



The Fourth International Conference and the Closing Event of the Institute for European Studies

of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University within the frames of the EU funded ERASMUS+ Jean Monnet Project “Establishment of the Bachelor’s Programme in European Studies” (EUStBA)

On October 28 and 29, 2022 a two-day international conference was hosted by the Institute for European Studies of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University within the frames of the EU funded Erasmus+ Jean Monnet project “Establishment of the Bachelor’s Programme in European Studies” (EUStBA). The conference was the closing event of the project, which aimed to summarize the results of the project together with international experts.

The international conference was organized in a hybrid format and took place in the first academic building of TSU on the one hand, and online via Zoom platform, on the other hand. The event was opened by the welcome speech of TSU Deputy Rector **Nino Okribelashvili**, where she congratulated the team of TSU Institute of European Studies with the establishment of a new Bachelor's (Undergraduate) programme in European studies, as well as with establishment of two double-degree master's programmes, and noted that teaching European Studies at all three levels at Tbilisi State University is of great importance especially in the context of granting the European perspective to Georgia.

Director of the TSU Institute for European Studies **Nino Lapiashvili** summarized the activities carried out throughout the past two years for the development and accreditation of the bachelor's programme in European Studies, the scientific conference follow-up publication of the project, the process of negotiations and successful implementation of Double Degree Master's programmes with Vilnius University of Lithuania and Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences of Latvia as the side effect and synergy of this Erasmus+ JM project, all the steps taken to update the English-taught Doctoral programme in European Studies and evaluation of the IES's study programmes at all three levels by international experts. Director of IES and JM Erasmus+ Project

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Coordinator Nino Lapiashvili pointed out that the long-term strategy and its action plan developed by her after she led the very first accreditation of the English-language Master's programme in 2011, facilitated the building of the Institute for European Studies in a dynamic manner, which was successfully concluded with the recent establishment of the Bachelor's programme in European Studies. She mentioned that even though IES still face some acute challenges, for example the Institute is not allowed to have its own affiliated academic staff in European studies, the results achieved as of today are the promising steps forward in this direction: firstly, establishment of the BA programme will ensure the financial sustainability of the Institute and besides, it will contribute to the increased research activities and outputs.

Professor Daniela Urse and **Professor Natia Lapiashvili**, the Co-Heads of Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral programmes in European Studies emphasized the great efforts that have been made to establish the Jean Monnet Bachelor's programme in European Studies as well as the final formation of the Institute, its historical significance for TSU and the entire country. Professor Natia Lapiashvili noted that when back in 2011 the Vice-Rector of TSU, Academician Levan Aleksidze offered her to help the Institute by sharing her experiences gained from leading European universities (University of Basel, University of Geneva, Riga Graduate School of Law) as well as from her insight as a practicing lawyer and solicitor in UK and Wales, it was difficult to imagine that the IES Team would have to go through such a difficult and challenging path. Therefore, she concluded, it is a very special day for her as well.

The Director of the TSU Institute for European Studies thanked the academic and administrative staff involved in the successful implementation and accreditation process of the programmes as well as all Co-Heads of the programmes - Professor Daniela Urse, Professor Natia Lapiashvili, Professor Vasil Kacharava and Professor Tamaz Zubiashvili.

The participants of the closing Jean Monnet project event were addressed by the Deputy Head of the Central Quality Assurance Service of TSU **Nino Kimeridze**, who discussed the important role of the quality assurance office in the programme accreditation process. She emphasized that the entire accreditation process of the Bachelor's and Master's programmes in European Studies was logically planned and well organized by the TSU Institute for European Studies with the full involvement of all interested parties and complete transparency at all stages. She emphasized on many occasions that the very fact of the active involvement of the large segment of stakeholders in the BA-programme building was a significant particularity of the process worth to be underlined. The Director of the IES thanked every member of the TSU assurance offices who contributed to the successful accreditation of the programmes including Prof. Ia Natsvlishvili from the QA service of the Economics and Business Faculty of TSU, Prof. Darejan Gardavadze from the QA service of the TSU Faculty of Humanities, Prof. Marek Devidze

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from the QA service of Faculty of Social and Political Sciences and Prof. Giorgi Makharoblishvili from the QA service of the Faculty of Law.

The Director of the TSU Institute for European Studies and the founder of Bachelor's and Double Degree Master's programmes, Nino Lapiashvili discussed and summarized all the results of the project implementation during the event. Afterwards, she gave the floor to the international experts/ externalevaluators - **Marek Martyniszyn**, Professor of Law at Queen's University Belfast (UK), **Kerry Longhurst**, Professor at Collegium Civitas and Visiting Professor at College of Europe, **Agnese Dāvidsone**, Acting Rector of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences and Associate Professor and **Kamil Zwolski**, Associate Professor in International Politics, Jean Monnet Chair of European Security Governance, Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy Politics & International Relations, University of Southampton (UK) – in order to share the results of the undertaken external evaluation of all three programmes of IES.

The experts congratulated the IES on its landmark success and came up with conclusion that the programmes do express the result of comprehensive and complex analysis of the field; As they said, such a variety of subjects offered under the IES programmes sometimes cannot be found even in the leading higher education institutions of the European Union, and in this respect the TSU Institute of European Studies is truly outstanding, while its interdisciplinarity is expressed in deeply thought-out content and not just in simple words.

The final part of the first day of the conference was dedicated to the small presentations made by the students of the first cohort of the Double-Degree Master's programmes (Double Degree Master's programme in European Studies, Strategic Communication and Governance in cooperation with Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (Latvia) and Double Degree Master's programme in European Studies and European Law/International Law in cooperation with Vilnius University (Lithuania)). **Ms. Tatia Nozadze, Ms. Mariam Jugeli, Mr. Mustafa Gojayev, Mr. Aleksandre Bezhasjvili and Mr. Giorgi Kiladze** shared with the participants their first hand experiences and impressions of studying at Double Degree MA programmes.

The first day of the event was closed with announcing another good news by the Director of the TSU Institute for European Studies of TSU Nino Lapiashvili. She informed the audience that negotiations for developing double degree undergraduate programme are already launched with several European universities, while the review of the curriculum with the School of European Law and Governance in Athens, Greece is already in the final phase. In this context, the Director of the TSU Institute of European Studies **Nino Lapiashvili** expressed special gratitude towards the former Rector of TSU, **Prof. George Sharvashidze**, for proposing the initiative of cooperation with the European School of Law and Governance in Athens to the Institute and for facilitating the

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process of starting discussions about collaboration as well as for the contribution to the successful completion of the negotiations of the double degree master's programmes and for his support to the internationalization of IES during the past years. After that, **Ambassador Ioseb Nanobashvili**, the head of the South Caucasus representation of the European Public Law Organization, addressed the participants and emphasized the importance of cooperation, while the General Director of the school, Panoraia Spiliopoulos, joined from Athens and talked about the progress of negotiations with the IES and the rapid implementation of the double-degree undergraduate programme.

The Director of the TSU Institute for European Studies informed the audience that the negotiations on implementing double degree bachelor's programme in European Studies are being ongoing with several high-ranking European universities and all updates will be shared with them step by step. She also mentioned that the head of the newly established Center for European Studies at Almaty Management University of Kazakhstan was visiting the IES to explore the IES's experience and establish new cooperation. As the visitors from Almaty university noted cooperation with the European Union as an economic union in the field of trade is a key priority for Kazakhstan, and due to the fact that it is necessary for Kazakh businesses to know about the EU Law, they considered it expedient to study the experience of the TSU Institute for European Studies and its newly established Jean Monnet Bachelor's programme- as a leading example of the development of the field of European Studies across the Eastern Partnership region.

The second day of the conference was opened with a session dedicated to the development of transversal skills. The Director of the institute **Nino Lapiashvili** noted that in order to maintain 100% employment rate of the graduates of the IES in the future, it is necessary to take effective steps, and in this context, she discussed activities of the IES, as well as the importance of this session. The session was led by the Acting Rector of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences and Associate Professor **Agnese Dāvidsone**. Prof. Davidsone talked about the best practices and experiences accumulated in the process of teaching communication at master's level. The event was followed by the presentations of the Executive Secretary of the International Chamber of Commerce **Khatia Bukhrashvili** and **Anano Ejibia**, as well as the Head of the Office of the Sector Economy and Economic Policy Committee of the Parliament of Georgia **Tamila Shabashvili** on the topic of strengthening the practical component (internships) offered to the students of the Institute for European Studies. In particular, they introduced in detail to the students and other participants of the conference the syllabi of the internship, its objectives and evaluation criteria of the practical component developed specifically for IES within the frames of the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Project EUStBA.

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In the final part of the event an international expert of the project Prof. **Kerry Anne Longhurst** spoke about the new Erasmus+ Jean Monnet module “Debating Europe: Internal and External Dynamics of European Integration” (DEBUE) and the role of the TSU Institute for European Studies in it as a partner institution.

The future prospects of the IES and action plan were discussed by the Director of the TSU Institute for European Studies. The IES students approved the initiative of the international experts to create an alumni organization of the institute and it was decided to integrate this into the strategic plan after thorough discussion.

After Q&A session and the closing remarks about successful implementation of the project the fourth Erasmus+ Jean Monnet international conference was officially closed.

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