

# **Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University**

## **Department of Foreign Relations**

### **The impact of participation in the ERASMUS+ ICM program on the institution and on the personal and professional development of the students and staff of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University: a case study**

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU) stands as a prominent participant in the ERASMUS+ ICM program, showcasing noteworthy involvement with a record of over 448 funded projects spanning over the period 2015-2022, collaborating with more than 150 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across 27 Program Countries. Aligned with its strategic priorities, the Department of Foreign Relations (DFR) at TSU places a specific emphasis on comprehensively studying the impact of numerous mobilities facilitated through these ERASMUS+ ICM projects. Consequently, TSU conducted a comprehensive study with the overarching goal of assessing the impact of the ERASMUS+ ICM program on the personal and professional development of its beneficiaries, as well as its broader impact at both the university and national levels.

The focus of this research was to investigate the positive and negative effects of the international mobility afforded by the ERASMUS+ program, exemplified through the experiences of TSU, encompassing students, academic and administrative staff, the university as an institution, and its impact on the national level. The research spanned the timeframe of 2022–2023.

The initial phase involved the collection of data pertaining to academic, administrative staff, and student participants in the ERASMUS+ ICM program. Subsequently, in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives from the educational and scientific management of the university, as well as employees engaged in the ERASMUS+ ICM program administration. Focus groups were convened with students and alumni who have participated in the at least one call for obtaining scholarships for a semester abroad within the ERASMUS+ ICM program and have obtained the grant, followed by interviews with program applicants within the calls administered by the TSU Department of Foreign Relations (DFR). Following the quantitative survey data analysis, the study acknowledged the potential for the program's participation to induce changes in the variables under investigation. Consequently, the research expanded its scope, encompassing students who did not participate in the calls for obtaining scholarships/grants for a semester abroad within the ERASMUS+ ICM program.

To address the research questions, a convergent parallel mixed-methods design was employed, involving the separate collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, subsequently merging them (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

The study was planned and executed in stages, commencing with desk research. The first phase employed qualitative research methods, including in-depth interviews and focus groups, engaging representatives from academic and scientific management of TSU, as well as academic and

administrative staff, and students at all academic levels (BA, MA, and Ph.D.) who participated as a grantee in the ERASMUS+ ICM program from 2016 to 2022. The second phase utilized quantitative research methods, employing a self-administered online questionnaire which was distributed to students and graduates through electronic mail. The recipients of the email were TSU students as well as alumni who have benefited from a semester abroad opportunities within the ERASMUS+ ICM program administered by DFR at least once. The email encompassed comprehensive information about the research, along with a consent form adhering to the ethical standards set forth by the research guidelines. Participants who willingly consented to engage in the study and formally provided written approval were subsequently invited to complete an online questionnaire. The solicitation for participation was extended to a total of 946 individuals whose data was accessible through the databases of the DFR, with a response received from only 215, indicating a participation rate of 22.7%.

Participants included 283 students and graduates from all three academic levels (BA, MA, and Ph.D.), divided into three groups: ERASMUS+ ICM - grantees (N = 140), participants who participated in the calls for obtaining scholarships/grants for a semester abroad within the ERASMUS+ ICM program, but did not get a grant (N = 75), and those who did not participate (N = 68).

Quantitative research hypothesized that the time spent abroad at European universities under the ERASMUS+ ICM program impacts various student characteristics, influencing core values and self-efficacy.

For the quantitative research, a manual/guide was developed, incorporating pertinent questions and scales from other studies (Sumbadze., Tarkhan-Mouravi, 2004; Sumbadze 2006, 2009, 2009a;<sup>1</sup> Sumbadze 2012<sup>2</sup>). Scales included trust in others, optimism, happiness and satisfaction with life. Additionally, instruments measuring psychological characteristics included scales adapted to the Georgian population, such as Schwartz's Values Questionnaire (PVQ-RR)<sup>3</sup> 1992; 20120); Dimensions of Identity Development Scale DIDS<sup>4</sup> (both scales adapted to the Georgian population by Javakhishvili and colleagues 2016<sup>5</sup>); and "Child and Adolescent Self-Efficacy Scale" (Bandura et al., 1996)<sup>6</sup> (the scale was adapted for the Georgian population by Bandzeladze 2022).

---

<sup>1</sup>Sumbadze., Tarkhan-Mouravi.(2004) Political profiles of the Georgian electorate: Panel survey data Sumbadze( 2006, 2009, 2009a) „Georgia Public Opinion Barometer“

<sup>2</sup> Sumbadze, N. (2012). Generations and values. Tbilisi: Institute for Policy Studies. Retrieved from Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF) website: [https://www.osgf.ge/files/publications/Taobebi\\_1.pdf](https://www.osgf.ge/files/publications/Taobebi_1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Schwartz, S.H., Cieciuch, J., Vecchione, M., Davidov, E., Fischer, R., Beierlein, C., Ramos, A., Verkasalo, M., Lönnqvist, J.-E., Demirutku, K., Dirilen-Gumus, O., & Konty, M. (2012). Refining the theory of basic individual values. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 103, 663-688.

Javakhishvili, N., Skhirtladze, N., Butsashvili, N., Lortkipanidze M., Makashvili, A., Vardanashvili, I., Shekrladze, I. (2016). Validation of Research Instruments. Proceedings of Psychological Conference Dedicated to D. Uznadze's Jubilee, pp. 63-84 (in Georgian).

<sup>4</sup> Luyckx, K., Schwartz S.J., Berzonsky M., Soenens B., Vansteenkiste M., Smits I., & Goossens L.

(2008). Capturing ruminative exploration: Extending the four-dimensional model of identity formation in late adolescence. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 42, 58-82.

doi:10.1016/j.jrp.2007.04.004

Skhirtladze, N., Javakhishvili, N., Schwartz, J. S., Beyers, W., Luyckx, K. (2016). Identity processes and statuses in post-Soviet Georgia: Exploration processes operate differently. *Journal of Adolescence*, 47, 197-209. doi: 10.1016/j.adolescence.2015.08.006.

<sup>5</sup>Javakhishvili, N., Skhirtladze, N., Butsashvili, N., Lortkipanidze M., Makashvili, A., Vardanashvili, I., Shekrladze, I. (2016). Validation of Research Instruments. Proceedings of Psychological Conference Dedicated to D. Uznadze's Jubilee, pp. 63-84 (in Georgian).

<sup>6</sup> Bandzeladze, T. (2022) Ph.D thesis "Psychosocial Factors of Vulnerability to Problem Behavior in Georgian Adolescents" TSU.

The process of participant selection employed non-probability-available sampling, restricted to individuals who had read and consented to participate in the research. Data were subsequently tabulated and processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS v25).

The outcomes of the research conducted by the Department of Foreign Relations (DFR) at TSU during the 2022-2023 period facilitate an assessment of the ERASMUS+ ICM program's impact, contributing valuable insights to guide future strategies and dissemination efforts. The interim and final reports stemming from this research were presented during staff weeks hosted at TSU in February 2023 and October 2023 (<https://tsu.ge/en/foreign-relations/page/1941>):

- During the Fifth International Staff Week at TSU (February 6–10, 2023), 51 representatives from 25 partner universities across 14 countries (including Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Spain, and Türkiye).
- During the Sixth International Staff Week at TSU (October 9–13, 2023), with the participation of 24 representatives from 16 partner universities from 8 countries.

DFR plans to extend the research to further investigate the program's impact. A self-administered longitudinal questionnaire has been developed for completion by grantees of the ERASMUS+ ICM program twice a year, corresponding to each semester-prior to departure for and upon return from their mobility experience.

The research findings are being shared widely and will continue to be systematically disseminated across professional networks, interdisciplinary forums, and to the general public through a series of planned activities:

- Information pertaining to the research has been disseminated through the TSU newspaper, featuring an article titled "The Impact of Erasmus+ on Tbilisi State University." <sup>7</sup>
- The research outcomes, already published in a Georgian academic journal, will be further disseminated through English academic journals (preparation for an English paper is currently underway) <sup>8</sup>.
- Presentation of the research is scheduled to take place at the annual conference organized by the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences at TSU in September 2024.
- The research findings will be showcased at international conferences, with confirmed participation in an upcoming EURIE in Istanbul in February 2024<sup>9</sup>.

Comprehensive dissemination of the final results is planned through the following means:

- The research report will be made available on the official website of DFR at TSU.

---

Bandzeladze, T., Arutiunov, L., Espinosa, P., (2019) The Role of Family Factors and Self-Regulation: Problem behavior in Georgian Adolescents, *Revista de Estudios e Investigacion en Psicologia y Educacion*, Vol. 6(2): 146-155, DOI:10.17979/reipe.2019.6.2.5775;

<sup>7</sup> The effect of Erasmus+ on Tbilisi State University <https://tsu.media/erasmus-kvleva/>

<sup>8</sup> Pirtskhalava, E., Gergedava, T. (2023) The Perception and Attitudes about Benefits of Participation in Erasmus+ ICM. A Case Study of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. *GESJ: Education Sciences and Psychology* // 2023 | No.4(69), pp. 39-54

<sup>9</sup> EURIE 2024 CONFERENCE ("The Influence of the ERASMUS+ Program Participation on the Basic Values of Students")

- A presentation of the results is scheduled at TSU on March 21, 2024. Invitations will be extended to interested individuals, including representatives from TSU's top management, student organizations, as well as international, and local organizations engaged in shaping higher education policy in Georgia.