**Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) action**

**Eastern Partnership region**

**Erasmus+ Capacity Building projects** (CBHE projects) are transnational cooperation projects based on multilateral partnerships, primarily between Higher Education Institutions from Programme countries and over 150 eligible Partner countries. Capacity Building projects aim at supporting the modernisation and development processes of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Higher Education (HE) systems in the eligible Partner Countries. They also aim to foster regional integration and cooperation within and between different regions of the world.

**CBHE projects features**

There are two types of Capacity Building projects, which aim to have their main impact either on Higher Education Institutions (Joint Projects) or on the higher education system as a whole (Structural Projects). In Structural Projects, Ministries of Education must be involved as full project partners.

Capacity Building projects can target a group of countries in a region (regional projects) or only one country (national projects). They can also address institutions in different regions (cross-regional projects).

These transnational projects consist of a minimum of five Higher Education Institutions from Programme and Partner Countries. Their duration is of 2-3 years (in the majority of cases) and the funding per project is between € 500,000 and € 1 million. The overall coordination of a CBHE project can be taken over by a HEI in a Programme country or in a Partner country.

Although the CBHE action mainly targets HEIs, other organisations (enterprises, professional organisations etc.) are also eligible to participate as full partners or as associated partners in CBHE projects.

**1. Funding for the Eastern Partnership region (EaP)**

Six countries from the Eastern Partnership region have participated in the Erasmus+ programme during the first six Calls for Proposals (2015-2020).

For the first six Calls for Proposals (2015-2020), the Eastern Partnership region had a total budget of € 86,008,578,54 million, around 10,64% of the annual global budget for CBHE projects. Ukraine was the country that benefitted the most in terms of budget (34%) and number of projects, followed by Georgia (15%), an equal share for Armenia and Moldova (13%), Belarus (10%) and Azerbaijan (8%). Although the maximum budget for a CBHE project can be up to €1 million, the average planned budget for project in EaP region is approximately € 680,000.00.

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1 Under CBHE (in case of multi-country projects) the budget committed to each country is a result of a theoretical calculation and is proportionate to the number of institutions of each country participating in the selected projects. These figures do not necessary correspond to the real budget that the institutions of the country concerned will receive during the implementation of the projects.
2. Applications and selected projects

Within the EaP region, 1242 applications were received and 127 CBHE projects have been funded in the course of the six Calls for Proposals. As a result, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) institutions are involved in 14% of all selected projects in all regions.

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2 In the six calls, 908 CBHE are the projects where Partner Countries were involved as coordinators or partners have been selected.
3. Involvement of EaP countries in CBHE projects (as coordinators or partners)

It can be observed that the level of participation across all Eastern Partnership countries does not present huge disparities. However, the level of involvement is more notable in the case of Ukraine (49) and Georgia (37). On the other side of the spectrum, we find Azerbaijan (19) and Moldova (21).

Number of projects coordinated by EaP countries (2015–2020)

The number of projects coordinated by EaP institutions is 33. This represents 26% of all EaP selected projects (127) and 13% of the total number of selected projects coordinated by Partner Country institutions (261). In spite of the high quality of the EaP involvement in the action, the number of projects coordinated by EaP institutions remains quite low mainly due to national administrative constraints, including mandatory project registration and lack of financial autonomy. However, the increase registered in recent years points to the strengthening of capacities in EaP institutions in relation to international project management. On the other end of the spectrum, Belarus is the only EaP country which is not yet coordinating any project.
4. Consortium composition

Selected projects in the EaP count 884 instances of participation in the consortia. Among them, the 70% are from private organisations, while 30% are from public ones. The minimum number of institutions in a consortium was 7, the maximum number was 36. When analysing the recurrent size of project consortia in the EaP across the six calls, it should be noted that 74% of selected projects have traditionally chosen a consortium involving 11-15 partners.

4.1 Number of HEIs and Non-HEIs involved in CBHE projects by country

The total number of HEIs involved in Eastern Partnership in the six CBHE calls is 243 whereas the total number of non-HEIs involved in the six Calls is 114.
5. **National projects vs multi-country cooperation**

99 **Joint Projects** and 28 **Structural Projects** have been selected in the Eastern Partnership Region in the period from 2015 to 2020. Within these 127 projects, 49 are national projects, 76 are multi-country (25 regional and 53 cross-regional projects).

The following charts show how often national and multi-country projects (regional and cross-regional ones) are represented in Joint and Structural projects:

**Multi-country projects** represent 70% of Joint projects and 30% of **Structural projects**. This shows that multi-country projects tend to focus on Higher Education Institutions instead of the education system as a whole.

5.1 **Regional vs cross-regional collaboration**

Among multi-country projects, 53 cross the EaP borders to cooperate mostly with the Russian Federation. Nevertheless, cases of cooperation can be observed with Central Asia and Asian organisations, albeit to a lesser extent.
6. Activities addressed by CBHE Joint Projects (JP) and Structural Projects (SP)

Most EaP activities focus on Joint Projects with an emphasis on Curriculum development, and Modernisation of governance, management and functioning of HEIs, as well on Strengthening of relations between HEIs and the wider economic and social environment.

Curriculum reform is the most successful activity of the CBHE action, since it allows HEIs to achieve their modernisation and internationalisation goals in a quick and efficient way through the transfer of knowledge and exchange of best practices. The accreditation of the newly developed curricula is also a guarantee for quality, public recognition and sustainability.

6.1 Curriculum development disciplines addressed in the EaP
Almost 50% of all projects in the region focus on curriculum reform. The most popular developments are in *Health, Social and behavioural sciences* and *Engineering*. The project ‘Training against medical error’ answers the need for change in national healthcare systems in Ukraine and Kazakhstan and ambitions to improve the quality of healthcare whilst decreasing its costs. Other projects such as the ‘Development of doctoral programmes in public health and social science in Armenia and Georgia’ and ‘Simulation in Undergraduate MEDical Education for Improvement of SAFETY and Quality of Patient Care’ can also be mentioned, as well as ‘Applied curricula in space exploration and intelligent robotic systems in Belarus’ and ‘Cross-domain competences for healthy and safe work in the 21st Century’.

Other popular disciplines include *Environmental Sciences and Protection technology*. The projects ‘Harmonising water related education’ and ‘Synergy of educational, scientific, management and industrial components for climate management and climate change prevention’ are good examples of projects that tackle pressing environmental challenges in the EaP region.

Nevertheless, CBHE projects in the EaP region tackle many other disciplines as evidenced by the table above (i.e. ICTs, Physical sciences, Languages, etc.).

The Education sector also constitutes one of the most important EU targets. For example, the Ukrainian-coordinated project ‘Modernization of Pedagogical Higher Education by Innovative Teaching Instruments’ is fully embedded in ambitious large-scale educational reforms in Ukraine’s ‘New Ukrainian School Strategy’.

However, it should be noted that project coordinators often highlight ‘education’ as the topic of their project only because the CBHE programme is about education, and not because their project specifically targets education and pedagogy. The statistics for the education topic are therefore inflated.

### 6.2 Modernisation of governance, policies, management and functioning of HEIs and HE systems

CBHE projects support the reform of Higher Education Institutions’ structures and processes, which has often proved to be more challenging than curriculum development given the strict hierarchies and policies that exist in many countries/universities. For example, some projects have succeeded in setting up international relations offices.
while others have focused on improving systems and processes in existing ones, which has facilitated international student exchanges and the development of international strategies. Career guidance offices are set up in many universities and help students find jobs quickly after their university studies, thus reducing youth unemployment in the region.

Within the scope of this project strand, the majority of projects targets **Quality assurance processes and mechanisms**. In this respect, the project focusing on the ‘Establishment and development of Quality assurance centres in Azerbaijan Universities’ develops a model of principles, priorities, guidelines and procedures to improve the Internal Quality Assurance System, which is inexistent in the majority of the Universities in Azerbaijan, and align it with international standards. The project ‘Open Practices, Transparency and Integrity for Modern Academia’ supports Ukrainian Universities in adopting and promoting Open Science practices to improve academic integrity in Ukraine.

**Governance, strategic planning and management of HEIs** represents the second more explored type of projects in this category. One of the projects aims at ‘Promoting excellence in teaching and learning excellence in Azerbaijani universities’ by using contemporary teaching tools and advanced technology, by developing human resource capacity and international partnerships, and developing students’ learning skills. The national Ukrainian project ‘University Teacher’s Certification Centres: Innovative approach to promotion Teaching Excellence’ can be mentioned as well under this category.

Regarding the **Internationalisation of HEIs**, the projects ‘Elevating the internationalisation of Higher Education in Moldova’, ‘Boosting Armenian Universities internationalization Strategy & Marketing’ and ‘International Students Adaptation and Integration’ can be mentioned as examples. Some projects also address **University services**, such as the ‘Establishment of Psychological Counseling Centers at Georgian HEIs for Students’, which is the first project of its kind in the region.

### 6.3. Strengthening of relations between HEIs and HE systems and the wider economic and social environment

![Graph showing various categories](image)
In the EaP region, the vast majority of projects in the **Strengthening of relations between HEIs and HE systems and the wider economic and social environment** category focuses on **University-enterprise cooperation, entrepreneurship and employability of graduates**.

For example, the project ‘Fostering university-enterprise cooperation and entrepreneurship of students via smart cafes in Armenia, Belarus and Moldova’ provides a concrete response to the employability challenges in EaP countries, by creating an innovative and stimulating environment to boost the creativity of students and young researchers. The project ‘Student mobility capacity building in higher education in Ukraine and Serbia’ improves employability chances of post-graduates in companies working internationally and the quality of PhD research, and thus their contribution to high quality research in the partner countries. Another project, ‘Introducing work-based learning in higher education systems of Armenia and Moldova for better employability of graduates’, aims at increasing employability through the development of supporting policy, legal framework and apprenticeship-based programmes.

There are also several projects tackling the **knowledge triangle and innovation**. For example, one structural project addresses ‘Strengthening the quality and relevance of the 3rd mission in Georgian Universities’, where the third mission refers to the social, enterprise, and innovative activities that universities perform in addition to teaching and research tasks. The project will develop a methodology to accelerate cultural change in the universities and issue guidelines to be applied across the whole higher education sector in Georgia.