressed (see Recommendation 3(a) above), the HE community should be prepared to accept that it may be necessary for a primary Law on HE to legislate for a consistent enabling framework on some of these HR staffing aspects of HE.

Similarly, the Government should be prepared to accept that it cannot simply evade public interest responsibilities in this area by arguing that these issues are 'matters for the HEIs'.

Recommendation 7 (c):

Much work has already been undertaken within internationally-funded projects in providing HE staff development on general European good practices in HR leadership and management, which will help address some of the issues summarised in Recommendation 7(a) above.

Therefore, future activities within this current Council of Europe project should concentrate on identifying and developing additional new approaches in this area. As will be detailed in Recommendation 13(b) below, the suggested additional approaches will focus on use of codes/statements of ethical principles and ethical behaviour for staff.

Recommendations from Section 8 on ‘The Teaching and Learning Relationship between Students and Staff (and Associated Issues)’

Recommendation 8(a):

The teaching and learning relationship between HE staff and students should be based on the fullest commitment to fundamental positive ethical principles and ethical behaviours. These should be embedded in comprehensive codes of ethics. In the case of HE staff, breaches of these codes should be linked to powerful sanctions through contracts of employment. In the case of students, breaches of these codes should be linked to powerful sanctions through HEI regulatory frameworks.

HE staff should have a particular responsibility for developing the positive commitment of students to ethical behaviours.

The Government of Armenia should support these developments through public awareness-raising campaigns with wider civil society. This should include targeting the parents of HE students specifically. The development of an advisory code of ethics for these parents should also be considered.

The Government of Armenia should also give full consideration to the extent to which it may be necessary to produce enabling legislation to underpin these developments, and ensure consistent minimum standards in institutional approaches, e.g. by inclusions in a new Law on Higher Education. This should also include considering whether ethical codes for HE staff should be linked to the wider development of ethical codes in the public services more generally (see also Recommendation 11 below).

Future activities within this current Council of Europe project should also include extensive and specific focus on supporting developments in this area of ethical principles, behaviours and codes (see also Recommendation 13(b) below).

Recommendation 8(b):

The Armenian HE community should engage in ongoing review and development of curriculum and assessment approaches to produce significant curricular and assessment innovation on a continuous basis. This should be designed to produce student-centred learning and teaching experiences which engage students fully, and rich and varied assessment approaches which enable students to demonstrate deep learning.

In return, students should show positive commitment to ethical integrity in their response to such innovations, and should not seek to manipulate innovative assessment approaches for any new opportunities these might be seen to present for cheating.

Similarly, HE staff should adhere to the highest ethical standards in the assessment of student work within any new, richer and more varied approaches.

The Armenian Government should support such developments by providing funding mechanisms for relevant curriculum and assessment innovations.

Recommendation from Section 9 on 'Issues with Student Admissions to HE'

Recommendation 9:

There appear to be significant issues with the national school leaving examinations. These seem to include systemic inappropriate private tutoring, cheating in final examinations (associated with inadequate invigilation), and narrow approaches to assessment which may increase the 'attractiveness' of inappropriate private tutoring.

The Armenian Government should investigate these issues thoroughly, and then take robust measures if these are needed.

While these issues may be more for the school system, they affect the admission of students to HE. Therefore, the HE community should engage fully in national discussion and action on these matters. In particular, HE academic staff should not be participating in inappropriate private tutoring.

Recommendations from Section 10 on 'Student Participation in HE Governance'

Recommendation 10(a):

The independence of Student Associations within HEIs should be fully recognised and guaranteed.

The Armenian Government should engage in dialogue with the HE community to discuss the extent to which this may require national enabling legislation, most probably in the new Law on Higher Education, to ensure minimum acceptable consistency of approach here.

However, the fundamental responsibility for recognising and guaranteeing the independence of their Student Associations should rest with individual HEIs themselves.

Recommendation 10(b):

Full, meaningful and independent involvement of students in the governance of HEIs should also be recognised and secured.

Again, the Armenian Government should engage in dialogue with the HE community to discuss the extent to which this may require national enabling legislation, most probably in the new Law on Higher Education, to ensure minimum acceptable consistency of approach here.

However, the fundamental responsibility for recognising and securing the involvement of their student body in institutional governance should rest with individual HEIs themselves.

Recommendation from Section 11 on 'Ethical Codes in HE and Legal Frameworks'

Recommendation 11:

As discussed under Recommendation 8(a) above, codes of ethics should be developed for HE staff, with breaches linked to significant sanctions (up to, and including dismissal) through contracts of employment.

If the Armenian Government is developing a general legal framework for the public services, in which breaches of ethical codes are linked to dismissal through contracts of employment, HE staff should certainly be included within this framework. This would strengthen the respect for codes of ethical behaviour among HE staff.

The Ministry of Justice should also advise on any developments required in the overall legal framework to underpin the use of sanctions against students who breach ethical codes within HEI regulatory frameworks, and to invoke the criminal law against parents who attempt inappropriate unethical interference in their children's HE experiences.

Recommendations from Section 12 on 'Anti-Corruption Strategies of Government and HEIs'

Recommendation 12(a):

The Armenian Government should clarify the relationship between the overall Government Anti-Corruption Strategy and anti-corruption strategy for education specifically. In particular, the Government should clarify whether there is simply an education section within the overall Government Anti-Corruption Strategy, which the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) is meant to follow, or whether the MoES is expected to develop its own detailed Anti-Corruption Strategy document, expanding from the relevant section of the overall Government document.

The Armenian Government should ensure that all Anti-Corruption Strategies, whether at overall Government or Ministry level, are continuous through time, i.e. that new Strategies begin immediately upon the end of previous Strategies, with no gaps in time and therefore in the monitoring for progress on the implementation of Strategies.

In this context, the Government should also ensure targets are met for the regular publishing of monitoring reports, and such reports are published transparently, including online.

The education Section (Section 3.1) of the new Government Anti-Corruption Strategy/Action Plan for 2015-2018 includes much good analysis and identifies many important issues to be addressed. The Government should ensure focus is sustained on these issues. On the other hand, the Government should review some aspects of this Section for further clarity, e.g. the discussion of 'Specialized Education'.

Chapter 4 of the new Government Anti-Corruption Strategy/Action Plan for 2015-2018 includes important material on approaches to monitoring and evaluating the extent to which objectives are being achieved. However, the Government should provide further detail on some aspects of this, such as the Anti-Corruption Strategy Committee, the indicators to be used for monitoring and evaluation, and the relationship between monitoring and evaluation for the overall Strategy and for specific sectors such as education.

Recommendation 12(b):

The Armenian Government and the HE community should agree in discussion the extent to which individual HEI Anti-Corruption Plans should follow a standardised national template, or at least some common guidelines, at the same time respecting HEI autonomy.

In particular, these discussions should include a focus on ensuring HEI plans include explicit timeframes for action, and clearly identify those responsible for progressing particular actions within institutions. Mechanisms also need to be clearly identified within plans for monitoring progress on achieving objectives, and for imposing effective sanctions when objectives are not met.

Recommendation 12(c):

The Armenian Government and HE community should recognise that, while the actions identified in Recommendations 12(a) and (b) above are important short to medium measures for strengthening anti-corruption activities in HE, the long-term strengthening of integrity in HE will depend on the fundamental commitment of all actors to positive ethical principles and behaviours (see also Recommendation 13(b) below).

Recommendations from Section 13 on 'Conclusions, and Next Steps for the Project'**Recommendation 13(a):**

Initially under this current Council of Europe project, there should be discussion between the Council of Europe experts and the Armenian Government and other senior Armenian stakeholders on the more mechanistic and regulatory measures recommended to enhance the quality of the HE system, and set the framework for the longer-term achievement of integrity in HE based on ethical principles and behaviours. Generally, this refers to aspects within all of Recommendations 1 to 12 above.

Recommendation 13(b):

Thereafter, the current Council of Europe project should specifically develop additional new support for the HEIs on activities and approaches to strengthen integrity. In discussion with the Armenian Government and HE community, this should focus on progressing positive commitment by staff and students to ethical principles and ethical behaviours through the use of ethical codes. This refers in particular to Recommendations 7(c), 8(a), and 11 above.

1 INTRODUCTION, INCLUDING GENERAL APPROACHES, METHODOLOGIES AND USE OF PREVIOUS WORK

1.1 Background, Aims and General Approach

1.1.1 This report is the first output of a two-year Council of Europe project, funded by the European Union, on 'Strengthening Integrity and Combating Corruption in Higher Education in Armenia'. The report is to provide an initial expert risk analysis of the issues affecting the integrity of the Armenian higher education system. As will be emphasised later (see Section 13), subsequent project activities are likely to include wide stakeholder awareness-raising events and staff development workshops for key Higher Education (HE) staff. The need to anticipate these subsequent activities had some implications for the report, both in terms of the literature reviewed and aspects of the detail included (see also par.1.2.3 below).

1.1.2 In considering these matters, the Council of Europe's experts will generally follow the approach they have adopted in other work for the Council. This approach argues that, especially for the long-term, the strengthening of integrity in education must be based upon a full commitment to fundamental positive ethical principles and ethical behaviours in professional and public life. Essentially, integrity is then seen as the connection between positive ethical principles and quality in education.

This emphasis on the importance of the overall quality of education means that the approach taken is wider than simply a narrow consideration of a deficit 'corruption' agenda and an associated set of top-down, mechanistic 'anti-corruption' measures. However, clearly such measures will have their place, especially in the short to medium term, and in initial discussions with the Armenian government and other senior Armenian stakeholders.

It follows from this approach that the experts will seek overall dialogue with Government and other senior stakeholders not only on the narrower aspects of an anti-corruption agenda, but also on some wider issues seen as relevant to setting the framework for the longer-term strengthening of integrity in Armenian HE.

The general approaches taken by the experts are expanded on in other work for the Council of Europe, most recently in the documents 'Ethical Principles for Education' and 'The Ethical Behaviour of All Actors in Education', presented to the Council's Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE) as part of the development of the Council's Pan-European Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED) (Council of Europe 2015a,b).

Methodology, including Use of Previous Work in this Area

The methodology for this report has partly included desk research on general literature and web resources available on the Armenian HE system.

1.2 Desk Research on Previous International Reports and Projects

1.2.1 In particular, significant resources have been produced by other international organisations and projects. These will be referred to in the report, and are given in full in the References list at the end of the report. However, in particular they include:-

The Tempus Report 'Higher Education in Armenia', July 2012 (Tempus 2012);

The World Bank Report ‘Addressing Governance at the Center of Higher Education Reforms in Armenia’, January 2013 (World Bank 2013);

The Open Society Foundation Armenia Report ‘Higher Education in Armenia Today: a focused review’, July 2013 (Open Society Foundation Armenia 2013).

The outputs of two ***Tempus IV Projects***:

The Athena Project on ‘Fostering Sustainable and Autonomous Higher Education Systems in the Eastern Neighbouring Area’, which involves Armenia, Moldova and the Ukraine; (See Athena website at www.athena-tempus.eu/)

The La MANCHE Project on ‘Leading and Managing Change in Higher Education’, which involves Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. (See La MANCHE website at www.lamanche-tempus.eu/)

- 1.2.2 The three overall reports by Tempus (2012), the World Bank (2013) and the Open Society Foundation (2013) are each single documents on aspects of the HE system, ranging in length from 15 to 61 pages. As subsequent Sections of the current document will demonstrate, outputs of this scale can be used in a relatively standard way to illustrate general points of analysis.

The Athena and La MANCHE Projects

- 1.2.3 On the other hand, the Athena Project and the La MANCHE projects are full projects running over three years, each with very extensive websites including a wide range of outputs. The nature and scale of this previous project work has some important implications for the current Council of Europe project. Both the Athena and La MANCHE Projects have already involved significant parts of the Armenian HE system in extensive international collaborative work on issues which are relevant to the current project. Both these Projects have been underpinned by significant EU funding. Therefore, current consideration and use of the outputs of these Projects needs to go beyond the ‘relatively standard’ use of single reports, such as the Tempus, World Bank and Open Society Foundation reports mentioned above.

The Athena Project

The Athena Project, running from October 2012 until October 2015, has involved Yerevan State University (coordinator for Armenia), Gavar State University, State Engineering University of Armenia, but also the State Universities Rector Council and the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), given that the project ‘is designed to support structural reform processes and the development of strategic frameworks at the national level’ (‘What is Athena’, website). The Project’s partnership has involved the European University Association, and Universities in Finland, the Netherlands and Portugal. The EU funding for this Project was 1,072,140 Euros. The Athena Project has involved Project-wide training seminars, country-level (national) workshops and institutional-level training seminars. These have covered topics such as HE governance (including autonomy), financial management and HR management. (See Athena website.)

The La MANCHE Project

The La MANCHE Project, running from October 2012 to October 2015, has involved a partnership with 23 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) from the Eastern Neighbouring Area, five HEIs from the EU (from Bulgaria, France, Greece, Portugal and the UK) and one

business development company from the UK. The Armenian partner Universities have been Yerevan State University, State Engineering University of Armenia (Polytechnic), Gavar State University, and the Armenian National Agrarian University. The EU grant budget was 837,652 Euros. (See La MANCHE website.)

The La MANCHE Project: Illustrative Details

1.2.4 The La MANCHE Project can be used to illustrate the detail of work covered by these Projects.

The La MANCHE Project has involved nine Work Packages (WPs), including WPs on 'Leadership and Management Skills and Models', 'Innovative Governance Practices in Higher Education', 'Training in Leadership and Change Management', 'Development of Strategy for Leading and Managing Change in Higher Education', and the development of a 'La MANCHE Virtual Think Tank'. (See La MANCHE website, 'La MANCHE Activities and Outcomes'.)

The La MANCHE Virtual Think Tank was launched during the 4th La MANCHE partner meeting in Yerevan in June 2014 (see La MANCHE website 'Information Bulletin, Issue 3, June 2014, p.1). Between September and December 2014, online discussions were to be initiated on topics including university governance and funding, human resource management and student engagement (see La MANCHE website 'Information Bulletin, Issue 3, June 2014, p.2). Attempts have already been made to attract more stakeholders in HE in Armenia to join the Virtual Think Tank (see La MANCHE website 'Information Bulletin, Issue 4, December 2014, p.8).

More generally, the La MANCHE Project has produced a 'Communication and Post-Project Dissemination Strategy' (2014 - see La MANCHE website). This seems a comprehensive and detailed document. It includes a specific commitment to targeting 'major stakeholders such as policymakers, business and industry, labour market institutions, civil society, student organizations, HEIs outside the consortium' (p.71), to 'Multiplier effects' (p.99), and to 'Synergies with other initiatives related to reforms in higher education' (p.99).

The La MANCHE Project also produced an External Assessment Report 'Leadership and Management Skills and Models in the Higher Education Institutions in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine', mapping out 'the current leadership skills and prevalent management models at the higher education institutions in the five participating Partner Countries' (2013 - see La MANCHE website 'External Assessment Report'). The research on Armenia was conducted by Agrosup Dijon, France.

The La MANCHE Project Information Booklet Issue 4, December 2014, p.1, indicated that '68 trainers and change agents have been trained at the Training for Trainers organised at consortium level. In 2014 more than 1500 staff members at the 23 project Partner country Institutions underwent trainings in change management at institutional level'.

The La MANCHE Project also produced the 'Changing Higher Education Institutions in Societies in Transition: In-depth Study Report' (2014 – see La MANCHE website). This Report includes general Project introductory analysis of the overall context and challenges facing all five Partner Countries. However, the Report is then based on describing 23 case studies in which partner HEIs from across the five countries have addressed major local or global trends and demands in HE with a view to achieving innovation and sustainable change. The four Armenian case studies are referred to in the current report in Sections 3, 7, 8 and 10 below.

The La MANCHE Project also produced the 'Handbook of European Governance Practices in Higher Education' (2014 – see La MANCHE website). This is a useful set of 16 case studies of 'innovative governance practices and approaches which have proved successful in the La MANCHE higher education institutions from Bulgaria, France, Greece, Portugal and the UK' (p.6). For example, they include case studies on general institutional governance and management (Chapters 2, 8, and 10), a case study on Professional development review (Chapter 12), and a case study on student involvement (Chapter 13).

- 1.2.5 The important general point from this quite detailed summary of the La MANCHE Project is to emphasise that much work has already been undertaken in Projects like La MANCHE and Athena which can be related to issues around the strengthening of integrity in Armenian HE.

As will be developed subsequently in later Sections of this document, having reviewed these previous Projects, the current Council of Europe project must ensure that it develops activities and materials which 'add new value' to the work of previous Projects, and do not simply repeat previous work.

The current project must also urge the Armenian Government to prioritise a similar overview of its involvement in various significantly-funded collaborative projects with international organisations, and the impact of these on the Armenian HE system.

- 1.2.6 Finally on international projects, it will also be important that the current Council of Europe project is informed by, and compatible with, the activities and outputs of the EU Twinning Project on 'Empowerment of the Tertiary Level Education of the Republic of Armenia for European Higher Education Area (EHEA)' (EU 2013).

1.3 Desk Research on Existing Armenian Resources

Some valuable resources from Armenian organisations have also been accessed by the experts.

- 1.3.1 The range of materials available in English on the website of the Armenian National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance (ANQA) has been especially helpful (as discussed particularly in Section 4) (see ANQA website at www.anqa.am/en/).

- 1.3.2 Some resources have also been made available from the Armenian Government and Armenian HEIs. These are listed fully in the References. They include:-

- ***a set of legal documents from the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), both Laws and Government and Ministry Decisions and Orders;***
- ***some recent Government and MoES Anti-Corruption Strategies and Action Plans; extracts from the currently-proposed Government Anti-Corruption Strategy; some exemplar recent or current HEI Anti-Corruption Plans***

- 1.3.3 However, as discussed subsequently, especially in Section 12, it has not been possible to access all such sources which the experts would ideally have wished to study in preparing the current report.

This is partly because the experts could only work from documents available in, or translated into, English. Some potentially relevant documents were not originally available in English, and it was necessary for translations to be arranged by the recently-appointed Project Officer. The current report had to be produced to a tight deadline and there was a

limit to the number of documents (e.g. separate HEI Anti-Corruption Plans) which could be requested and translated within the limited time available.

The experts also found they could not locate or access on the English versions of Government, MoES and HEI websites certain documents which it had been suggested would be available on these websites. Of course, this may have been due to technical English language web browser issues at the experts' end, rather than these documents not being available on the Armenian host sites.

However, the experts judged that there may have been underlying issues with some original Armenian source documents, e.g. there appear to be 'time gaps' in the availability of certain important documents, or current versions of some potentially important documents do not appear to be available, with only out-of-date versions being available, or current versions are only available in part. Such issues seemed to apply to documents such as anti-corruption action plans and strategies at the levels of the Government of Armenia, the Ministry of Education and Science, and individual HEIs.

1.4 Evidence from Interviews/Meetings Undertaken as Part of the Current Project

- 1.4.1 Beyond desk research, the main methodology in obtaining new, current evidence has been content analysis of an extensive series of semi-structured interviews/meetings, sometimes with individuals and sometimes with groups, set up by Council of Europe staff and conducted by the visiting experts.

A broad range of stakeholders was interviewed, including:

The Minister for Education and Science;

The Deputy Minister of Education and Science;

The Deputy Minister of Justice;

Senior officials from the Ministry of Education and Science, including the Head of the Department of Higher and Post Graduate Professional Education and the Head of the Department for Development Programs and Monitoring;

The Director of the Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance (ANQA);

Twelve Vice-Rectors from major public Universities;

Senior representatives of the Armenian National Student Association (ANSA) and Universities' Student Councils;

Senior staff from various international organisations:

The Bologna Secretariat;

Erasmus +;

The European Union;

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE);

The World Bank;

The Open Society Foundation Armenia.

In total, the experts were involved in thirteen interviews/meetings, involving thirty-six individuals.

- 1.4.2 In referring to information and views provided in these interviews/meetings, no names are actually given. However, the experts judged it was appropriate and unavoidable to refer to the senior Government representatives by post held (the Minister of Education and Science; the Deputy Minister of Education and Science; the Deputy Minister of Justice; and the Head of the Department for Development Programs and Monitoring, who was interviewed separately). This also applied to the Head/Director of ANQA.

On the other hand, the experts judged it important not to identify the institutions of the University Vice-Rectors they met with as group, or the institutions of student representatives they also met with as a group. In particular, the experts have not named the specific international organisations associated with particular comments made by their representatives in the separate meetings the experts held with each organisation. These comments have been described more 'anonymously' as made by 'international organisations met by the experts'. The experts feel that these various judgements on preserving anonymity reflect the approach committed to by the experts at the relevant meetings.

As a final comment on terms used, the experts generally refer throughout to 'Higher Education Institutions', using the abbreviated 'HEIs'. However, there are some occasions when the term 'University' is used, principally where an interviewee is being quoted who has used this term specifically.

1.5 Subsequent Sections: Themes Identified and The Organisation of Evidence

- 1.5.1 In analysing the evidence from Interviews/Meetings and 'Wider Literature' ('Previous International Reports and Projects' and 'Existing Armenian Resources'), the following themes emerged, and these provide the basis for Sections 2 to 12, which now follow:-

Issues with the Overall Number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) – including the Number of Private HEIs, and the General Position on Private HEIs

The Legal Framework and Governance Issues for the HE System, including the Overall Relationship between National Government and the System

The Position of ANQA (The National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance)

The Funding of HE

Research and the HEIs

HR/Staffing Approaches and Issues in HE

The Teaching and Learning Relationship between Students and Staff (and Associated Issues)

Issues with Student Admissions to HE

Student Participation in HE Governance

Ethical Codes in HE and Legal Frameworks

Anti-Corruption Strategies of Government and HEIs

The report concludes with a final Section 13 on **‘Conclusions, and Next Steps for the Project’**.

Within each of Sections 2 to 12, the Sections are generally organised by the presentation and analysis of **‘Evidence from Interviews/Meetings’**, then the presentation and analysis of **‘Evidence from Wider Literature’**, followed by **Recommendations**.

Recommendations from Section 1

The following specific Recommendations follow from key aspects of the content and analysis in this Section:-

Recommendation 1(a):

Dialogue between the Council of Europe, and the Armenian Government and Higher Education (HE) community, should be based on the broadest approach to achieving integrity in education through the commitment of all actors to positive ethical principles and ethical behaviours, rather than only focusing on a narrower ‘deficit’ approach based on top-down, mechanistic regulatory measures.

This dialogue around integrity should move beyond the consideration simply of ‘anti-corruption’ issues to related issues on the fundamental and wider quality of the education system.

However, in the short to medium term, focused discussion with the Armenian Government and other stakeholders will be required on more mechanistic and regulatory measures to set the framework for the longer-term achievement of integrity in HE based on ethical principles and behaviours.

Recommendation 1(b):

The Armenian Government should ensure that the fullest consideration is given to achieving coherence across its interaction with the many externally funded interventions of international organisations in its education system, specifically here the HE system. In particular, this consideration should look to achieve the widest and most sustained impact, avoiding any inappropriate repetition between projects and ensuring significant ‘added value’ in new projects.

Recommendation 1(c):

International organisations, such as the Council of Europe, should similarly give the fullest consideration to ensuring that new projects build on previous project activities and findings, avoiding inappropriate repetition with previous projects, and producing significant ‘added value’ from previous projects. This is particularly important when such projects are all drawing upon the same funding source, e.g. the EU.

2 ISSUES WITH THE OVERALL NUMBER OF HEIs – INCLUDING THE NUMBER OF PRIVATE HEIs, AND THE GENERAL POSITION ON PRIVATE HEIs

2.1 Evidence from Interviews/Meetings

The MoES

2.1.1 Armenia is a comparatively small country (with a population of c.3million). From their initial review of literature (see par.2.2.1 and 2.2.2 below), the experts were surprised at how many HEIs there seemed to be in Armenia. The number of HEIs, both public and private, appeared high to them, and they explored this with the Deputy Minister of Education and Science.

The Deputy Minister indicated that there had been two attempts to merge public universities, but these mergers had not been carried through. There appeared to be a longer-term issue with an increasing number of vacant places in public universities, not in subjects like law, medicine, economics and international relations, but in subjects like the sciences, agriculture and engineering. Attempts were being made to address this, e.g. providing more state scholarships in these disciplines.

The Deputy Minister also indicated that the number of private universities had been reduced significantly, from c.70 to c.30. Private universities had closed or merged. This was linked to the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) pursuing strict licensing using state requirements, but also to the declining numbers of applications to private universities. Accreditation using European guidelines and international experts also applied to all private universities, as well as to public universities (see Sections 3 and 4 below). The centralised university entrance system (see Section 9 below) also applied to private as well as public universities, at least for full-time students. Generally, there was not major concern about private universities.

International Organisations

2.1.2 The representative of one of the international organisations met by the experts also emphasised that there had been a significant reduction in the number of private universities, with a reduction from 78 in 2007 to 30 as a result of MoES licensing. Private universities had been closed, and students transferred to other institutions, although this representative mentioned that there had only been one case of actual merger among private HEIs. It was not a requirement for private universities to offer the third cycle of Doctoral degrees, and many only offered the first two cycles. However, this representative judged there was not actually a problem with 'degree/diploma mills' within the private university sector.

2.1.3 Another international organisation did mention that 'lower grades' were required for entry to private universities.

Senior Student Representatives

2.1.4 In the meeting with senior student representatives, the students focused on corruption within the public universities. Corruption in the private universities did not seem to be a major issue for them. In their view, the private universities had fewer students and therefore less corruption.

2.2 Evidence from Wider Literature

The 2012 Tempus Report

2.2.1 The 2012 Tempus report highlighted the high number of HEIs, especially private HEIs. Produced in July 2012, this report identified 26 state HEIs: 16 'with their 14 branches' belonging to the system of the MoES; 4 'founded by interstate agreements and state participation, and funded by ' MoES; 2 'in the system of the Ministry of Defence'; one in each of the Police, Ministry of Emergency Situations, Civil Service Council, Mother See of Holy Etchimiadzin (Tempus 2012, p.4). In 2010/2011, there were 91,404 students in public HEIs, and 19,599 in 41 private HEIs (ibid.).

The 2013 World Bank Report

2.2.2 The 2013 World Bank report also highlighted the number of public HEIs, and gave considerable emphasis to issues around private HEIs. Produced in January 2013, this report identified, as of mid-2012, 23 public HEIs (19 state and 4 inter-governmental), with 95,000 students in state HEIs and 8,700 students in inter-governmental HEIs (World Bank 2013, p.11).

The World Bank report then discussed 48 private HEIs (39 local private and 9 branches of foreign HEIs), with 20,000 students in local private HEIs and 3,000 students in branches of foreign HEIs (ibid., p.11). The report stated that 'All private HEIs in Armenia except two foundations are for-profit organisations' (ibid., p.14). With the requirement for students admitted to private HEIs to take the state unified school leaving examinations, 'the number of students who were admitted to private HEIs sharply dropped to only 72 in 2012, compared to several thousand in the previous years' (ibid., p.30). When comparing the Government's financial regulation of public and private HEIs, the report claims that 'the government does not regulate financing of private HEIs at all; it is up to the initiative of the respective HEIs to demonstrate their financial integrity' (ibid., p.36).

2.3 Combining the Evidence

2.3.1 Despite the Deputy Minister of Education and Science's perspectives, the experts still judge there are likely to be too many public HEIs in Armenia. In particular, they would question whether all current public HEIs are big enough to provide the 'critical mass' necessary to sustain genuine 'international class' research and contemporary quality teaching and learning environments. They would also assume that a smaller number of larger HEIs would achieve 'economies of scale' advantages for the national Government finances.

Specifically on private HEIs, again despite the Deputy Minister's comment that this is not a major concern, the experts would also question whether so many, presumably very small, private HEIs can really provide the 'critical mass' of research and scholarly activity necessary to underpin a genuinely HE quality learning and teaching experience, especially if 'University' status is being claimed.

Recommendations from Section 2

The following specific Recommendations follow from key aspects of the content and analysis in this Section:-

Recommendation 2(a):

The Armenian Government should undertake a fundamental review of the number of public Universities within the HE system. Such a review should give full consideration to the potential for enhancing quality and easing funding shortage pressures which may follow from a reduction in the number of public universities through amalgamations and closures.

Recommendation 2(b):

The Armenian Government should also undertake a fundamental review of the private HEI sector. Such a review should explore whether the current number of private HEIs is appropriate, if fully-robust licensing and quality assurance approaches are being applied which match contemporary European standards (including on criteria for University status, where this is being claimed).

3 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES FOR THE HE SYSTEM, INCLUDING THE OVERALL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND THE SYSTEM

3.1 Evidence from Interviews/Meetings

The MoES

3.1.1 Based on their initial review of literature (see par.3.2.1-3.2.3 below), the experts had identified arguments that the Armenian Government is too involved in HEI governance, thus excessively limiting HEI autonomy. They explored these issues with the Deputy Minister of Education and Science.

The Deputy Minister referred to the parallel work of the EU Twinning Project in reviewing legislation on education, including for transparency and integrity. She indicated that some members of University governing bodies may be from employers, not only Government and parliamentary members. However, she argued strongly that high profile Ministers chair governing bodies not as a means of control, but as a way of demonstrating the importance of HE. On the other hand, she mentioned that governing boards may be reviewed again, e.g. to consider reducing their size.

International Organisations

3.1.2 While commenting on the continuing 'political' nature of University governing bodies, one of the international organisations met by the experts had some sympathy with the suggestion that the involvement of Government figures is seen by Armenian society as indicating the importance the Government attaches to HE.

The representatives of this organisation also highlighted some of the legal complexities around University governance. They mentioned the Law on State Non-Commercial Organisations (SNCOs), and issues because this was written before it was applied to Universities. They also mentioned the Law on Foundations. This will address autonomy and accountability, but also help the Universities to develop commercial activity.

3.1.3 Another of the international organisations met by the experts commented that the 25% of Board members who are students have to be approved and are still party political

representatives. According to these representatives, the HE system generally resisted change and was very resilient against change.

3.1.4 The representative of a third international organisation provided an interesting broader political context for such issues. This representative talked of Armenia needing to 'create space for potential leaders to become professional leaders', and saw this as relevant to HE governance.

3.1.5 Representatives of a further organisation expressed a very critical perspective on the current political context, presenting a general view that the Government wished to retain overall control of HE rather than commit to fundamental reforms which would empower other stakeholders.

More specifically, these representatives appeared to say the Armenian Government position was to be generally happy with recent developments (essentially 'Bologna reforms'), with the only other significant response being to push for new international funding to support further work in this area.

These representatives seem to have been disappointed with the 'Bologna reforms'. They suggested that much of the 'Bologna' development had been at a merely formal level, essentially only about credit systems etc.. Attempted quality assurance initiatives had not had the impact hoped for, e.g. on student participation and HEIs acting on student evaluations.

3.2 Evidence from Wider Literature

The 2012 Tempus Report

3.2.1 The 2012 Tempus report characterised the HE system as highly regulated, with the emphasis on the power of the state as opposed to institutional autonomy, and highlighting in particular the Government influence on University governing bodies. In particular, the report indicated that the 'Council of the Institution' (an HEI's governing body) has its composition and membership defined in accordance with regulations issued by the Government. For example, while the Rector is selected by the Council of the Institution 'in an open competition/voting process', 'The results of the election must be approved by the government' (Tempus 2012, pp.4-5).

The 2013 World Bank Report

3.2.2 The 2013 World Bank report also fully discussed issues of the regulatory framework for HE, including the limitations on institutional autonomy and the extent of Government control (World Bank 2013, pp.1, 8-9).

According to the World Bank report, there is a particular issue around the position of HEIs relative to the Law on State Non-Commercial Organisations (SNCOs). The report argues that state HEIs now have the legal status of SNCOs since 2002-2003 and are subject to the Law on SNCOs. This contradicts any legal autonomy apparently given to HEIs under Education Laws because the Law on SNCOs gives the 'founder' (i.e., the Government) powers to make final decisions on activities and governance of SNCOs (in this case public HEIs) (see *ibid.*, par.14, p.9).

There is also a particular issue relative to the Law on State Governing Institutions (SGIs). The report argues that this Law also gives the Government, as founder of state HEIs, the authority to make any decisions for these HEIs (see *ibid.*, par15, p.9).

In relation to governance bodies within public HEIs, such as the Council, Scientific Council (or Academic Council) and Rector's Board, the World Bank report goes on to conclude that 'a careful examination of the rules on these bodies reveals overwhelming presence of government representation in university governance and management, undermining university autonomy'. This is despite any apparent statements on autonomy in Article 15 of the Law on Higher Education. (ibid., par.39, p.24). This analysis is developed more extensively through pp.25-28 in the World Bank Report, including the comment that 'The selection of Rectors is supposedly competitive and non-political in theory, but there seems a great deal of political influence in reality' (ibid., p.27).

The 2013 Open Society Report

3.2.3 The 2013 Open Society Foundation report also discussed the 'top-down' nature of HE governance (Open Society 2013, p.4), highlighting Government influence on University governing bodies (p.12) and Government budgetary control on public Universities (ibid., p.13). The report argues that Bologna reforms have been 'mechanistic', and have not countervailed these 'top-down' features effectively (ibid., pp.7-9).

The Athena Project

3.2.4 The Athena Project includes the fostering good practices and promoting inclusive approaches to governance ('What is Athena?' website). The Athena Project has used European University Association approaches to evaluating and developing University Autonomy. This includes a University Autonomy Scorecard.

The second Project-wide Athena Training Seminar in November 2014 at Coimbra, Portugal, focused on 'Autonomy and Governance' (see Athena website). Presentations at this Seminar specifically focused on the requirements to achieve increased University autonomy. At this Seminar, presentations suggested Armenia at 25th with 47% on an 'Organisational autonomy scorecard', with the UK 1st at 100% (see Thomas Estermann, European University Association, 'University autonomy and institutional governance', Athena website). Issues with Armenia included that 50% of boards are composed of Government and Ministry representatives, and that Universities may not freely select external members of governance bodies, depending on legal status (ibid.).

These themes were also addressed at the Athena Armenia National Workshop in March 2014 at Yerevan. In addition, presentations at the National Workshop also emphasised that Rectors are formally employees of the state (which is required to approve election results), and that Universities require authorisation of the Ministry to decide on internal academic structures (see Thomas Estermann, European University Association, 'The State of University Autonomy in Armenia: an external analysis', Athena website).

The La MANCHE Project

3.2.5 The La MANCHE Project 'External Assessment Report: Leadership and Management Skills and Models at the Higher Education Institutions in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine' (2013 – see La MANCHE website) included a chapter on 'Leadership and management skills and models in Armenia' (pp. 9-19). This chapter tended to focus more on HR issues (see Section 7 below).

However, the chapter includes some analysis of wider governance issues. Some positive developments are highlighted. On wider governance, reference is made to one of the

partner Universities emphasising ‘ the importance of an open university community with shared responsibility’ (p.10), and that all four partner Universities ‘have regular sessions of the various departmental councils which involve representatives from academic, non-academic staff and students; hence encouraging participation in the governance of their university’ (ibid.).

On the other hand, more critical comments are also made. It is observed that ‘approval for ...decisions is only given at the highest level in all four universities’ (p.11), and ‘the conservative nature of the educational system in general and of the universities in Armenia is, in particular, a major barrier’ to implementing change (pp12-13).

3.3 Experts’ Summary on Evidence from Interviews/Meetings and from Wider Literature

3.3.1 The Deputy Minister of Education and Science’s essential position seems to be that the existing role of the Government in HEI governance reflects the importance which the Government attaches to HE, rather than a desire to ‘control’ the system. However, the overall view from other international organisations and wider literature clearly sees issues with excessive Government involvement in HE governance. After evaluating this evidence, the experts would support the position that the Government needs to review its role in HE governance with the aim of securing appropriate autonomy for HEIs. In the experts’ opinion, the Government should be encouraged to demonstrate the importance it attaches to HE in other ways, e.g. through supportive funding provision for the system.

3.4 The EU Twinning Project

3.4.1 As has been mentioned in the Introduction, it will also be important that this project is informed by, and compatible with, the activities and outputs of the EU Twinning Project on ‘Empowerment of the Tertiary Level Education of the Republic of Armenia for European Higher Education Area (EHEA)’ (EU 2013).

The experts understand that one Component of this Project is a ‘Review of Armenian Legislation on Higher Education and Review of the Institutional Arrangements for the Development and Maintenance of the National Qualifications Framework’, with Activity 1.1.2 ‘Reviewing of Armenian Legislation of the Tertiary Education System (TES) – Drafting Gap Assessment Report and Recommendations’.

The experts have had sight of this report, but only in a ‘preliminary’ form, which includes the explicit comment that this preliminary report will only become the ‘joint final gap assessment report’ ‘if and after MoES has placed its comments in due course’. Therefore, the experts judge they can only refer informally and conditionally to this preliminary report.

However, in so far as this report may eventually call for new primary legislation for HE (replacing the 1999 general Law on Education and the 2004 Law on Higher Education), the experts would support this, particularly that any such legislation:-

provides a clear definition of the criteria for ‘University’ status, and for any other types of HEIs, if these continue; specifies fully and explicitly the standards to be met by private HEIs, with these matching the standards required of public HEIs; satisfactorily ensures sufficient autonomy for HEIs, especially in relation to avoiding an excessive central Government role in HEI governing bodies; fully explores the implications of public universities moving to foundation status.

3.5 The Experts' Own Analysis of Armenian Government Legal Documents

3.5.1 As mentioned above, the experts understand the above EU report will recommend a new primary Law on Higher Education to succeed the current 1999 general Law on Education and the 2004 Law on Higher Education. Apart from supporting any such recommendation, the experts would also argue separately for this.

The experts were provided with a set of translated legal documents which they understood had been made available to the EU Twinning Project. These comprise:-

The Law on Education, 1999;

The Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education, 2004;

A number of Government Decisions and Orders, specifically:

Government Decision No. 1183 of 2006 (on the Regulation for Providing Student Allowances and State Scholarships at HEI); Order No. 1193-N of 2007 (on Admission and Instruction in Master's Programmes); Order No. N-1194 of 2007 (on Part time Enrolment at HEIs); Decision N 1240-N of 2011 (on Academic mobility of Students at HEIs); Order N 1197-N of 2011 (on Final Certification of Graduates at HEIs); Order N 1242-N of 2011 (on Dismissal [Withdrawal] and Reinstating of Students at HEIs); Decision 597-N of 2012 (on Admission to HEI Bachelor's Program). (Abbreviated titles are given here for each of these Decisions and Orders – the full titles are given in the References.)

The experts have conducted their own analysis of these documents. They would now note the following issues with these documents which they suggest should be addressed in moving from these Laws (and Decisions and Orders) to any new primary Law on Higher Education:-

The Law on Education, 1999

3.5.2 In the Law on Education, 1999, at Article 3, par.10-13, there are definitions of 'university', 'institute', 'academy' and 'conservatory'. These definitions are relatively brief. It is not completely clear how 'institutes' and 'academies' differ from 'universities', and why the terms 'institute' and 'academy' are needed in addition to 'university'. In particular, it is not completely clear where references to 'postgraduate education' position the respective types of institution on the provision of 'third cycle' (i.e., doctoral) awards, in Bologna terms. The particular issue of how the Armenian HE system handles 'Bologna doctoral equivalence', relative to former Soviet terminology, also arises with the reference to Article 3, par.23, and its use of the term 'researcher' as a postgraduate degree qualification.

Also in the 1999 Law, there are repeated references to 'middle level vocational education' and 'middle level vocational education institutions' (e.g., Article 14, par.3, 7, 8; Article 15, par.4; Article 21, par.1; Article 23). Presumably, 'middle level vocational education' is not normally offered in HEIs, but Article 24, par.6 mentions that HEIs 'may...also implement ...middle level vocational education'. Therefore, the relationship between 'middle level vocational education' and HE could be clearer, especially in terms of Bologna equivalences.

More specifically in relation to HE, there are repeated references to 'Higher professional education', e.g. Article 10, par.3 (3); Article 13; Article 14, par.7, 8; Article 21, par.1; Article 24. It is not completely clear whether these references effectively cover all HE, or only a specialist 'professional' sub-category within it. This same point applies to the references to

'Post-graduate professional education' (e.g., Article 25, par.2). In particular, the meaning of 'Degreed specialist' in Article 24, par.4(2) could be clearer.

Article 37 of the 1999 Law refers to the 'State Inspectorate for Education', and Article 43, par.7, also appears to do so. Presumably, this does not cover HE, and only covers pre-HE schools etc.. However, this could now be made completely explicit, especially in relation to ANQA.

Article 41 of the 1999 Law covers Licensing of educational activities, as does Article 43, par.1. However, Article 41 only refers to the 'Government of the Republic of Armenia', and provides no further detail on the nature of the licensing body envisaged. The position on licensing relative to ANQA now needs to be clarified in more detail.

In the 1999 Law, Article 3, par.18, simply refers to 'state accreditation' relative to 'quality of preparation of specialists'. This should now be overtaken by a fuller reference to ANQA. Similarly, Article 42 on 'State accreditation' now needs to be linked specifically to ANQA, and re-written on the basis of an independent ANQA.

The Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education, 2004

3.5.3 In the 2004 Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education, the point raised above about the term 'professional education' applies generally to this Law. The term is used in the title of the Law itself, and within the Law, e.g. at Article 3, Article 5 etc.. The specific issue on 'degreed specialist' also arises in the 2004 Law, e.g. at Article 3.

The 2004 Law also raises the issue of the provision of 'third cycle' (i.e., doctoral) awards, in Bologna terms, in relation to definitions of HEIs. For example, Article 3, par.(2) defines an HEI as implementing 'Bachelor's, Master's and degreed specialist's programmes'. There is no reference to doctoral 'Bologna third cycle equivalence' here. Similarly, Article 5, Section 2, par.(1) only refers to 'Transition to the two-cycle qualification system of higher education'.

The particular issue of how the Armenian HE system handles 'Bologna doctoral equivalence', relative to former Soviet terminology, also arises with the reference to Article 3, par.(3) which refers to 'doctoral candidates, researcher's and doctoral or post-doctoral candidate's programmes'. This seems a rather confusing combination of 'Soviet' and 'Bologna' terminology. This remains an issue throughout Article 3, par.(7)-(9), where there are references not only to the degree of 'Doctor of Philosophy', but also to 'the scientific degree of post-doctoral degree holder'. Article 9, par.3 also includes a potentially confusing reference to 'Researcher's qualification degree of postgraduate professional education'. Article 14, Section 6, on 'Admission to doctoral studies', needs to provide more detail on the role of Government in relation to 'competitive admission examinations'.

The 2004 Law simply refers to 'State accreditation' (Article 3, par.12), and this should now be expanded into a specific reference to ANQA. In addition, the same comments already made about the approach to State accreditation in article 42 of the 1999 Law can also be made about Article 13, Section 3 of the 2004 Law.

Beyond this, although Article 5, Section 1, par.(5) now further refers to introducing 'international (European) standards' for 'assessment of...quality and accreditation', this would now need to be re-written to relate to ANQA. Article 8 discusses 'State educational criteria' for HE. Article 8 gives an appropriate description of the general aims and elements to be included in such 'criteria'. However, given the experts' general comments about ANQA, Section 3 of Article 8 should be re-written to establish explicitly that 'ownership' of

such 'criteria' rests with ANQA. The same point applies to Article 22 on 'Assurance of quality of higher and postgraduate education and state supervision over it'

Article 12 of the 2004 Law simply lists the types of HEIs, without providing any definitions of the terms.

The 2004 Law appears to recognise HEI autonomy, e.g. in relation to staff appointments (see Article 6, Section 1, par.(3)). Autonomy also appears to be recognised in the extensive details provided in Article 15. However, there are particular references to the role of Government which may indicate potentially very significant limitations on HEI autonomy, relative to Government. Specifically, in Article 15, Section 2, 'The procedure for the formation of the board [i.e. the body of collegial management] shall be defined by the Government...upon the proposal of the authorised body'. In Section 4, 'The results of the election of the rector shall be approved by the founder' (which the experts understand to mean the Government in the case of public HEIs).

In addition, Article 21 of the 2004 Law appears to collate a very long list of 'Competence of public authorities in the sphere of higher and postgraduate professional education'

The same comments already made about the approach to Licensing in Articles 41 and 43 of the 1999 Law to can also be made about Article 13, Section 2 of the 2004 Law. In addition, there is a very full Article (13.1) in the 2004 Law which details how the 'authority responsible for public administration' will deal with termination of licences etc.. However, this does not include clear detail on the composition of the relevant 'authority'.

The 2004 Law appears to recognise the role of HEIs in 'scientific research' (Article 11, par.(2)). This reference should be further developed in any new Law.

The 2004 Law stipulates very considerable detail on state scholarship approaches etc. to tuition fees (Article 6, Sections 3 and 4). The experts would suggest that such detail may be better placed in separate documents for the state scholarship scheme, rather than in the main Law on Higher Education.

Article 17, Section 3, par.(4) states the entitlement of students to 'Take part in the activities of the relevant management bodies' of HEIs, and Article 17, Section 7 indicates that students 'may associate within student councils'. However, more detail could perhaps be provided on the precise role of students in management bodies, and the procedure for the establishment of student councils currently 'shall be approved by the authority responsible for public administration in education sector'. These points can be linked to the subsequent discussion on 'Student Participation' in Section 10 below.

Article 19, Section 4, emphasises that employment contracts 'shall be concluded for a period of up to 5 years' and there should be 'competitive selection procedure' after 'expiration' of the contract. On the other hand, it is also stated that 'a new contract may be concluded...for a period of up to 5 years, without competitive elections and based on the outcomes of...scientific and pedagogical activities'. These points can be linked to the subsequent discussion on 'HR/Staffing Approaches and Issues' in Section 7 below.

Government Decisions and Orders

- 3.5.4 As mentioned earlier, the experts were also provided with Government Decision No. 1183 of 2006 (on the Regulation for Providing Student Allowances and State Scholarships at HEIs); Order No. 1193-N of 2007 (on Admission and Instruction in Master's Programmes); Order No. N-1194 of 2007 (on Part time Enrolment at HEIs); Decision N 1240-N of 2011 (on

Academic Mobility of Students at HEIs); Order N 1197-N of 2011 (on Final Certification of Graduates at HEIs); Order N 1242-N of 2011 (on Dismissal [Withdrawal] and Reinstating of Students at HEIs); Decision 597-N of 2012 (on Admission to HEI Bachelor's Programs). (As before, these are abbreviated titles, and the full titles can be found in the References.)

It is not proposed to analyse these documents in detail, but essentially only use them to illustrate an important general point. As suggested above on state scholarship details within the 2004 Law, the experts would suggest that the types of details given in these documents may be better placed in separate documents rather than formal central Government 'Decisions' and 'Orders'.

For example, Government Decision No. 1183 of 2006 (on the Regulation for Providing Student Allowances and State Scholarships at HEIs) could be replaced by a separate user-friendly public document giving the formal arrangements in a transparent form for students and their parents.

Order No.1193-N of 2007 (on Admission and Instruction in Master's Programmes), Order No. N-1194 of 2007 (on Part time Enrolment at HEIs), Decision N 1240-N of 2011 (on Academic Mobility of Students at HEIs), Order N 1197-N of 2011 (on Final Certification of Graduates at HEIs) and Order N 1242-N of 2011 (on Dismissal [Withdrawal] and Reinstating of Students at HEIs) each need to be reviewed to establish if the details within them are more appropriate for inclusion within separate HEI regulatory frameworks, rather than within Government Orders/Decisions as such.

Decision 597-N of 2012 (on Admission to HEI Bachelor's Programs) is essentially about the procedures for the national school leaving exams, and could be provided as a separate document of the national examination body (the 'Assessment and Testing Centre').

Summary from Analysis of Armenian Government Legal Documents

3.5.5 The experts would argue for the replacement of the existing 1999 general Law on Education and 2004 Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education with a new primary Law on Higher Education.

This new Law should certainly address the crucial issue of guaranteeing HEI autonomy, and it should also address the other specific issues identified by the experts in their analysis of the current Laws.

The experts would support any similar recommendations made by the EU Twinning Project on 'Empowerment of the Tertiary Level Education of the Republic of Armenia for European Higher Education Area (EHEA)'.

Beyond major Law, the experts would also argue for minimal use of additional formal Government Decision and Order documents for the HE sector.

Recommendations from Section 3

The following specific Recommendations follow from key aspects of the content and analysis in this Section:-

Recommendation 3(a):

A new primary Law on Higher Education in Armenia should be developed.

This Law should confirm fully that HEIs have appropriate autonomy, including the separation of Government from the governance of HEIs, especially in relation to membership of HEI governing bodies. The Law should also address legal issues around giving HEIs greater economic and financial operating freedom, e.g. in relation to the current Law on State Non-Commercial Organisations (SNCOs) and the possible move to foundation status (see Recommendation 5(b) below).

This Law should also include an explicit reference to the guaranteed autonomy of the National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance (ANQA), thus guaranteeing autonomy to the accreditation process for HEIs (see Recommendation 4(a) below). The Law should also endorse the Standards developed by ANQA as the ‘national Standards’ for Armenian HE. The Law should also produce a clear and detailed position on the licensing of HEIs, and the relationship between accreditation and licensing. This should include considering whether any separate licensing process can be as transparent as simply linking the issuing of a licence to the completion of the ANQA institutional accreditation process.

This Law should also include clear statements on the criteria for the different types of HEI in Armenia. In particular, consideration should be given to whether terms other than University continue to be appropriate, and to the future position on provision of ‘third cycle’ doctoral qualifications as a criterion for University status. Consideration should also be given to whether ANQA documentation should in future be the core source for such criteria statements, rather than national Law.

This Law should also consider any necessary inclusions which may follow from subsequent Recommendations below, especially: Recommendation 7(b) on HEI staffing issues; Recommendations 8(a) and 11 on ethical codes in HE; Recommendations 10(a) and (b) on the position of students.

Recommendation 3(b):

In developing a new Law on Higher Education, the principle of appropriate autonomy for HEIs should lead to the minimal inclusion in either the primary Law or in secondary legislation (Government and Ministry Decisions and Orders etc.) of detailed matters which should more appropriately be covered in HEIs own regulatory frameworks, or in the documents of other organisations, such as ANQA.

Recommendation 3(c):

The Armenian Government should consider these Recommendations on a new Law on Higher Education alongside any recommendations for a new Law from the EUT winning Project on ‘Empowerment of the Tertiary Level Education of the Republic of Armenia for European Higher Education Area (EHEA)’, which they are intended to reinforce.

Recommendation 3(d):

The Armenian Government should respect the appropriate autonomy of HEIs not only when producing new legislation, but also in its ongoing follow-up political activity. The Government should be encouraged to view this not as a reduction in the importance it attributes to HE, but as a way of responding to appropriate European approaches on these

matters. The Government should be encouraged to demonstrate the importance it attaches to HE in other ways, e.g. through funding provision (see Recommendation 5(b) below).

4 THE POSITION OF ANQA (THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE)

4.1 Evidence from Interviews/Meetings

The MoES

4.1.1 Based on their initial review of literature (see par.4.2.1-4.2.3 below), the experts had identified some very positive views of ANQA, but also possible issues around ANQA's lack of appropriate independence from the national Government. They explored these issues with the Deputy Minister of Education and Science.

The Deputy Minister for Education and Science accepted that the Prime Minister was currently Head of ANQA's Council. However, she emphasised that ANQA was not subordinate to the MoES, and that ANQA will be changing its charter to address this issue.

Licensing, currently for 1-2 years, was the responsibility of an agency within the MoES, while accreditation was ANQA's responsibility. The Deputy Minister said that ANQA would move from affiliated to full membership of ENQA (The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) when it had acquired two years of full accreditation experience, with accreditation decisions actually issued. She accepted that the Netherlands Flemish Agency's evaluation of ANQA indicated that ANQA was not yet fully independent.

International Organisations

4.1.2 One of the international organisations met by the experts was particularly positive about ANQA. The representative of this organisation said the Universities accept ANQA, and ANQA had been very active in holding meetings with Universities, and producing handbooks etc.. Although accepting that the Prime Minister is still Head of ANQA's Council, this organisation's representative said that ANQA's relationship with the central Government will change. The representative mentioned that 10 Universities had passed through accreditation, with 399 experts trained. However, the representative conceded there may be an issue with the sustainability of the ANQA system after external funding ends (this representative said that ANQA's recent activities had been funded by the World Bank, a Tempus PICA Project for external evaluation, and a DIUS Project for internal evaluation).

4.1.3 The representatives of another international organisation were more critical of ANQA's position. They highlighted 'de jure' weaknesses, specifically that ANQA could only advise, not accredit as such. They also highlighted that to date ANQA had relied on international (World Bank) funding.

4.1.4 The representatives of a third organisation also suggested that the composition of ANQA is still 'political'.

The Director of ANQA

- 4.1.5 A very positive meeting took place with the Director of ANQA. The Director was particularly helpful in talking very fully about ANQA's work.

Governance

The Director explained the establishment of ANQA in 2008 as a 'foundation' (i.e. he suggested this meant it was independent). Experts were involved.

The Director stated that ANQA works with the Office of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is the Head of the Board. However, the Director emphasised that the Prime Minister wanted to use ANQA as an agent for reform

The Director seemed to say that the new Board also includes four Professors, student(s) and the Minister responsible for HE. However, at another point in the interview, the Director also mentioned employers as Board members.

The Director explained that ANQA had developed Standards for Accreditation, although these were then presented to the MoES which in turn presented them to the Government. Therefore, ultimately the State decided the Standards. Formally, Accreditation is also by the State, although 'this will change'.

The Development of the Accreditation System

The Accreditation Standards link with internal quality assurance (QA) in the Universities. The World Bank had supported the development of internal QA units in the Universities.

The planned approach for Accreditation is that it will be mandatory at institutional level, but optional at programme level. The Director would have preferred 'audit' rather than 'accreditation' at institutional level, but the 'decision' was for 'accreditation'. By 2018, all HEIs should have been accredited. Although institutional Accreditation is mandatory, the Director suggested that this had 'no consequences' (i.e., presumably from a 'negative' finding).

The Director also discussed the cycle of Accreditation. He seemed to say that ANQA had wanted a 4-year cycle as normal, with 2 years as an additional option, and internal audit mid-cycle. The Government has decided to go with a 6-year cycle, with options of 4 years conditional and 2 years conditional.

A World Bank project had trained 400 people on how to write self-evaluations and follow-up plans. It had supported 15 University Accreditations. Each Accreditation involved one student and one international expert, with these selected from suggestions made by ENQA, and quality agencies in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. These Accreditations were evaluated by the French quality agency. They were expensive, costing 14,000 Euros each. The World Bank paid for these first 15 Accreditations, but now the Universities pay.

Funding Issues

The Director seemed to indicate that there are issues with the sustainability of future funding, although the position did not seem completely clear on this. The Director conceded that public Universities did not like to pay. While private Universities may be more enthusiastic about paying, the overall system cannot be funded from this source. Alternative sources of funding may be sought, e.g. charging for consultancy and staff

development training programmes. However, the ANQA Board recognises future funding is an issue.

Private Universities

The overall position on private Universities was not completely clear. The Director appeared to say that, of 5 considered, 2 private Universities will not be accredited. Of course, Accreditation is not the same as Licensing. The Director said that ANQA will feed back on the outcomes of Accreditations to the Licensing Agency. He also said that the Licensing Agency will ask for advice from ANQA.

The Detailed Accreditation Process

There is an overall ANQA Accreditation Committee. This has 10 members (including one student, and all the others have teaching experience in Universities). The Chair of the Accreditation Committee is elected by the Committee itself.

The Director provided details on the Accreditation process. He mentioned the importance of the institution writing a self-evaluation document, followed by desk review of this documentation. This is followed by a 5-day site visit, involving 18 meetings with University staff, including institutional leaders of QA and staff involved in research and internationalisation, and employers.

The Director seemed to say there are two basic levels of decision, and follow-up plans are sought from institutions. The experts involved in the Accreditation give their decision to the Accreditation Committee. The report to the Accreditation Committee appears to have a number of dimensions (the academic process, including teaching and QA; research and internationalisation; social responsibility; students; governance). At present, reports do not recommend 'commendations', but there are plans to give grades. There seems to be an issue currently with reports being in the public domain, but there will be a move to full publication.

Accreditation protocols are reviewed every year. Biannual conferences of stakeholders, including students, are held. These normally include international inputs.

Membership of ENQA

On the issue of moving from Affiliated to Full Membership of ENQA, the position was not completely clear here.

The Director referred to a World Bank project as a pilot for ENQA membership. This involved working with the Netherlands/Flemish QA agency, and two Universities. The Director seemed to say that this had not produced a conclusive outcome, implying that the evaluation had not produced definitive results, and that there had not actually been any dialogue with ENQA on a Full Membership application associated with this. He appeared to recognise the issue over independence in this context, i.e. the role of the Prime Minister as Chair of the Board.

He implied that the current revision of the Charter would remove the Prime Minister, and replace him with the Government providing two nominees, one of whom can be chosen. The Director appeared to recognise that this may still raise 'independence' issues with ENQA.

The Experts' Summary on This Meeting

In summary on this very full meeting with the Director of ANQA, the experts were very impressed by the amount of work ANQA has undertaken, and the many ways in which it has progressed to 'European good practice' approaches in its activities. For example, although they are not sure they captured every detail fully, the experts judged the actual Accreditation process described to them to be consistent with key aspects of the Western European approaches they are familiar with.

On the other hand, the experts judged that the meeting still indicated issues to be fully resolved as ANQA moves forward, including the relationship with national Government, the related question of Full ENQA membership, and the development of a sustainable funding model for ANQA.

4.2 Evidence from Wider Literature

The 2013 World Bank Report

4.2.1 The 2013 World Bank report highlighted issues around the independence of ANQA. The report referred to ANQA's 2012 invitation to an ENQA expert to 'review and assess whether the legislative framework governing the accreditation process in Armenia is in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)'.

Two major findings and recommendations from this expert are summarised. Firstly, 'the fact that the Prime Minister *ex officio* is the President of the Board...undermines independency' leads to the recommendation that 'the position of the President of the Board be an elective one'. Secondly, it is recommended that the final decisions upon awarding accreditation certificates should rest with the Accreditation Committee of ANQA, and not the Government (World Bank 2013, p.17).

The World Bank report goes on to say that 'these two recommendations have already been approved by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education, and the necessary changes to improve the independence and credibility of the accreditation process are on their way' (ibid.).

The World Bank report emphasises that 'ANQA has achieved enormously in a short period' (ibid., p.16) and that 'It is crucial...the government and the Ministry of Education and Science...continue creating an enabling environment' for ANQA (ibid., p.2).

The 2013 Open Society Report

4.2.2 The 2013 Open Society report also analysed issues with the independence of ANQA, particularly the issue of the Prime Minister being chair of the Board (Open Society 2013, pp.11-12).

The 2012 Tempus Report

4.2.3 The 2012 Tempus report commented on the funding of ANQA, mentioning that it is 'projected to be financed through entrepreneurial initiatives.' (Tempus 2012, p.6).

The La MANCHE Project

4.2.4 The La MANCHE Project has produced the 'Changing Higher Education Institutions in Societies in Transition: In-depth Study Report' (2014 – see La MANCHE website). One of

the Armenian case studies in the Report is by Yerevan State University on 'Quality assurance and internationalization (Ch.6, pp.55-73). This provides a full description of one Armenian University's development of internal quality assurance procedures, measures and strategies to meet the requirements of ENQA. While not an evaluation of ANQA as such, this chapter illustrates positive developments in an exemplar institution, consistent with the overall quality enhancement culture which ANQA is looking to progress.

ANQA's Own Materials

4.2.5 The experts have analysed extensive materials produced by ANQA, almost all of which are available in English on the ANQA website (www.anqa.am/en/). With one exception (see below), these documents do not appear to carry a particular date when they were first produced. Therefore, the dating 'website 2015' is given in the References for the documents without a particular date. The main documents analysed were:-

The ANQA Action Plan, and the ANQA Strategic Plan 2010-2015.

These documents together provide strong evidence of a systematic and comprehensive approach to the planning of the first five years of ANQA's activities. In the 'Introduction' to the Strategic Plan, it was particularly interesting to note awareness of the possibility that compulsory accreditation could provide the basis for one agency bringing together quality assurance/enhancement and licensing (see Strategic Plan, p.7).

External Quality Assurance, Policies and Procedures, Programme 1; Institutional Audit and Programme Accreditation, Programme 2; International Relations, Programme 3; ANQA's Internal Quality Assurance Program, Program 4; Internal Quality Assurance of TLIs and Stakeholder Relations, Program 5.

These documents further demonstrate the systematic and comprehensive approach to planning which ANQA has adopted in its first five years. On the other hand, the versions available on the English public website do include significant numbers of 'to be done' entries still showing in 'Program Action Plans'.

Guiding Principles for Tertiary Level Educational Establishments on External Quality Assurance.

This is an interesting and wide-ranging document. A clear Quality Framework is outlined, including an appropriate emphasis on Quality culture, and a clear summary of 'six dimensions' for measuring performance (pp.8-9). The document then proceeds to discuss 'six mechanisms' for quality assurance (pp.10-11). It is interesting to note that the document appears to indicate an initial preference to use the term 'audit' to cover institutional quality assurance, and accreditation to cover programme quality assurance (p.10). Of course, this document is described as a 'Draft'.

Guidelines, Criteria, and Standards for Quality Assurance in the Armenian Tertiary Education.

This appears to be a crucial ANQA document. The document is well-referenced to the European context (see pp.8-12, and pp.48-50). There is a good emphasis on 'public trust' (p.19), accountability and transparency (p.22), and enhancement (p.24). The appropriate and clear definition of Accreditation has now moved to an emphasis on the institutional level (p.32).

The main part of the document is the provision of full statements on the 'ANQA Quality Assurance Criteria and Standards' which will be used for institutional audit/accreditation (pp.58-68) and programme accreditation (pp.70-76). These relate to seven domains (see pp.52-54).

In relation to themes relevant to integrity, it is interesting to note that the institutional 'Criteria Statements and Standards' include references to 'ethical decision-making' in governance and 'ethical leadership' (see p.58); staffing (see p.64); 'impartial evaluation' of students (see p.66); linking of research to teaching (see p.66); development of 'citizenship' (see p.68). The document outlines a 5-point scale for evaluation, ranging from 'Excellent' to 'Very poor' (see pp.86-88). The document is also very thorough on how to identify, recruit and deploy 'Experts' (see pp.92-122).

Glossary of Quality Assurance.

This is a well-researched and useful document. It makes good links with the European context, and provides helpful definitions on a range of important terms, including Accreditation; Accreditation Body; Audit (Report); Code of Ethics (for Quality Assurance); HEI; Licensing; Quality Assessment/Quality Review; Quality Assurance; Quality Audit. Use of this Glossary should ensure that the Armenian HE community talks a 'common language' on quality assurance, consistent with contemporary European approaches (although some entries, such as for 'University', may require further consideration).

A Guide to Self-Assessment.

This is another very positive document. There is a particularly good emphasis on 'Improvement and Enhancement' (pp.10-12). In terms of themes relevant to integrity, there is a particularly useful example of 'Benchmarking the human resource management' (p.90).

ANQA Accreditation Manual: Internal Quality Assurance: Challenges and Perspectives.

This document, which is specifically dated 2011, has many strengths, and provides another very good overview of ANQA's approaches. The European and Armenian context is well-described (pp.6-8). There is a very appropriate emphasis on 'Public trust'; 'Social responsibility'; quality improvement and enhancement; the role of employers and professional associations as stakeholders (pp.8-10). In describing external quality assurance, the term accreditation is now clearly used for both institutional and programme level (pp.13-15).

The document largely repeats the 'Criteria and Standards' already mentioned above for the 'Guidelines, Criteria, and Standards for Quality Assurance in the Armenian Tertiary Education' document, although there are some differences in the presentation of these (see pp.34-46). One of these minor differences provides a further valuable Standard statement relating to integrity issues for student assessment (see Standard 4b& e, p.43). In addition, rather than a five-point scale for evaluation, the document describes three decisions available to the Accreditation Committee (Accepted; Conditionally Accepted; Rejected) (see p.32). It also largely repeats the material on 'Experts' found in the other document (see pp.47-59).

Beyond this, the document includes additional material on the Accreditation Committee and the 'Accreditation Procedure' (see pp.15-16, and 18-33). However, this material does not resolve all the issues around the independence of ANQA relative to Government. The

Accreditation Committee is described (pp.15-16), and its role in final ANQA decision-making is made clear (pp.31-32). However, this description still emphasises that final 'certification' of the ANQA Accreditation Committee decision rests with the MoES (pp.32-33). It is useful that the document seems to move from separately referring to 'State Standards' and 'ANQA Accreditation Criteria and Standards' (p.18) to more of an implication that the ANQA 'Criteria and Standards' can be regarded as the 'State Criteria and Standards' (p.21 and p.34), but this still needs to be clarified more explicitly.

The Experts' Summary on ANQA's Own Materials

The experts have analysed these ANQA materials in some detail to make the important point that they demonstrate the very considerable work and commitment shown by ANQA in developing detailed approaches consistent with European 'best practices' within external and internal HE quality assurance and enhancement. On the other hand, by not fully clarifying issues around the independence of ANQA relative to Government, the materials also emphasise how important it is that these issues do not remain unresolved.

4.3 Summarising the Evidence on ANQA

4.3.1 From their own evidence, drawing upon their interview with the Director and ANQA's own materials, the experts would confirm the positive view of ANQA's achievements to date which also emerged from some interviews and the wider literature reviewed. This emphasises the great potential importance of ANQA to the future of Armenian HE.

However, it also emphasises the crucial priority which must be given to establishing unambiguously that ANQA has the independence which will secure ENQA Full Membership. Similar priority must also be given to establishing a funding model which will support ANQA's continuing development.

Recommendations from Section 4

The following specific Recommendations follow from key aspects of the content and analysis in this Section:-

Recommendation 4(a):

Building on the existing positive achievements of ANQA should be a priority for the Armenian Government and HE community in strengthening integrity within Armenian HE.

Recommendation 4(b):

In particular, the Armenian Government should take all necessary measures, including through a new Law on HE, to establish transparently and unambiguously that ANQA will enjoy the independence required to meet the criteria for full membership of ENQA (The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education).

As already implied in Recommendation 3(a) above, this should include final decisions for accreditation resting with ANQA, rather than ANQA simply making recommendations to the Government. It should also include recognising that ownership of the national Standards for HE rests with ANQA, and that these Standards effectively become the 'State' Standards. It should also involve ensuring that the Governing Board of ANQA is independent of Government, in terms of membership and appointment to membership.

Recommendation 4(c):

The Armenian Government and HE system should give the fullest support to ANQA in developing a financial model which ensures its long-term financial sustainability, consistent with ANQA also being fully independent. This should include consideration of the HEIs paying significant ongoing subscriptions, beyond simply the costs of particular accreditations; the HEIs commissioning staff development from ANQA as a required part of institutional staff development programmes; and the Government either directly commissioning national HEI staff development programmes from ANQA, or indirectly providing funds to HEIs to underpin commissioned ANQA staff development in institutions, and institutional subscriptions to ANQA.

Recommendation 4 (d):

All Armenian HEIs should ensure that they commit fully to developing the systems of internal quality assurance and enhancement necessary for the most positive interaction with ANQA's external quality systems.

Recommendation 4(e):

As an important part of the strengthening of integrity in Armenian HE, ANQA should make maximum use of the current criteria relating to integrity within its Standards when evaluating institutions and programmes during accreditation. ANQA should also consider the further development of integrity dimensions within its Standards. Addressing integrity issues within institutional and programme accreditation should become a powerful tool for strengthening integrity within Armenian HE.

5 THE FUNDING OF HE

5.1 Evidence from Interviews/Meetings

The MoES

5.1.1 In discussion with the experts on the funding of HE, the Deputy Minister of Education and Science accepted that the funding levels for public Universities were low. On the other hand, she emphasised the importance of student scholarships. She recognised the potential tensions in this area between responding to national economic priorities and the backgrounds of students. A merit-based approach was taken, with rotation of scholarships depending on success. However, it was recognised there were increasing social tensions among students, with directed social assistance programmes being considered. There was an increased requirement for Universities to discount fees (by 10-15%), with the Government putting a 7% ceiling on fee increases. The Government was doing its best to avoid 'merit based' students losing places to better-off students.

International Organisations

5.1.2 One of the international organisations met by the experts emphasised the serious impact of general inflation on students.

Senior Student Representatives

5.1.3 The student representatives spoke eloquently about student fees being a very significant barrier to participation in HE. They mentioned fee levels of 1M Drams at the Medical University, and 200,000 Drams at public Universities generally. They also suggested that fee levels are a particular barrier to students from regions beyond Yerevan. On the other hand, they did accept that the rotation system was a motivation to obtain good grades. However, more generally the student representatives argued strongly for HE to be free from fees. They suggested that Universities could earn income in other ways and that taxes should largely finance HE.

5.2 Evidence from Wider Literature

The 2012 Tempus Report

5.2.1 The 2012 Tempus report accepted that there was considerable institutional autonomy on budgets and finance, but emphasised that 80% of funding came from student fees (Tempus 2012, pp.5-6).

The 2013 World Bank Report

5.2.2 The 2013 World Bank report commented extensively on issues of budgeting and financing, including the need to increase the overall level of expenditure on HE.

The report emphasised the reliance of public HEIs on student fees, and commented on how high this is by international comparisons. The report also emphasises how high the fees were in terms of the internal Armenian economic situation (World Bank 2013, pp.20-22, 33).

The World Bank report described the current state-funded student scholarship scheme, but suggested this scheme did not fully deal with the issues around student fees (ibid., pp.19-20).

On the other hand, the report also highlights the attractions of a state-backed student loan scheme, especially to assist economically-disadvantaged students. While the report indicates 'the government has long considered' this, and 'Most recently...has agreed on a draft Law on State Support of Student Loans', the report indicates the original plan was put on hold in 2009, and in terms of the most recent initiative, 'Details of the scheme are yet to be determined' (ibid., p.22).

More generally on budgeting and financing, the World Bank report discusses the 'new Higher Education Financing Strategy'. While detailing the ways this is intended to address weaknesses in the current HE financing system, the report cautions that 'without substantially increasing the total public funding, it may not result in a marked impact on quality' (ibid., p.23).

The World Bank report also analyses in detail the very significant limitations to the financial autonomy of public HEIs, relative to Government powers, due to various regulations and lack of funding (ibid., pp.33-34). Eight major limitations are identified.

The 2013 Open Society Report

5.2.3 The 2013 Open Society report also highlighted the dependence of public Universities on student fees, with state Universities receiving only between c.9 and 30% of their budgets from the state (Open Society 2013, p.13).

The Athena Project

5.2.4 The Athena Project includes fostering good practices and promoting inclusive approaches on funding reforms, and building the capacities of Universities to modernise the management of financial resources ('What is Athena?' website). In relevant materials on these aspects, the Athena Project has highlighted the issues with the current funding of HE in Armenia.

For example, the first Project-wide Athena Training Seminar in April 2014 at the University of Helsinki focused on financial management. Presentations at this Seminar specifically highlighted the reliance of Armenian public Universities on student fee income (see Athena website).

This analysis was also heavily stressed at the Athena Armenia National Workshop in March 2014 at Yerevan (see Thomas Estermann, European University Association, 'The State of University Autonomy in Armenia: an external analysis', Athena website).

This presentation also stressed the other limitations on University financial autonomy, such as legal status/Governmental restrictions on engaging in commercial activities, on borrowing money, and on managing and selling buildings (ibid.).

The presentation went on to argue that there is a need to increase public funding to ensure a degree of sustainability of University operations (ibid.). It also gave detailed consideration to formula-based funding, costing methodology and allocation methodology (ibid.).

The La MANCHE Project

5.2.5 The La MANCHE Project 'External Assessment Report: Leadership and Management Skills and Models at the Higher Education Institutions in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine' (2013 – see La MANCHE website) included a chapter on 'Leadership and management skills and models in Armenia' (pp. 9-19). This referred to 'lack of diversity of the university's financial resources and lack of sufficient financial resources for innovation as a major threat to change' (p.13).

Recommendations from Section 5

Of course, in making any Recommendations on public funding for HE, the experts are very sensitive to the wider economic challenges facing the Armenian Government.

The following specific Recommendations follow from key aspects of the content and analysis in this Section:-

Recommendation 5(a):

There should be maximum public transparency on the funding relationship between the central Armenian Government and public HEIs, and on the use of funds by HEIs. This should include the Government detailing explicitly and fully how the policy thinking in its recent Higher Education Financing Strategy is being translated into practice.

Recommendation 5(b):

The Armenian Government should recognise the priority need to address under-funding of public HEIs. In identifying strategies in this area, full consideration should be given to

appropriate freeing-up of public HEIs to engage more fully in commercial activities, borrow money etc., e.g. as involved in possible moves to foundation status. As discussed in Recommendation 2(a) above, full consideration should also be given to the potential funding benefits of reducing the number of public HEIs through amalgamation or closure.

Recommendation 5(c):

The Armenian Government should not regard the current level of reliance by public HEIs on student fees to be appropriate or sustainable. The Government should give immediate priority to developing funding models which significantly reduce the current level of dependence on student fees. This should certainly include full consideration of a model which completely removes student payment of fees at the points of access and delivery of HE, e.g. even if this involves the introduction of a student loans system rather than simply financing HE through general taxation.

6 RESEARCH AND THE HEIs

6.1 Evidence from Interviews/Meetings

The MoES

6.1.1 In discussion with the experts on the importance of embedding research in HEIs, the Deputy Minister for Education and Science accepted that the 'old' system of research through separate scientific institutes rather than the Universities still persisted. However, the Government was looking to develop resources for University research. For example, some scientific institutes were being moved into Universities, especially for postgraduate activities. On funding, thematic funding was available through grant applications to the State Commission of Science, and 90% of the research groups awarded this funding were in the Universities. Basic research funding was also available, e.g. it was implied this supported research students.

International Organisations

6.1.2 In contrast, the representative of one of the international organisations met by the experts suggested that limited progress was being made on research funding issues. In theory, 70% of funding should be going to the Universities, but they were competing with the scientific institutes. This representative suggested that the scientific institutes were not particularly innovative, with innovation depending on international funding. This representative felt that the split between the Universities and the scientific institutes persisted.

6.1.3 The representatives of another international organisation also emphasised the absence of research as a systemic part of HE. They did not think this is being dealt with effectively though 'random grant allocation', even current grants for research available from international sources (The World Bank).

6.1.4 However, the representatives of a third international organisation did refer positively to the World Bank 'working on' the issues of research in the research institutions and the Universities.

6.2 Evidence from Wider Literature

The 2012 Tempus Report

6.2.1 The 2012 Tempus report emphasised that teaching was funded in the HEIs, but not research (Tempus 2012, pp.5-6). This has led to an artificial separation between teaching and research, with the various research institutes receiving direct Government funding through the National Academy of Science (NAS), thus providing 'better research conditions than universities' (ibid., p.7).

The 2013 World Bank Report

6.2.2 The 2013 World Bank report also highlighted issues with the failure to integrate research fully into the University sector, and issues with the funding of research. The NAS, as 'the highest state scientific self-governing organisation which unites more than 34 scientific institutions and other organizations', is described as part of a 'Soviet legacy'. However, the report argues that a 2011 Law on the National Academy of Sciences actually gave the NAS 'a more autonomous legal status' from the MoES (World Bank 2013, p. 8).

The World Bank report also argues that other legislation restricts HEI involvement in research and development. The Law on SNCOs restricting HEI commercial activities means that an HEI cannot engage in research unless this is specifically included in the list of commercial activities in the HEI's charter. The Law on Scientific and Scientific-Technical Activities provides inadequate incentives for research because of unclear definitions around intellectual property rights on research outputs (ibid., pp.30-31).

The 2013 Open Society Report

6.2.3 The 2013 Open Society report also commented on the separation of research and teaching. This report argued that 'research production at the level of both the higher education institutions and individual academics appears to be significantly underdeveloped, and in fact neglected and undervalued.' This had the effect that university education is about 'reproducing existing knowledge' with 'the process of new knowledge creation' playing 'no or only minimal role in universities' (Open Society 2013, p.21). The Open Society goes on to make an extended case for 'bringing research into universities in Armenia. This case includes contributing to the development of a competitive knowledge economy and society; retaining able HEI staff; stimulating students and staff through a research-based teaching environment (ibid., pp.22-23).

Recommendation from Section 6

The following specific Recommendation follows from key aspects of the content and analysis in this Section:-

Recommendation 6:

The Armenian Government should move to the full integration of academic research activity into the University sector. Government funding models should reflect this, including the removal of any legal impediments, such as those which may currently be associated with the Law on SNCOs and the Law on Scientific and Scientific-Technical Activities. The Armenian research community should accept that this reconfiguration of research activity may involve the disappearance of scientific institutes as these have traditionally existed.

7 HR/STAFFING APPROACHES AND ISSUES IN HE

7.1 Evidence from Interviews/Meetings

The MoES

7.1.1 The Deputy Minister for Education and Science and her colleagues indicated that staffing should be seen as a University responsibility, and that HR management issues should be explored with the Universities. There were state requirements to progress from Lecturer to Associate Professor and then to Professor. There were not many complaints made to the Ministry on such issues. Of course, the Rector was chosen by the Board and Deans were 'selected'.

International Organisations

7.1.2 One of the international organisations met by the experts emphasised that the procedures for staffing appointments were not transparent. There was a Ph.D. requirement, but the 'best students' tended to be offered posts in their own Universities. Political background could be relevant for appointment, as could nepotism. In particular, these representatives claimed that a number of young, recently-appointed Vice-Rectors were political party members.

7.1.3 The representative of another international organisations said that critics in Universities (staff and students) could feel 'under threat'. HR management in the Universities needs to be developed. Deans operate under local regulations and by-laws. The length of terms for Rectors could well be extended as Universities moved to foundation status.

7.1.4 The representatives of a third international organisation also identified issues with staffing in Universities. They stated there is a need for on-going professional development for University staff. They also commented on the comparatively low salaries, and agreed that staff tended to have other jobs.

Vice-Rectors from Universities

7.1.5 The experts held a long meeting with twelve Vice-Rectors from major public Universities. This was a fascinating meeting for the experts, and it provided a rich source for comments, particularly relevant to the current Section 7 of the report, and Section 8 which follows.

Salaries

The Vice-Rector from one University in particular forcefully raised the issue of staff salaries. It was suggested that the only really effective way of reducing corruption was to raise salaries. While reference was made to two recent 40% increases, with salaries doubling as a consequence, it was argued that inflation had reduced the value of these increases. Of course, in discussion among the Vice-Rectors, it was recognised that salary increases alone did not eliminate corruption, and ultimately individuals had to show commitment to principles of moral behaviour. It was also argued strongly that the State and University administrations must 'root out' and 'punish' corrupt staff.

Additionally on salaries, one Vice-Rector indicated that Vice-Rectors may have lower salaries than Deputy Deans. This Vice-Rector emphasised that he himself had a second job. He argued that there were significant variations in salaries between Universities, e.g. salaries were higher at the American University, but there were also variations between the public Universities. Senior academic salaries needed to be increased, e.g. a Head of IT

within a University could earn more than a senior academic, although perhaps less than he could outwith the University sector.

HR Management Systems and Staffing Issues

In the meeting, one Vice-Rector introduced the issue of 'weak' HR management systems. This led to a 'heated' general discussion among the Vice-Rectors on general HR and staffing issues.

It was suggested that there are systemic issues in this area.

Comments were made that 'collective agreements' in the employment field had expired (e.g. agreements which had prevented immediate family working in the same sector as relatives), and new HR 'commissions' were needed to introduce clear job descriptions and person specifications for each post.

There was a need to establish clearly that University teachers 'could do the job properly', e.g. to have a teacher assessment system which incorporated student evaluations and lesson observation, with this preceded by appropriate 'teacher training'.

One Vice-Rector in particular argued that there needed to be a culture of open competition for appointments. Currently, while there were certain competitive mechanisms, 'who the Dean wanted to be admitted will be admitted'. According to this Vice-Rector, a lecturer can be replaced after five years, but the post cannot be advertised, therefore there is effectively only one candidate. It is a 'buddy' system, especially given that the Dean is elected by the Scientific Council. There is no election if only one candidate. If there is more than one candidate, the students have 25% of the vote, but if lecturers vote together they can 'neutralise' the students.

In the general discussion which followed, it appeared that there is no strict obligation for competitions under the law. Universities appear to have by-laws to govern the appointment of Presidents and Deans. One University mentioned that Deans could only serve for a maximum of two five-year terms, and one appeared to suggest that its Deans were appointed by the President, and not elected.

In terms of open advertisement, apart from elected posts, it seemed that posts were advertised in newspapers, and were open to applicants from outwith the University (but this did not seem to apply to 'renewal' of contracts – see above) . One University emphasised that it certainly recruited from outside for new specialisms.

However, it was also suggested that appointments could be made without open competition, with a 'President's decree' used to make appointments, including the possibility of selection from outwith the University under this 'decree'. It was also suggested that 'acting' appointments could be used as an initial way of giving 'preferential treatment' in appointments.

In summary on HR management systems and staffing issues, there seemed to be some differences of approach on detail between institutions. However, there also seemed general agreement on the underlying issues which need to be addressed across institutions.

7.2 Evidence from Wider Literature

The 2013 World Bank Report

7.2.1 The 2013 World Bank report commented fully on staffing issues in HE. The report particularly highlights the lack of open competition in appointments processes, especially to senior posts (World Bank 2013, pp.28); and the absence of well-developed performance evaluation of staff (ibid., pp.31-33).

The 2013 Open Society Report

7.2.2 The 2013 Open Society report also discussed issues with employment contracts in HE, specifically the potential to restrict academic free speech associated with the need for regular extension of contracts (Open Society 2013, p.15).

The Athena Project

7.2.3 The Athena Project involves building the capacities of Universities to modernise the management of human resources ('What is Athena?' website). The final Project-wide Athena Training Seminar in February 2015 at the University of Amsterdam involved a specific focus on human resources management and staff development in Universities (see Athena website).

In presentations at this Seminar, challenges highlighted in relation to HR included development of strategic staffing policies, transparent recruitment, clear career development pathways for University staff, succession planning, developing and promoting young talent, and lack of comprehensive middle management (Thomas Estermann 'Modern Human resource management at universities' see Athena website).

Aspects of this analysis were also heavily stressed at the Athena Armenia National Workshop in March 2014 at Yerevan (see Thomas Estermann, European University Association, 'The State of University Autonomy in Armenia: an external analysis', Athena website).

This presentation particularly stressed limitations in University HR approaches such as recruitment procedures for academic staff being set up internally in University statutes, with no civil service status for university staff and dismissal being regulated by general labour law; recruitment processes based on election for a fixed term of 5 years, thus hindering promotion possibilities for academic staff and creating excessive instability. On the other hand, this presentation suggested that Universities had autonomy on salaries, but the problem was lack of funds to set attractive salaries.

Therefore, this Athena material demonstrates that this previous Project has already identified many of the main issues which need to be addressed in HR and staffing.

The La MANCHE Project

7.2.4 The La MANCHE Project has involved work on building management capacities in the participating HEIs. This has included capacity building activities including development of syllabuses and guidance materials in leadership and change management, and training of trainers in leadership and change management.

The La MANCHE Project includes specific WPs on 'Leadership and Management Skills and Models', 'Innovative Governance Practices in Higher Education', 'Training in Leadership

and Change Management’, and ‘Development of Strategy for Leading and Managing Change in Higher Education’.

Some La MANCHE materials appear to relate to general approaches to theories and practices of leadership and management, including change management, rather than relating very specifically to HR management issues. For example, this applied to the La MANCHE Learning and Teaching Resources on ‘Leadership and Change Management’ (see La MANCHE website).

On the other hand, other La MANCHE materials clearly relate more closely to specific relevant HR management issues. For example, the La MANCHE Project ‘External Assessment Report: Leadership and Management Skills and Models at the Higher Education Institutions in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine’ (2013 – see La MANCHE website) includes a chapter on ‘Leadership and management skills and models in Armenia’ (pp. 9-19).

This chapter tends to focus more on HR issues specifically. In providing a ‘General overview of the human resource management processes’, there is a generally positive description of a range of practices, such as provision for staff training, appraisal of staff performance, ‘clearly defined’ requirements to move from Associate Professor to Professor (pp.14-16).

This description also refers to some specific issues in Armenia, e.g. work contracts are for a determined period, ‘most typically 5 years’, and contracts make no provisions ‘for procedures to remove a teacher from his/her duties if they continue to be demonstrably ineffective’ (p.14). The ‘assignment for Rector’s position is undertaken’ by the MoES (ibid.). There are ‘no clearly defined mechanisms for conflict management’ (p.16).

A full list of the ‘Main challenges faced in the human resource management processes’ is then presented (pp.16-18). Twenty-nine challenges are listed. Interestingly, for current purposes, these include ‘Low professionalism of some employees creates obstacles for provision of high-quality services by the university’ (p.18). They also include ‘Young specialists are more interested in getting a job within a company than applying for a Masters or PhD due to the fact that the salary for high level specialists in the local labour market is 2-3 times higher than in the university’ (p.17).

The La MANCHE Project also produced the ‘Changing Higher Education Institutions in Societies in Transition: In-depth Study Report’ (2014 – see La MANCHE website). One of the Armenian case studies is by Gavar State University on ‘Academic Honesty Policy’ (Chapter 26, pp.382-391). This includes an emphasis on ‘increasing responsibility among lecturers and university staff’ (p.382).

Therefore, as with the Athena materials, these La MANCHE materials also demonstrate a previous Project which has already identified many of the main issues needing to be addressed in HR and staffing.

It will be important for the current Council of Europe Project to move beyond the identification of these issues to develop new approaches for responding to them (see Recommendations 7(a) and (c), and 13(b), which follow).

Recommendations from Section 7

The following specific Recommendations follow from key aspects of the content and analysis in this Section:-

Recommendation 7(a):

Much work has already been undertaken in identifying staffing issues in the HR environment of Armenian HEIs, and in raising awareness of these.

Key issues already identified include: lack of transparency and objective, open competition in appointments processes, including for election to senior posts; inadequate salary levels; lack of on-going professional development opportunities for staff; inadequate systems for effective staff evaluation and appraisal; problems arising from the standard use of five-year contracts of employment; significant inconsistencies on HR approaches between HEIs.

Future activities should concentrate on developing effective responses to such issues, and not on further research to repeat confirmation of what seem already to be well-recognised issues.

Recommendation 7(b):

In developing effective responses to the HR staffing issues identified in Recommendation 7(a) above, the Armenian Government and HE community should engage in a full dialogue over the balance between Government and individual HEI responsibility and action here.

While the future importance of HEI autonomy has already been stressed (see Recommendation 3(a) above), the HE community should be prepared to accept that it may be necessary for a primary Law on HE to legislate for a consistent enabling framework on some of these HR staffing aspects of HE.

Similarly, the Government should be prepared to accept that it cannot simply evade public interest responsibilities in this area by arguing that these issues are ‘matters for the HEIs’.

Recommendation 7 (c):

Much work has already been undertaken within internationally-funded projects in providing HE staff development on general European good practices in HR leadership and management, which will help address some of the issues summarised in Recommendation 7(a) above.

Therefore, future activities within this current Council of Europe project should concentrate on identifying and developing additional new approaches in this area. As will be detailed in Recommendation 13(b) below, the suggested additional approaches will focus on use of codes/statements of ethical principles and ethical behaviour for staff.

8 THE TEACHING AND LEARNING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS AND STAFF (AND ASSOCIATED ISSUES)

8.1 Evidence from Interviews/Meetings

The MoES

The Minister for Education and Science

8.1.1 In identifying corruption risks, The Minister for Education and Science focused very much on student behaviour (although generally he argued that corruption in education, while still high in the Government Survey corruption perception index, was decreasing, e.g. education was no longer in Transparency International's 'top three' corruption areas).

The Minister for Education and Science said that some Armenian students were 'smart' at finding their way round barriers to corruption. He argued the problem was not that corrupt staff asked all students to pay etc.. 'Good' students did not have to pay etc.. The problem was that 'bad' students were prepared to pay, and they were targeted by 'bad' staff. This then became public knowledge, e.g. because the 'bad' students advertised this themselves. This in turn created an exaggerated sense of the scale of the problem. The most vulnerable point in the system was during the 'exam season'. Payment was being made as 'an alternative way to get marks'.

The Minister indicated that student rights and entitlements had increased, including on progression and whistle-blowing. However, an aggressive minority persisted in corruption. 'Public' Universities were now more autonomous than former 'state' Universities, and the Minister's direct leverage had gone to University Boards. Much now depended on Rectors adopting appropriate managerial approaches in addressing issues with 'bad' staff.

The Minister suggested that 'high-ranking' Universities had low levels of corruption, and corruption levels were higher in 'low-ranking' Universities.

The Deputy Minister of Education and Science

8.1.2 The Deputy Minister of Education and Science indicated that staff requiring students to purchase their own authored textbooks may be an issue. However, there was not much private tutoring of students during their degree studies (although there was still some private tutoring by University staff at entrance). On the other hand, the Ministry did not receive many complaints about this.

International Organisations

8.1.3 The representatives of one of the international organisations met by the experts commented on corruption on cheating, and on textbook selling. These representatives also suggested that it was 'easier' to complete degree courses than to gain admission to them. Therefore, private tutoring in the HE system was not 'endemic', and really only prevalent among 'weak' students.

University Vice-Rectors.

8.1.4 In the meeting with University Vice-Rectors already discussed in Section 7 above, one University described its use of 'transparent systems for examination supervision', and rules for grading and appeals over grading.

Another University described at length its particular focus on addressing corruption risks in end-of-term examinations, with examinations 'being open for all, including parents'; all examinations being in written form (although this was hard to achieve in some disciplines); and a supervisory team involving the University President's staff, the University Quality Management System, the Deans' Offices, Heads of Chairs, and other teaching staff. There were discussions of examination results with all students in the presence of the Deans' Offices.

In this same meeting, one University Vice-Rector highlighted the 'problem' as being the minority of students who do not attend or study. 'Intensive work' was done with these students.

This Vice-Rector also commented on the importance of the 'rotation' system for payment of student fees being conducted openly, and there had been no student complaints about this.

Another Vice-Rector also described fully how his University had developed anti-corruption strategies for examinations, which were only 'written', with centralised, computerised marking, and the use of audio-visual devices in supervision. All examination results are publicised and students therefore see the grades their classmates are awarded. There is a clear appeals system after every examination. The system for awarding grades is carefully calibrated. In practical examinations in this discipline, the 'human factor' had been eliminated through the use of dummies in practical skills centres.

Another Vice-Rector highlighted the particular corruption risks around 'extra-mural education', where students attend rarely, and with an emphasis on self-study. These students are more prone to initiate 'corrupt' approaches, being ready to pay for evading study requirements.

A Vice-Rector from this same University focused on the issue of 'poor' students obtaining good grades. He described a situation where 'poor' students were staying until the end of examinations and 'begging' to be awarded good grades. This was when neither other classmates nor parents were present. The problem was that 'good' students do not then complain if 'poor' students obtain good grades. There is not a 'mentality' of complaining, so complaints cannot be used as an 'anti-corruption' instrument. This Vice-Rector also argued that there must be anti-corruption components in taught disciplines, not just in disciplines like law and politics, but also in other disciplines. He repeated his view that the problem was students who 'do not like strict teachers' and who 'do not like to work hard'.

In summary on the comments from Vice-Rectors, there appear to be significant initiatives in developing measures to combat corrupt behaviours in the learning and teaching context, e.g. around the conduct of examinations. However, the expert note that these tend to concentrate on more 'mechanistic' anti-corruption measures, and could be extended to more positive discussions on the development of codes of ethical principles and behaviours.

Senior Student Representatives

- 8.1.5 In the meeting with senior student representatives, the students suggested that there had been a reduction in corruption within the last ten years as a result of computerised examinations being introduced. On the other hand, they described an assessment system which, from a Western European perspective, seems narrow in its approaches. The only alternative to computerised examinations seems to be oral examinations (and at least one student representative referred to some move back to these in his discipline and institution).

There appears to be no use of anonymised marking of extended student writing, either in assignments or examinations. The students also suggested that the Universities had lowered criteria for students who are 'failing', and it is now too easy to pass. They were critical that a high quality of work was not required to obtain the degrees which led to jobs.

Moving beyond the assessment system, the students also extended this wider criticism of the quality of education to broader aspects of the curriculum. For example, they contrasted the requirement to study Armenian language and history with suggested weaknesses of the curriculum in providing employability skills (e.g. they suggested employers were not sufficiently involved in discussions about the curriculum). Generally, they suggested competences and skills are not addressed sufficiently in their teaching and learning. Higher education may be less corrupt, but quality issues still remain.

The students indicated that there is limited anonymous evaluation of teaching, and they are unclear what happens if there are significantly negative evaluations of staff.

International Organisations

8.1.6 On these wider issues around the quality of teaching and learning, the representatives of one of the international organisations met by the experts also referred to student evaluations at University not being followed up.

8.1.7 The representatives of another international organisation referred to the World Bank's 'competitive innovation' fund. Proposals are made by Universities which could impact positively on teaching and learning experiences, e.g. the example was given of funds being made available to the State Medical University to establish a simulation centre for clinical practices. It was indicated that every University had received assistance from this fund.

However, the experts sensed that this funding had to be tied to some specific technological innovation. It did not currently seem to be made available for more general developments without a specific technological dimension, such as general assessment developments on anonymised marking. However, the experts were told that such developments could be considered.

8.2 Evidence from Wider Literature

2013 World Bank Report

8.2.1 The 2013 World Bank report highlighted issues of corruption in the teaching and learning situation. In particular, this report highlighted potential risks of examination fraud (World Bank 2013, p.35).

2013 Open Society Report

8.2.2 The 2013 Open Society report discussed 'poor quality' students obtaining University qualifications 'without much work' (Open Society 2013, p.19), highlighting issues with outdated teaching styles, which link to problems with 'unmotivated' students (p.23).

The La MANCHE Project

8.2.3 The La MANCHE Project produced the 'Changing Higher Education Institutions in Societies in Transition: In-depth Study Report' (2014 – see La MANCHE website). One of the Armenian case studies is by Gavar State University on 'Academic Honesty Policy' (Chapter 26, pp.382-391). This includes an emphasis on 'Implementation of programmes towards moral education of university students' (p.384).

The Report also includes two case studies on curricular reform. One case study is by the Armenian National Agrarian University on 'Outdated curricula and teaching and delivery methods and its conformability with the contemporary labour market needs' (Chapter 9). A second case study is by the State Engineering University of Armenia (Polytechnic) on 'Novel approaches to the design and implementation of dynamic curricula based on University-Industry Cooperation Models' (Chapter 13). Both these case studies detail full attempts to develop curricular, teaching and learning approaches linking to the future employment needs of students.

However, while these La MANCHE materials are interesting examples of possible positive developments in this area, they are only illustrations of what will need to be taken forward more fully and extensively. For example, there is only a reference to 'programmes towards moral education', and not developed programmes themselves, in the Gavar State University material, and the materials from the Armenian National Agrarian University and the State Engineering University of Armenia (Polytechnic) are essentially case studies specific to particular specialisms.

Recommendations from Section 8

The following specific Recommendations follow from key aspects of the content and analysis in this Section:-

Recommendation 8(a):

The teaching and learning relationship between HE staff and students should be based on the fullest commitment to fundamental positive ethical principles and ethical behaviours. These should be embedded in comprehensive codes of ethics. In the case of HE staff, breaches of these codes should be linked to powerful sanctions through contracts of employment. In the case of students, breaches of these codes should be linked to powerful sanctions through HEI regulatory frameworks.

HE staff should have a particular responsibility for developing the positive commitment of students to ethical behaviours.

The Government of Armenia should support these developments through public awareness-raising campaigns with wider civil society. This should include targeting the parents of HE students specifically. The development of an advisory code of ethics for these parents should also be considered.

The Government of Armenia should also give full consideration to the extent to which it may be necessary to produce enabling legislation to underpin these developments, and ensure consistent minimum standards in institutional approaches, e.g. by inclusions in a new Law on Higher Education. This should also include considering whether ethical codes for HE staff should be linked to the wider development of ethical codes in the public services more generally (see also Recommendation 11 below).

Future activities within this current Council of Europe project should also include extensive and specific focus on supporting developments in this area of ethical principles, behaviours and codes (see also Recommendation 13(b) below).

Recommendation 8(b):

The Armenian HE community should engage in ongoing review and development of curriculum and assessment approaches to produce significant curricular and assessment innovation on a continuous basis. This should be designed to produce student-centred learning and teaching experiences which engage students fully, and rich and varied assessment approaches which enable students to demonstrate deep learning.

In return, students should show positive commitment to ethical integrity in their response to such innovations, and should not seek to manipulate innovative assessment approaches for any new opportunities these might be seen to present for cheating.

Similarly, HE staff should adhere to the highest ethical standards in the assessment of student work within any new, richer and more varied approaches.

The Armenian Government should support such developments by providing funding mechanisms for relevant curriculum and assessment innovations.

9 ISSUES WITH STUDENT ADMISSIONS TO HE

9.1 Evidence from Interviews/Meetings

The MoES

9.1.1 The Deputy Minister of Education and Science spoke very positively about the centralised system of university entrance, highlighting the role of standardised tests (e.g. in Armenian, Maths and English), and the role of the independent National Centre. She said that the results were very 'secure', and 'scores' were a good discriminator for entrance to HE (e.g., the highest scores led to scholarships being awarded). She said that complaints to the Ministry about these aspects of HE entrance had reduced to insignificant levels.

International Organisations

9.1.2 In contrast to this very positive picture, the representatives of one of the international organisations met by the experts commented strongly on the prevalence of private tutoring in school education. This was described as 'endemic'. For the school-leaving examinations, both schoolteachers and University staff were involved.

9.1.3 The representatives of another international organisation were also strongly critical of related aspects of high school education.

They highlighted private tutoring, even suggesting that this took place in the morning, with students paying to be entered on the high school attendance register while being tutored privately by their teachers elsewhere, and called into the school if an attendance monitoring exercise was taking place. These representatives suggested that schoolteachers were also falsifying their own attendance records to show they were present at school when they were in fact elsewhere undertaking private tutoring. They also indicated that University staff were involved in private tutoring. They argued that 90% of University entrants had to get private tutoring

Regarding the school leaving examination, these representatives suggested that there could be corruption in invigilation.

They also argued that the unified national external examinations were multiple choice for all subjects, and published examples were very similar to forthcoming examinations.

Additionally, they also appeared to suggest that teachers within schools could be responsible for final assessment if a subject was not a 'main subject' for the student. The example given was Maths II (not a 'main subject'), as opposed to Maths I (a 'main subject'). It was not entirely clear if Maths II could count towards University entry for a non-STEM subject, although the implication seemed to be that it could.

9.1.4 The representatives of a third international organisation also commented on private tutoring, including the involvement of HE staff in this.

These representatives also discussed the limitations of the current school leaving examinations, with their exclusive reliance on computer-marked multiple choice papers (although they did mention that Universities have direct control of different approaches where 'performance elements' are involved). These representatives said that a new project on curriculum revisions in the upper secondary, funded internationally (by the World Bank), would hopefully include consideration of some of these issues

The representatives of this organisation also suggested the need for better workforce planning associated with University admissions. For example, there is a need to address low entry to the Pedagogical University, which is related to the need to increase the attractiveness of school teaching as a career.

Senior Student Representatives

9.1.5 The student representatives highlighted the prevalence of private tutoring for the school leaving examination required for University entrance. They mentioned that this could involve University professors, but mostly the tutors were schoolteachers. They emphasised the very significant financial sacrifices which families were prepared to make to pay for private tutoring.

Comment by the Experts

9.1.6 The experts can only report on the strength of comments they received from some interviewees on these issues with the school leaving examinations. They are not in position to investigate these issues directly, e.g. to evaluate how accurate and representative claims are about cheating in final examinations, or about extreme abuses around private tutoring (such as falsification of student and staff attendance in school).

However, the strength of comments was such that the experts ask Government to investigate these potential general issues thoroughly, and take robust action, if necessary.

In particular, the experts approach private tutoring from the perspective that no national education system should place upper secondary pupils and their parents in a situation where expensive private tutoring is seen as necessary to achieve success in school leaving examinations, and with this entrance to HE. This becomes an issue for the HE system, not only the secondary school system.

Recommendation from Section 9

The following specific Recommendation follows from key aspects of the content and analysis in this Section:-

Recommendation 9:

There appear to be significant issues with the national school leaving examinations. These seem to include systemic inappropriate private tutoring, cheating in final examinations (associated with inadequate invigilation), and narrow approaches to assessment which may increase the ‘attractiveness’ of inappropriate private tutoring.

The Armenian Government should investigate these issues thoroughly, and then take robust measures if these are needed.

While these issues may be more for the school system, they affect the admission of students to HE. Therefore, the HE community should engage fully in national discussion and action on these matters. In particular, HE academic staff should not be participating in inappropriate private tutoring.

10 STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN HE GOVERNANCE

10.1 Evidence from Interviews/Meetings

The MoES

10.1.1 When exploring the importance of student participation in HE governance, the Deputy Minister of Education and Science emphasised that all University governing bodies had student members.

10.1.2 In a separate interview, the Head of the Department for Development Programs and Monitoring at the MoES also emphasised the importance of students being involved in anti-corruption measures

International Organisations

10.1.3 One of the international organisations met by the experts emphasised that ANSA (The Armenian National Student Association) had joined ESU (The European Students’ Union), and was strong on student involvement, although it was suggested that student organisations were very politicised. This organisation further mentioned that there were no student councils in the private Universities, although there was not much public discussion about this.

Senior Student Representatives

10.1.4 The experts met with senior representatives of ANSA and Universities’ Student Councils. These student representatives expressed the view that student representation had been heavily politicised until 2008, but not now. However, the opinion of ANSA leadership appears to be that some local student associations are still political, and that there are even some situations where it is easier for ANSA to work with Rectors than the local student associations.

This led to some wider discussion of the relationship between ANSA and local student associations, and the overall position of the local associations. There appears to be the possibility of tension between ANSA and some local associations, although ANSA obtains membership fees from local associations. ANSA is producing a policy paper on the legal position of local associations, particularly pushing for the local associations to have a more secure legal status (preferred terms like 'registered association' and 'NGO status' were used, and the student representatives seemed to say that local associations currently 'cannot have their own budgets').

The student representatives suggested that students were not in a 'good place' with the MoES regarding representation within University governance. Certainly, students comprise 25% of the governing bodies of state Universities, but these governing bodies were characterised as sustaining much of the 'old Soviet Komsomol structure', with 50% of membership 'controlled' by the Government. The Ministries want to 'use the students'. It was suggested that students were notionally 'free agents' on the main Board, the Scientific Boards and the Faculty Boards. However, in reality Rectors' 'selections' dominate these Boards.

These student representatives suggested that the wider student body currently has a lack of understanding of the role they can/should play in the quality assurance process. They need to be made aware of the mechanisms which exist and the role they can play in these. This was the purpose of a recent OSCE-supported project. Indeed, the experts were able to attend a launch event, hosted by students, on the publication of the major outputs from this project.

The student representatives spoke in detail about the situation at one particular University, which was moving to foundation status. It appeared that the Acting President/Rector was asserting his right to draft the by-laws for the students' council, as part of the new overall governance procedures involved in the move to foundation status. This seemed to be an extreme example of the general point that other Universities were also free to write their own statutes, including not giving full autonomy to student councils.

University Vice-Rectors

10.1.5 In other discussions at the meeting referred in Sections 7 and 8 above, one of the University Vice-Rectors emphasised the importance of students proactively 'standing up for themselves' and being 'trained to argue with the Presidential Office'.

10.2 Evidence from Wider Literature

The 2013 World Bank Report

10.2.1 The 2013 World Bank report stressed the limited nature of student participation. The report emphasised the need for students to be better informed and trained for roles in HEI governance and quality assurance (World Bank 2013, p.37).

The La MANCHE Project

10.2.2 Certainly, the La MANCHE Project has involved work on empowering students to become more actively involved in decision making in the participating HEIs.

Within the WP on 'Development of Strategy for Leading and Managing Change in Higher Education', there was the 'Organisation of Young Leaders Academy including a 5-day

training in grassroots leadership and student engagement in higher education'(see La MANCHE website 'La MANCHE Activities and Outcomes').

La MANCHE activities have also included the launching at Gori State University of a new module titled 'Building Students' Engagement within Higher Education Institutions for Managing Enhanced Knowledge' (see La MANCHE website 'Information Bulletin Issue 2, December 2013, p.7).

The La MANCHE 2nd Partner Meeting at University College, Birmingham, in April 2013 also included sessions on 'Opening Spaces for Students as Co-creators' (see La MANCHE website).

However, the experts would suggest that the presence of this type of material in earlier projects simply emphasises the importance of student involvement in governance as a topic, rather than indicating that no continuing work on this area is needed to develop existing specific activities still further.

Recommendations from Section 10

The following specific Recommendations follow from key aspects of the content and analysis in this Section:-

Recommendation 10(a):

The independence of Student Associations within HEIs should be fully recognised and guaranteed.

The Armenian Government should engage in dialogue with the HE community to discuss the extent to which this may require national enabling legislation, most probably in the new Law on Higher Education, to ensure minimum acceptable consistency of approach here.

However, the fundamental responsibility for recognising and guaranteeing the independence of their Student Associations should rest with individual HEIs themselves.

Recommendation 10(b):

Full, meaningful and independent involvement of students in the governance of HEIs should also be recognised and secured.

Again, the Armenian Government should engage in dialogue with the HE community to discuss the extent to which this may require national enabling legislation, most probably in the new Law on Higher Education, to ensure minimum acceptable consistency of approach here.

However, the fundamental responsibility for recognising and securing the involvement of their student body in institutional governance should rest with individual HEIs themselves.

11 ETHICAL CODES IN HE AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

11.1 Evidence from Interviews/Meetings

The MoES

11.1.1 The Deputy Minister of Education and Science expressed interest in the concept of codes of ethics for University staff, although her definition of research ethics appeared to focus largely on issues with student plagiarism in research.

The Deputy Minister of Justice

11.1.2 Ethical codes were also discussed with the Deputy Minister of Justice. He said that there were 'committees of ethics' in different state bodies, including the MoES. He was not sure if there were specific ethical codes in education, but he indicated that the overall strategy is to develop new ethical codes in such areas. In this context, he referred to the 'Law on Public Services', and his previous experience of medical areas. He implied that the overall Draft Strategy on Anti-Corruption already mentioned ethical codes.

The Deputy Minister of Justice suggested that he is looking for codes of ethics which will be more legally binding, e.g. with statutes for educational institutions (foundations etc.) including special articles to cover dismissal for breach of ethical codes. In terms of governance, he indicated that his technical experts would make general recommendations which individual institutions would then apply (thus respecting institutional autonomy). This would mean that every institution would have an ethical code linked to a general code, with these institutional ethical codes linked through conditions of employment to dismissal for breaches of the code.

The Deputy Minister of Justice emphasised the 'dangers' to society if there were not such clear consequences of unethical behaviour.

11.2 Evidence from Wider Literature

The La MANCHE Project

11.2.1 The La MANCHE Learning and Teaching Resources on 'Leadership and Change Management' were reviewed (see La MANCHE website). These appear to relate to general approaches to theories and practices of leadership and management, including change management, rather than relating in any great detail to ethical behaviours and codes. Certainly, there is a Section in the 'Guidance Materials on Leadership' on 'Morality and Leadership', but this is fairly general and only considers the 'leader's' position.

The La MANCHE Project also produced the 'Changing Higher Education Institutions in Societies in Transition: in-depth Study Report' (2014 – see La MANCHE website). One of the Armenian case studies is by Gavar State University on 'Academic Honesty Policy' (Chapter 26, pp.382-391). This includes an emphasis on 'increasing responsibility among lecturers and university staff' (p.382), and on 'Implementation of programmes towards moral education of university students' (p.384). However, while interesting, this La MANCHE chapter does not constitute a fully-developed ethical code.

Therefore, these examples from La MANCHE materials demonstrate that existing projects have not focused on producing full codes of ethics for HE staff. This emphasises that the current project would 'add value' in this area by undertaking work in developing such codes.

Recommendation from Section 11

The following specific Recommendation follows from key aspects of the content and analysis in this Section:-

Recommendation 11:

As discussed under Recommendation 8(a) above, codes of ethics should be developed for HE staff, with breaches linked to significant sanctions (up to, and including dismissal) through contracts of employment.

If the Armenian Government is developing a general legal framework for the public services, in which breaches of ethical codes are linked to dismissal through contracts of employment, HE staff should certainly be included within this framework. This would strengthen the respect for codes of ethical behaviour among HE staff.

The Ministry of Justice should also advise on any developments required in the overall legal framework to underpin the use of sanctions against students who breach ethical codes within HEI regulatory frameworks, and to invoke the criminal law against parents who attempt inappropriate unethical interference in their children's HE experiences.

12 ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGIES OF GOVERNMENT AND HEIs

12.1 Evidence from Interviews/Meetings

The MoES

12.1.1 The Deputy Minister of Education and Science said that there was a new overall Government anti-corruption programme from January/February 2015, but there would not be a new separate MoES document. She referred to the role of the Ministry's Department for Development Programs and Monitoring in addressing the anti-corruption programme for the overall education system, for 'everything that can improve integrity'. She also emphasised the role of internal University procedures.

12.1.2 In a separate interview, the Head of the Department for Development Programs and Monitoring within the MoES referred to a State Programme for Educational Development which had the force of Parliamentary law. This had different sections covering the entire education system, and his Department co-ordinated information-gathering and monitoring for this Programme. This exercise was just being completed for 2011-2015, and the Department would then move on to 2016-2025. He also referred to 6-monthly reports monitoring for corruption. The Department used multiple sources in this work, including from different Directorates and NGOs.

Within a five-year timeframe, the MoES produced biannual action plans. It also had a dedicated project for corruption, MoES-specific as well as Government-wide. There had been a 2013-2014 programme, but there would now be a new general Government programme, which would then be followed by MoES adoption.

His Department reports on a public website. The level of public interest in this website is monitored. His Department reports to Government, on anti-corruption and other issues. If action points are not overtaken, then the Government gets back to the Ministry. The

Universities are linked to the e-government system, and can learn immediately of any emerging HE issues which require them to take action.

The experts trust this is an accurate summary of what was quite detailed information provided during this interview. However, they have not been able to independently access the full documents and website mentioned by the Head of the Department for Development Programs and Monitoring. This leaves them unclear on how to evaluate finally the position on MoES anti-corruption plans and monitoring, relative to some comments from other sources suggesting 'aspects which require to be addressed' in this area (see below).

The Deputy Minister of Justice

12.1.3 The Deputy Minister of Justice indicated that there would be a new Ministry of Justice/Government Anti-Corruption Strategy, overall and with sections for health, education, administration and finance. He indicated that education is still considered to be one of the most corrupt areas, but linked this to the fact that most families are involved in education (the same point applied to health).

The Deputy Minister of Justice suggested that specific responsibility for education would then rest with the MoES. He said there had not yet been a risk assessment in this area, but the MoES should produce a strategy in accordance with a risk analysis. This should involve international experts to ensure that the MoES is addressing all risks. If the current Council of Europe work is covering higher education, then other international assessment should certainly take place for secondary school education. International donors should be approached about this. In terms of current Ministry Action Plans, the Deputy Minister said there are no mechanisms for monitoring progress against these Ministry Plans.

The Deputy Minister of Justice indicated that there is now a special department in the Government dealing with anti-corruption, led by the Prime Minister, with responsibility for monitoring Action Plans (presumably the overall Government Plans). He mentioned UN, OECD and GRECO (Council of Europe) involvement with this, and a 'working group of independent experts'. This related to the overall Plan at Government level, with international donors looking at the whole strategy. On the detail of forthcoming overall Plans, the 'Anti-Corruption Council' was to be adopted the next day (i.e. after the interview/meeting).

He then referred to 'competition for non-governmental organisations' in early-March, with 'institutional capacities' established by the end of March. Simultaneously, a strategy would be developed for adoption in April. He was not sure about the timelines for local Ministerial Plans (e.g. for the MoES). This would depend on 'donor situations', but possibly would take a 'couple of months'. However, he did indicate that a draft Overall Strategy, including education sections, could be made available to the experts. Some Sections of this Strategy have subsequently been made available to the experts (see par.12.2.8 and 12.2.9 below).

International Organisations

12.1.4 One of the international organisations met by the experts commented that Government and MoES anti-corruption action plans were very vague, that it was difficult to track progress against them, and the MoES was not really willing to share these. This organisation also referred to University anti-corruption action plans, which were supposed to be produced on a 2-3 year cycle, appear on university websites, and also go back to the MoES. These were very similar looking, and students were not involved in producing them.

University Vice-Rectors

12.1.5 In the very full meeting with Vice-Rectors from seven main public Universities (already discussed for other topics in Sections 7 and 8 above), each University outlined its anti-corruption strategy.

One University referred to the full involvement of students, with an e-governance system circulating all documents transparently; a 'corruption board' on walls; an anonymous mail box for students; student surveys inviting views on staff and also suggested improvements.

In another University, every term the President meets the student body in the absence of Deans and Professors to discuss the main problems students wish to raise, including corruption issues. This University also conducted anonymous assessment of a sample of staff by students every term. Where staff had received significantly negative feedback over several years, their position had been investigated by the President or Vice-President, e.g. to establish whether there were corruption/integrity issues. Some staff had been required to resign.

On the other hand, a Vice-Rector from another University did question whether enough staff who had been 'caught red-handed' had actually been dismissed. This Vice-Rector argued strongly that in the post-Soviet period there were general 'corruption temptations' for individuals, especially because of financial pressures, and that ultimately each individual must resist these.

Another University referred to its recent introduction of the Moodle system. It was suggested that this would strengthen anti-corruption activities, e.g. students would be able to see online the attendance and grades of their classmates, which would 'rule out' the corruption of students being awarded grades which their attendance and performance did not merit.

A further University also discussed its use of 'Departmental Councils', student surveys, and feedback to students on an open website.

Another University referred to its Work Programme on Anti-Corruption, which also involved the relevant Scientific Council. This University identified five main groups of risks, three of which have already been discussed extensively earlier in the current document (entrance examination risks; risks to examinations during degree studies; appointments and promotions of staff). In addition, this University mentioned risks in financial management, e.g. procurement, and risks around public relations.

A further University discussed the overall political context of Ministers requiring all Universities to carry out anti-corruption activities. It was important for this political will to underpin Universities' activities.

Generally, Vice-Rectors suggested that external evaluations of University anti-corruption activities 'were not realised', and Universities were essentially left to address this area themselves. Senior University management has the leverage, and they draft, implement and assess the anti-corruption processes, but all staff and students must also be involved.

It was also suggested by one Vice-Rector that it was difficult to fund anti-corruption activities. Serious work had been done within Tempus projects but this had been on a voluntary basis. The Universities cannot find the money for staff to study external experiences at other Universities.

The experts' overall impression from this meeting with the University Vice-Rectors is that much positive activity is being attempted on anti-corruption activities, but this would benefit from co-ordinated national discussion, including Government, on consistency of approach, evaluation of progress, and resourcing for this area.

12.2 Evidence from Wider Literature

12.2.1 The experts had previously received the 2009 '2nd. Republic of Armenia Anti-Corruption Strategy and its Implementation Action Plan for 2009-2012', and the MoES 'Action Plan on anti-corruption measures for 2013-2014'. However, these documents are not considered in detail here because they do not refer to the current position, and they do not include monitoring evaluations which lead continuously into the current position.

University Anti-Corruption Plans

12.2.2 In response to requests for current documents, the experts have received a small number of University Anti-Corruption Plans.

They received the 'Comprehensive Plan of Actions To Combat Corruption' from Yerevan State University (YSU). However, this was described as the '2011-2012' Plan and dated as 'Approved at the Academic Council Session, May 30th 2013' (although there are also confusing references within this document to sustaining the earlier work into 2013-2014).

A document 'Anti-Corruption Policy Measures –Long term Action Plan' was received from the State Engineering University of Armenia (Polytechnic), although again this was described as for 2011-2012.

On the other hand, the document received from the Yerevan State University of Languages and Social Sciences after V. Brusov (YSLU) was described as the '2015 Complex Project of Events Against Corruption in YSLU'.

The documents range in length from 5 to 7 pages.

12.2.3 While there is some similarity between these plans, they do not follow a common template. All include 'Expected Results', but one (YSU) lists 'Measures' and 'Performed Activities and Expected Results'; one (State Engineering University of Armenia) lists 'Purposes', 'Activities', 'Expected Results', 'Responsible Departments' and 'Implementation Schedule'; one (YSLU) lists 'Aims', 'Events', 'Responsible People', 'Expected Results'.

Although the YSU document refers to further details of the programme and its results being available on the YSU official website, the experts could not access any such information on the English versions of the YSU website, and they were not able to access any relevant detailed information in English from the official websites of the other Universities.

However, there is much of interest and value in these documents.

Yerevan State University (YSU)

12.2.4 The YSU document helpfully distinguishes between 'Direct Measures' (i.e. measures that directly concern the anti-corruption problems, such as 'development of supervisory mechanisms for the exam processes'), and 'Indirect Measures' (i.e., measures 'that were performed with a view of solving other problems, however can simultaneously have an anti-corruption impact', such as 'activities directed to increase the quality of education', pp.3-4).

The document also produces an appropriate and comprehensive list of 'Main Corruption Risks' (and 'directions of anti-corruption measures') ,comprising the following main groups: 'Knowledge evaluation'; 'Access to the education system'; 'Student mobility'; 'Staff management'; 'University Financial Management'; 'Economic management of the University' (pp.4-5).

The 'Measures' and 'Performed Activities and Expected Results' (pp.6-7) do not then correspond exactly to these 'Main Corruption Risks' headings, but they do generally cover most of the areas already identified within them, e.g. 'promote competitive process' for appointments within 'Improvement of management process at the University'. On the other hand, these 'Activities' could be stated in more specific detail, and they do not include clear separate statements of who is responsible for undertaking them, or on timetables for implementation.

The State Engineering University of Armenia (Polytechnic)

12.2.5 The State Engineering University of Armenia document also provides a useful list of corruption risks, in two Groups:

Group I (admission to state HEIs; admission to MA Programs; PHD admission; admission to distance learning system and second profession; admission of foreign citizens; internal (in the university) transfers; inter-university transfers);

Group II (administrative impact ['arbitrary application by the professors of administrative measures, bonuses, salary increases or other issues in case of some shortcomings and omissions or other problems']; procurement

Interestingly, this list is preceded by the identification of the 'main corruption risks in the sphere of education' from the Government Anti-corruption strategy, i.e. 'Entrance exams, Current university exams, Final exams and admission to postgraduate programs'.

The University list includes admissions aspects of the Government list, but not the 'exams' aspects, and adds its 'employment and economic activity' aspects (Group II above) beyond the Government list (p.2).

It is also interesting to note the University's emphasis on ensuring 'a healthy ethical and psychological atmosphere at the University' (p.2).

The document then details 13 aspects of its action plan, giving 'Purpose', 'Activities', 'Expected Results', and also particularly helpfully 'Responsible Departments' and 'Implementation Schedule' (pp.3-6). These last two headings go beyond the detail in the YSU document, although all the entries for 'Implementation Schedule' simply state '2011-2012'.

It is also interesting to note a repeated reference to the 'SEAU Trade Union' among 'Responsible departments'.

Yerevan State University of Languages and Social Sciences after V. Brusov (YSLU)

12.2.6 The YSLU document refers to the creation of an anticorruption 'council' and 'commission'. The 'main function' of the commission is described, but the distinction between the 'council' and the 'commission' is not explained, and their respective compositions are not detailed.

The 2015 'complex project of events' gives 'aims', 'events', 'Responsible people' and 'Expected results' under 10 main areas. Some of these areas are quite specific, e.g.

relating to full tuition reimbursement (rotation), while others are more general, e.g. relating to overall student and staff attitudes to corruption risks.

It is also interesting to note a particular emphasis on assistance from international organisations, and co-operation with 'co-partner' organisations.

On the other hand, no 'expected results' appear for 2 of the 10 areas covered.

12.2.7 In summary on University Anti-Corruption Plans, the experts would comment that the exemplars provided show evidence of interesting approaches, covering many important areas. However, only a limited number of plans have been accessed, and not all of these appear to be current. In addition, the exemplar plans show differences of approach, e.g. on identifying who is responsible for implementing actions. All of this suggests that the HE sector would benefit from further national discussion on developing consistent and comprehensive approaches to anti-corruption planning.

Government of Armenia Documents

Section 3.1 from Chapter 3 of the new Government overall 'Anti-Corruption Strategy'

12.2.8 The experts have received Section 3.1, 'Anti-corruption strategy in the sphere of education' from Chapter 3 'Primary Sectors for Anti-Corruption Programmes' from the new Armenian Government overall 'Anti-Corruption Strategy', 2015-2018.

Section 3.1 begins with a 'Situational analysis', which adopts a positive tone.

This analysis emphasises that it is important to reduce corruption risks in education as one of the key 'prerequisites' to achieving 'improvement of the education quality and efficiency, their compliance with international standards and access to education by all layers of the population' (par.57-58).

In describing what was achieved as a result of the 2009-2012 Anti-Corruption Strategy, areas stressed include teacher education, school-leaving/ HEI entrance exams, and the governance of public schools (par.59).

More specifically on Anti-Corruption and HE, it is emphasised that 'annual anticorruption strategy plans have been developed by the Higher Education Institutions', and that 'stricter' HEI licensing standards have reduced the number of private HEIs from more than 90 to 34 (ibid.).

There is a positive reference to MoES staff receiving 'anti-corruption' training (ibid.).

The reference to all HEI's having internal 'Quality Assurance Centers' is clear and positive. On the other hand, there are also rather unclear references to a new 'Department of Inspection for Specialized Education' operating within the State Inspection for Education, and that 'in all HEIs a new "Department of Inspection for Specialized Education" operates' (ibid.).

Part of the issue for the experts in trying to clarify such statements is that references are made to the official MoES website and an associated 'education portal', but they have not been able to access these in English. There are references to '2011 year reports on inspection, research and audit of public education institutes' being published on these websites, but it is not clear whether any of these cover HE, or only relate to school education (ibid.).

The 'Problems in the Education System' section (Section 3.1.2) reads as a quite robustly 'self-critical' evaluation of aspects of the current position.

A number of the specific areas highlighted in this section relate to the school sector rather than HE (school staffing, school textbook development and procurement, school funding, and the school leaving examinations), and there are only two very specific reference to HE.

One of these is the very important statement that 'Imperfect and contradictory legislative regulations allow the interference of the executive to the HEI management that leads to the absence of the HEI's self-regulation' (par.61). This is reasonably clear to the experts on the assumption that the 'executive' refers to the central Government.

The other is 'In HEIs there is provision and application of non-participatory and non-transparent quality assurance mechanisms for specialized education' (ibid.). The meaning of this is not clear to the experts.

On the other hand, a number of the more general problems highlighted are clearly also relevant to HE: 'Imperfect regulations [legal acts]'; 'Low level of transparency and accountability of and public information on education management system'; 'level of public trust towards the structures that guarantee the quality of education is rather low'; 'Need to shape an efficient management system in the sphere of education' (ibid.).

Additionally, of course, any issues highlighted with the school-leaving exams are also issues for university entrance.

The document then moves on to Section 3.1.3 on 'Preventive Anti-Corruption Measures'. This Section stresses 'the improvement of the legal framework', and the importance of organising 'anticorruption courses and events for the students that will contribute to the increase of their awareness and development of the capacity to defend their own rights' (par.62). (The experts find this last phrase particularly interesting).

A range of points regarding staffing are stressed, which presumably apply to both school and HE staff. In particular:-

'the process of education staff selection competition shall be regulated, clear mechanisms and procedures for staff selection, appointment, career development shall be put in place, job description and unified code of behaviour shall be established for people working in educational institutions, the private file of the teacher and the lecturer shall be defined as a public document and a procedure shall be introduced for its publication'

'Revisit the job descriptions foreseen for the staff of educational institutions in the acting legislation, define ethical principles and unified rules of behaviour for them...establish commissions on ethics or responsible people on ethical matters to supervise and control that the requirements set by the unified rules of behaviour are met'.(ibid).

In summary on Section 3.1 of Chapter 3, the new Government overall Anti-Corruption Strategy shows much appropriate and good insight into areas to be addressed in education. However, there are areas relating to HE which could be clarified or developed further. In addition, this Section does not address how progress on anti-corruption in education will be monitored and evaluated.

Chapter 4, 'Monitoring and Evaluation System for the Implementation of the 2015-2018 Action Plan' from the new Government overall 'Anti-Corruption Strategy'

12.2.9 In response their request for material on monitoring and evaluation, the experts then received Chapter 4 'Monitoring and Evaluation System for the Implementation of the 2015-2018 Action Plan of the Anti-corruption Strategy of the Republic of Armenia'.

Certainly, this document demonstrates an important general commitment to monitoring and evaluating the extent to which the objectives on the overall Government Anti-Corruption Action Plan for 2015-2018 are being achieved, and to involving civil society stakeholders in this process (par.118-122). There is an indication that such stakeholders will be involved in the work of the Anti-Corruption Strategy Committee which will monitor the Strategy (par.121).

The document also refers to the publication of semi-annual and annual monitoring reports, and evaluation reports and recommendations being produced by experts (par.125, 133 and 135).

There is an emphasis on the use of the indicators from the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) and the Control of Corruption Index (CCI), and there are other references to 'aggregated indicators of good governance', 'concrete indicators' and 'quantitatively measurable' indicators (par.126, 128, 131). There is also an emphasis on statistical data collection, creation of databases, use of 'thematic and targeted surveys and polls', and 'accountability assessment by international organisations' (par.129).

On the other hand, some of this description of intended approaches will need to be expanded into further detail.

The full membership and precise role of the Anti-Corruption Strategy Committee needs to be clarified, especially in relation to 'non-Government' involvement.

There is some illustration of what is intended by 'aggregated indicators of good governance' ('the quality of regulation, government effectiveness, rule of law, voice and accountability, political stability and civil liberties', see par.126). However, more details are needed on the type of indicators which will be used for monitoring and evaluation, especially indicators which can be 'quantitatively measurable'. Indeed, there could be further discussion of the appropriate balance between quantitative and qualitative monitoring and evaluation.

Finally, this document does not make clear how overall approaches to monitoring and evaluation will link to the monitoring and evaluation of 'Anti-Corruption Strategies' in education specifically.

Recommendations from Section 12

The following specific Recommendations follow from key aspects of the content and analysis in this Section:-

Recommendation 12(a):

The Armenian Government should clarify the relationship between the overall Government Anti-Corruption Strategy and anti-corruption strategy for education specifically. In particular, the Government should clarify whether there is simply an education section within the overall Government Anti-Corruption Strategy, which the Ministry of Education

and Science (MoES) is meant to follow, or whether the MoES is expected to develop its own detailed Anti-Corruption Strategy document, expanding from the relevant section of the overall Government document.

The Armenian Government should ensure that all Anti-Corruption Strategies, whether at overall Government or Ministry level, are continuous through time, i.e. that new Strategies begin immediately upon the end of previous Strategies, with no gaps in time and therefore in the monitoring for progress on the implementation of Strategies.

In this context, the Government should also ensure targets are met for the regular publishing of monitoring reports, and such reports are published transparently, including online.

The education Section (Section 3.1) of the new Government Anti-Corruption Strategy/Action Plan for 2015-2018 includes much good analysis and identifies many important issues to be addressed. The Government should ensure focus is sustained on these issues. On the other hand, the Government should review some aspects of this Section for further clarity, e.g. the discussion of 'Specialized Education'.

Chapter 4 of the new Government Anti-Corruption Strategy/Action Plan for 2015-2018 includes important material on approaches to monitoring and evaluating the extent to which objectives are being achieved. However, the Government should provide further detail on some aspects of this, such as the Anti-Corruption Strategy Committee, the indicators to be used for monitoring and evaluation, and the relationship between monitoring and evaluation for the overall Strategy and for specific sectors such as education.

Recommendation 12(b):

The Armenian Government and the HE community should agree in discussion the extent to which individual HEI Anti-Corruption Plans should follow a standardised national template, or at least some common guidelines, at the same time respecting HEI autonomy.

In particular, these discussions should include a focus on ensuring HEI plans include explicit timeframes for action, and clearly identify those responsible for progressing particular actions within institutions. Mechanisms also need to be clearly identified within plans for monitoring progress on achieving objectives, and for imposing effective sanctions when objectives are not met.

Recommendation 12(c):

The Armenian Government and HE community should recognise that, while the actions identified in Recommendations 12(a) and (b) above are important short to medium measures for strengthening anti-corruption activities in HE, the long-term strengthening of integrity in HE will depend on the fundamental commitment of all actors to positive ethical principles and behaviours (see also Recommendation 13(b) below).

13 CONCLUSIONS, AND NEXT STEPS FOR THE PROJECT

As discussed in Section 1 above, the current document presents the experts' initial risk analysis of issues affecting the integrity of the Armenian higher education system.

Following standard Council of Europe practice, the experts look forward to an early opportunity to discuss the Recommendations from this analysis with Armenian Government representatives and other senior Armenian stakeholders. Additionally, the document also attempts to anticipate subsequent project activities, which are likely to include wider stakeholder awareness-raising events and staff development workshops for key Higher Education (HE) staff.

The Recommendations below follow from these twin aims of the current document:-

Recommendations from Section 13

Recommendation 13(a):

Initially under this current Council of Europe project, there should be discussion between the Council of Europe experts and the Armenian Government and other senior Armenian stakeholders on the more mechanistic and regulatory measures recommended to enhance the quality of the HE system, and set the framework for the longer-term achievement of integrity in HE based on ethical principles and behaviours. Generally, this refers to aspects within all of Recommendations 1 to 12 above.

Recommendation 13(b):

Thereafter, the current Council of Europe project should specifically develop additional new support for the HEIs on activities and approaches to strengthen integrity. In discussion with the Armenian Government and HE community, this should focus on progressing positive commitment by staff and students to ethical principles and ethical behaviours through the use of ethical codes. This refers in particular to Recommendations 7(c), 8(a), and 11 above.

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ANQA website 2015 - www.anqa.am/en/

Includes:-

The ANQA Action Plan, and the ANQA Strategic Plan 2010-2015.

External Quality Assurance, Policies and Procedures, Programme 1; Institutional Audit and Programme Accreditation, Programme 2; International Relations, Programme 3; ANQA's Internal Quality Assurance Program, Program 4; Internal Quality Assurance of TLIs and Stakeholder Relations, Program 5.

Guiding Principles for Tertiary Level Educational Establishments on External Quality Assurance.

Guidelines, Criteria, and Standards for Quality Assurance in the Armenian Tertiary Education.

Glossary of Quality Assurance.

A Guide to Self-Assessment.

ANQA Accreditation Manual: Internal Quality Assurance: Challenges and Perspectives (2011).

Athena Project website 2015 - www.athena-tempus.eu/

All materials from The Athena Project on 'Fostering Sustainable and Autonomous Higher Education Systems in the Eastern Neighbouring Area', which involves Armenia, Moldova and the Ukraine, (A Tempus IV Project), including specifically materials from:-

'What is Athena?

The Athena Armenia National Workshop in March 2014 at Yerevan – including Thomas Estermann, European University Association, 'The State of University Autonomy in Armenia: an external analysis'.

The first Project-wide Athena Training Seminar in April 2014 at the University of Helsinki.

The second Project-wide Athena Training Seminar in November 2014 at Coimbra, Portugal, focusing on 'Autonomy and Governance' - including Thomas Estermann, European University Association, 'University autonomy and institutional governance'.

The final Project-wide Athena Training Seminar in February 2015 at the University of Amsterdam, involving a specific focus on human resources management and staff development in Universities – including Thomas Estermann 'Modern Human resource management at universities'.

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