

BENCHMARKING REPORT ON INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE FRAME OF ERASMUS+ BOOST PROJECT ON BOOSTING ARMENIAN UNIVERSITIES INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGY AND MARKETING

Introduction

The aim of this report is to use a comparative benchmarking approach to examine the level of internationalization of Armenian Higher Education Institutions using other Post-Soviet and European universities as comparators. It was initiated in order to improve the understanding and knowledge of level of internationalisation of European HEI with long tradition of internationalisation on the one hand and HEIs with education system inherited from USSR on the other and to identify good practice exemplars and features. This will help to reveal the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of Armenian HEI by conducting SWOT analysis and thus to improve their performance.

Methodology

A comparative benchmarking approach was applied to carry out this study. The analysis was based on data of existing research on internationalization of a number of HEIs collected within Erasmus+ CBHE Harmony project for the period 2015-2016 academic year. In case of Tallinn University of Technology the data was collected from the presentation done during Erasmus+ BOOST CBHE project coordination meeting as well as from the official website of the university.

The study included three groups of comparators:

- Armenian Higher Education Institutions
 1. Khachatur Abovian Armenian State Pedagogical University
 2. Russian Armenian (Slavonic) University
 3. Vanadzor State University named after Hovhannes Tumanyan
- Other Post Soviet Higher Education Institutions
 1. Belarusian State University /Belarus/
 2. Voronezh State University /Russia/
 3. Tallinn University of Technology /Estonia/
- European Higher Education Institutions
 1. Instituto Politécnico de Tomar /Portugal/
 2. Aston University /UK/
 3. Kassel University /Germany/

The benchmarking indicators that were measured and evaluated were divided into the following categories and clear distinction has been made between key indicators and key figures. The latter presents merely data, meanwhile the indicator shows interconnection of the data with bigger or another data.

Indicators
1. Number of Full Time Students
2. Number of Academic Staff
3. Number of Staff in the International Office

4. Internationalization strategy /National, Institutional/

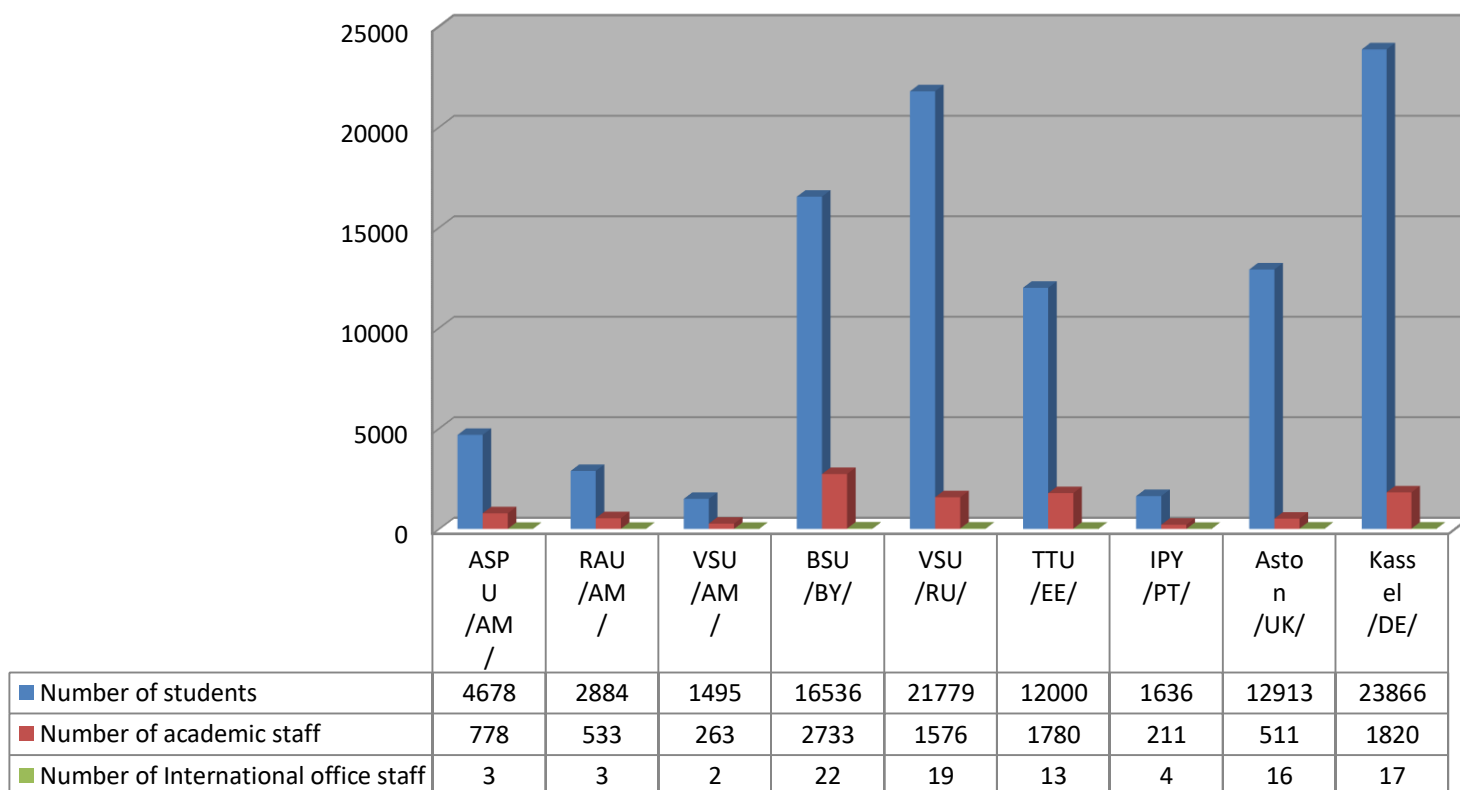
5. Mobility/student, staff; incoming, outgoing/

6. Management /Centralized, Decentralized/

Analysis

1. The first indicator addresses the ratio of students to academic staff and staff of international office. As it is shown in the Fig. 1 the number of staff of international office is proportional to the number of enrolled students in the majority of the benchmarked universities. The highest number of international office staff has Belarus State University and Voronezh State University /Russia/.

Fig. 1 Number of students /full time/, number of academic staff, number of international office staff



- Table 1 and Table 2 show whether the benchmarked universities have strategic plan of internationalization both on national and institutional level. The table 1 data reveals that all the benchmarked universities have strategic plan of internationalization. However, the benchmarking between the countries illustrates that there is a National Strategy of internationalisation in all the benchmarked countries both post-soviet and European except Armenia. These strategies vary from more general documentations to more specific ones. In fact, as the table data shows in case of post-soviet countries the strategy is mainly more general / Belarus, Russia/ aiming to develop all the aspects of education as a whole while in case of

European countries /UK, Germany/ the strategy is more specific and focused. If we consider the national strategy of each country separately, the following aspects can be singled out:

Belarus: The most important document towards internationalization so far in Belarus is the **State Program of Development of Higher Education of Republic of Belarus for 2011-2015** approved in 2011. International cooperation is mentioned among seven main goals of the higher education development program mainly through the "increase of international prestige of the Belarusian higher school and tripling the volume of export of educational services". Thus export of educational services was mentioned in the State Program as a priority of international cooperation. Within the program the government has allocated certain amount of funding from budget to enable HEI's of Belarus to take part in international education fairs, to create website promoting Belarus as an attractive education destination, to invite foreign researchers to establish new and modern knowledge areas etc. A limited number of students would receive funding to obtain education by profiles unavailable in the national higher education system. However, it should be mentioned that students' and staff mobility are not mentioned in the program. This means that the country strategy is mainly aimed at attracting international students and not expanding opportunities for the Belarusian students and staff to participate in international exchange programs.

Russia: In 2012, Russia announced the launch of a new educational project, known as the **5-100 Initiative**. This is a special government run program to develop major Russian universities. The project's goal is to have five Russian universities enter the top 100 of world university rankings by 2020, enhancing their global competitiveness.

Another important initiative towards internationalization of Russian education is the **"Development of the Export Potential of the Russian Education System"** programme approved on May 30, 2017. The program aims to build its international enrolment from under 220,000 students /2017/ to nearly 310,000 by 2020 (a 40% increase). The programme also sets a long-term strategy to build Russia's foreign student base to 710,000 students by 2025. The programme will initially be rolled out to group of 20 leading Russian institutions, and then to all universities in the country by 2021. Its major components include:

- Strengthened support services for international students
- Expanded English-medium degree programmes

- An increasing range of joint programmes, pathway options, summer programmes, and online programmes

The next big step towards internationalization of education in Russia is the **Russian Scholarship Project**. This is an international competition which gives the students from all over the world a unique opportunity to enroll in a Master's program in Russia without entrance exams. Entrants can choose among more than 500 universities in 80 Russian cities, from Kaliningrad to Siberia and the Far East. Winners of the competition will enjoy early admission and tuition-free education in a university of their liking. The competition is open to all foreign citizens, as well as Russian citizens permanently living abroad, who already have a Bachelor's degree or are completing their Bachelor's education in 2018. The competition is conducted entirely online.

Estonia: Among the benchmarked countries the case of Estonia as a post-soviet country is more specific because it is EU member since 2004 and thus has also benefited from European funds. Besides, Estonia can also be a role model taking into account its tremendous and coordinated efforts towards internationalisation of HE in Estonia. In fact, as a result of these efforts the number of foreign students in formal education has more than doubled over the last six years /since 2011/. It should be mentioned that internationalization in Estonia is prioritized towards incoming students.

Estonia has a formal strategy for internationalization of higher education at the national level since 2007 /**Estonian Higher Education Internationalization Strategy 2008–2015**/ which is complemented by the **Agreement on Good Practice in the Internationalisation of Estonia's Higher Education Institutions**. The objective of this strategy was to improve the competitiveness of Estonian higher education in the region, make Estonian higher education institutions more visible, to create a legal and institutional environment that supports internationalization in all of its aspects. The Agreement includes issues related to admissions, such as language requirements, as well as responsibilities and duties of the higher education institutions to ensure quality education for international students and also a suitable environment for international academic staff. Estonia also identified priority countries (top

markets) for its internationalization efforts and is targeting mostly: Finland, Russia, Latvia, Turkey, and China.

In 2008 Estonia launched branding and marketing campaign “**Study in Estonia**” that really made a difference in attracting international students.

Another important initiative towards internationalization of Estonian HEI is the **Archimedes Foundation**. This is an independent body established by the Estonian government with the objective to coordinate and implement different international and national programmes and projects in the field of training, education and research. It has an official website which includes all the possible information about studying in Estonia and available scholarships.

To increase the number of incoming students several scholarship programmes have been developed in Estonia. The greatest of the scholarship programmes promoting the internationalization of higher education is **Dora Plus 2015-2023** funded from the European Regional Development Fund. The programme aims at increasing the popularity and attractiveness of Estonia as a place for study and research, and the international competitiveness of the education provided by the institutions of higher education.

In 2015, the managing committee for the internationalization of Estonian higher education and research approved **the Strategy for the Internationalization of Estonian Higher Education 2015-2020**. The priority target group is particularly potential doctoral and master’s level students. The key point of the strategy is to insure that 30% of foreign students who have graduated from the master’s and doctoral level work in Estonia after graduation. Thus the strategy will support the development both of higher education as well as the economy and labor market.

Germany: Germany has a very well-elaborated, comprehensive strategy for internationalization, coordinated across sectors and also across levels of policy making and implementation. Germany has had various internationalization strategies already since the 1990s. These strategies have resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of international students in Germany over the past two decades – from 158,000 in 1997 to approximately 358,000 in 2017 (about 12% of all students). In January 2001, GATE Germany program was established by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Association of

Universities and other Higher Education Institutions in Germany (HRK) as a joint initiative. The first goal of the initiative was to promote German higher education and its various research and teaching facilities, offering a wide range of subjects in more than 10,000 degree programmes and, second, to provide international students and faculty members with comprehensive information before and during their stay in Germany. Through this program German universities have gradually come to terms with, and built competence in, international marketing. Universities have increasingly taken part in international education fairs and similar initiatives; some institutions have even established representative offices abroad for the purpose of attracting students. The internationalization is supported not only by government, but also by industry with perspective for attracting academically qualified individuals from abroad. The crucial role in their internationalization of HEI's in Germany play German Academic Exchange Program with three strategic fields of activity "Scholarships for the Best", "Structures for Internationalization" and "Expertise for Academic Collaboration".

UK: The first internationalization strategy in UK was launched in 2004 called **Putting the World into World-Class Education**. The strategy announces a planned expansion of the Education UK recruitment website operated by the British Council: The strategy features **an emphasis on educational technology**, and, in particular, on promoting a major new online course delivery platform – FutureLearn. It also intends to "explore opportunities to broker new partnerships with countries looking to send large numbers of students to the UK on government scholarships (such as Brazil's Scientific Mobility scholarship programme) and to support an interdepartmental initiative to promote engagement with "the 200,000 foreign students who graduate from UK universities every year."

Another important UK Strategy for internationalization is called **Outward Student Mobility 2017 – 2020** which followed **UK Strategy 2013–2017 for Outward Mobility**. A key outcome of the first strategy was *Go International* campaign brand. The Go International website is an online resource for information on studying, working or volunteering abroad as part of a UK university education.

The second strategy on outward student mobility aims to double the percentage of UK-domiciled full-time, first degree students who undertake an international placement as part of their higher education programme by 2020. This will create a new generation of global

graduates, and a higher education culture in which international opportunities are an aspiration for all students.

Portugal: Portuguese Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have undergone an intense process of internationalization, with rising figures in the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge and research as well as student and staff international mobility and academic cooperation.

In 2006, the main obstacles to the internationalization of Portuguese HEIs were defined to be linguistic barriers and the lack of financial resources and support from the government. The internationalization strategy of HEI was adopted in Portugal in 2014. The strategy was presented as a list of 40 recommendations across four key dimensions, namely institutional collaboration, mobility, institutional strategic partnerships and the development of more digital education resources. Institutional collaboration involves not only consortia and joint curricula but also co-operation between researchers and the design and implementation of projects with other HEIs. Collaboration also covers international mobility of students, teachers and researchers, the development of International Student Law and an improved welcoming process for international students. Simultaneously, the strategy aims to double the number of visiting international students by 2020 by development of institutional strategic partnerships and the digital education, which also include distance learning courses in Portuguese. Special attention to language issues is apparent in the 2014 Internationalization strategy, where Portuguese is acknowledged as an attractive place for students from Community of Portuguese Language Countries and for those interested in developing their communicative competence in a fast expanding language that is currently spoken by 250 million worldwide.

Table 1. Institutional Strategic Plan of Internationalization

University Name	Institutional Strategic Plan
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ASPU /Armenia/

Yes

RAU /Armenia/

Yes

VSU /Armenia/

Yes

Table 2. National Strategic Plan of Internationalisation of HEI

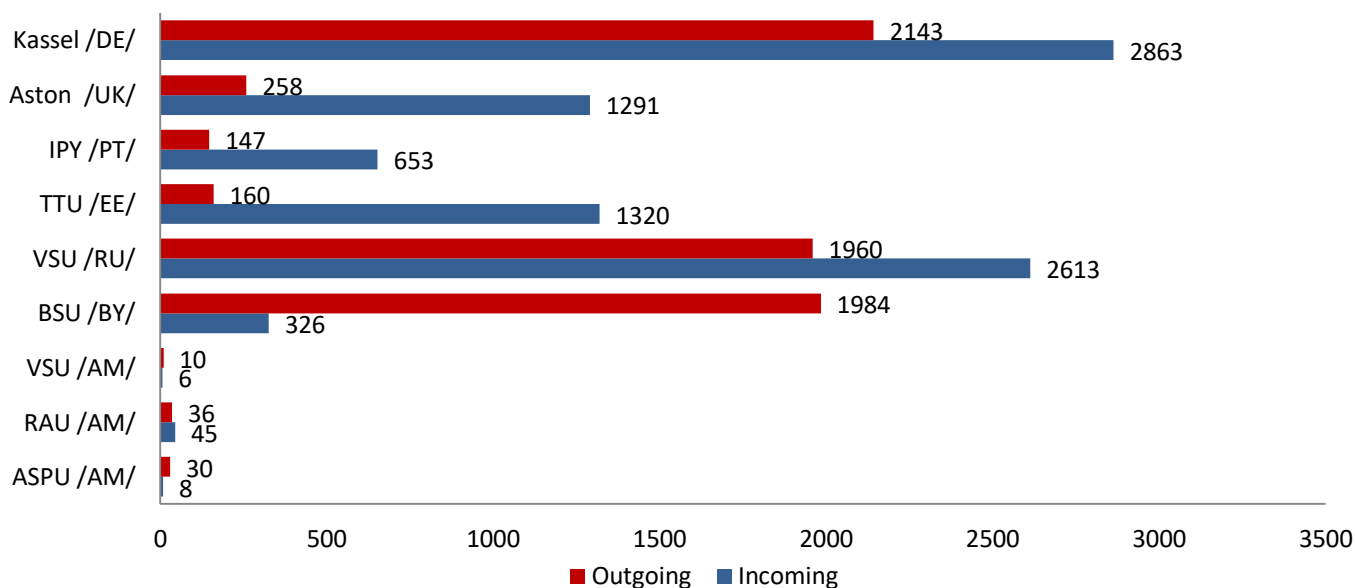
Country Name	National Strategic Plan	Details
Armenia	No	-----
Belarus	Yes	State Program of Development of Higher Education of Republic of Belarus for 2011-2015
Aston /UK/		Yes
Kassel /Germany/		Yes

Russia	Yes	State Programme “Development of Education for 2013-2020
Estonia	Yes	Internationalization Strategy 2006–2015; Agreement on Good Practice in Internationalization of Estonia’s HEIs
Portugal	Yes	National Reform Program /2016-2020/
UK	Yes	International education strategy: global growth and prosperity /2013/
Germany	Yes	DAAD Strategy 2020 (2013); Strategy of the Federal and Länder Ministers of Science for the Internationalisation of the HEI in Germany (2013); Strategy of the Federal Government for the Internationalization of Science and Research (2008)

- Figure 2 illustrates the number of incoming and outgoing students per university. As the chart shows the number of incoming students exceeds the number of outgoing students in all the universities. Among European Universities the highest number of incoming students has Aston University in UK. Voronezh State University in Russia is the leader among the post-

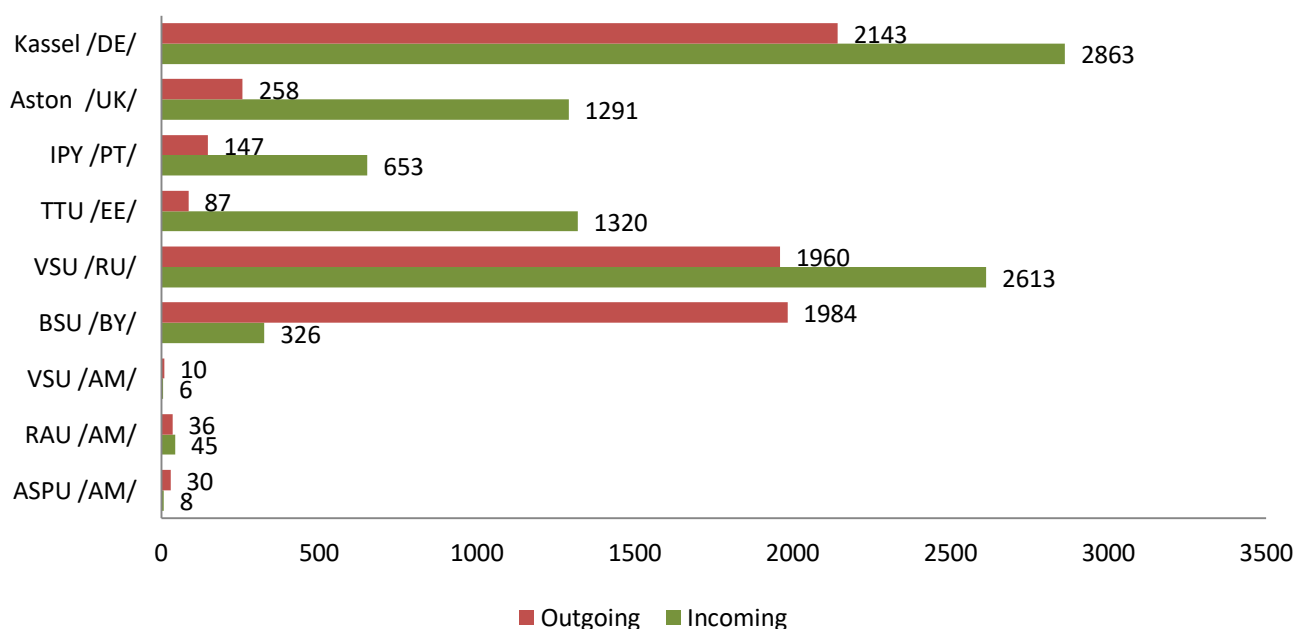
soviet countries with the number of incoming students. This may be justified taking into consideration that the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation together with Rossatrudnichestvo enrolls foreign students in study programs of Russian Universities on a free basis (funded from the budget of the Russian Federation). Thus according to the information on web-site of Voronezh State University there were 158 international students admitted to the VSU Institute of International Education on a state-subsidized and fee-baying basis in 2016. Interesting case of study is the data of Tallin University of Technology. As the figure 3 shows the number of incoming students is 1320 while the number of outgoing students is 160. The reason is probably the international strategy of Estonia which is more targeted on attracting international students and staff than being focused on the number of outgoing academic staff.

Fig. 2 Number of incoming and outgoing students



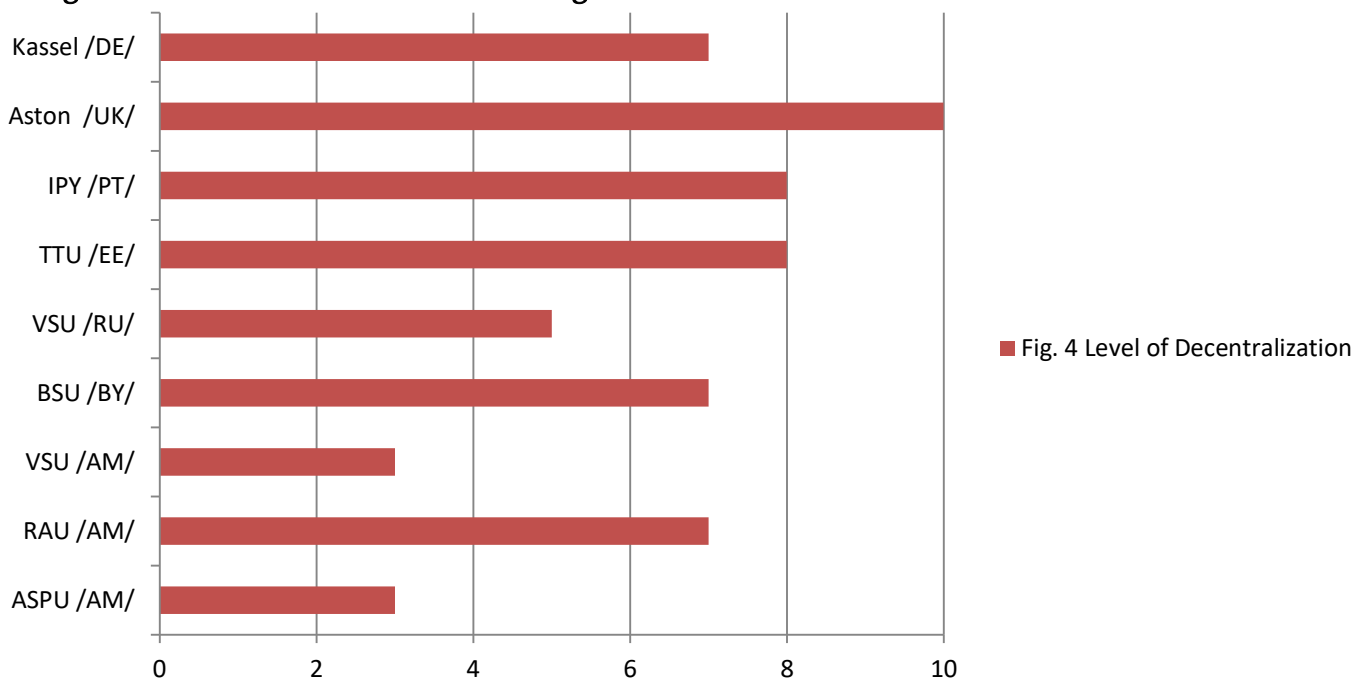
4. As the Figure 3 shows, the number of outgoing and incoming academic staff is the highest in Kassel University in Germany. This may be conditioned with the active role of DAAD /German Academic Exchange Service/ as well as of German Research Foundation. In fact, the prominent German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) has been active and well-funded since the 1950s in promoting international academic cooperation, and in particular exchange of scholars. Besides, Germany has also had various internationalisation strategies already since the 1990s. The most recently developed national-level key strategic documents supporting internationalisation are: a joint Strategy of the Federal and Länder Ministers of Science for the Internationalisation of the Higher Education Institutions in Germany (2013), the DAAD 2020 Strategy (2013 a, b), and Strengthening Germany's Role in the Global Knowledge Society, Strategy of the Federal Government for the Internationalization of Science and Research (2008). The highest gap between the number of incoming and outgoing staff is again in case of Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia conditioned by its more selective strategic approach.

Fig. 3 Number of incoming and outgoing academic staff



5. Figure 4 illustrates the extent to which the management of university is decentralized by assessing the results using 10-point scale. The highest level of decentralisation has Aston University in UK. As compared to other Universities the two of Armenian HEI have the lowest number of decentralization which may also condition the low level of internationalisation.

Fig. 4 Level of Decentralization of Management



Results

Key findings related to each of the benchmarking indicators are as follows:

- ❖ **Number of students, number of academic and international office staff:** The number of staff of international office is proportional to the number of enrolled students in majority of benchmarked universities. However, in case of Armenian HEI the management type is centralised to large extent which may strongly affect the level of internationalisation.

- ❖ **Internationalisation strategy /National, Institutional/:** All the benchmarked universities have internationalisation strategy on institutional level. As for the national strategy of internationalisation of HEI's, only Armenia from the benchmarked countries does not have national strategy.

The following findings from the national strategies of the benchmarked countries could be singled out as success factors and be applied for the development of national strategy for Internationalization of Armenian HEI:

- Prioritized country strategy which may be focused on: specific target countries, on incoming students and staff, on expanding opportunities for Armenian students and staff, or it may also include internationalization in all of its aspects.
- Allocation of certain amount of funding from budget to enable HEI's to take part in international education fairs
- Creation of website promoting Armenia as an attractive education destination (in this case www.studyinarmenia.org could be improved)
- Inviting foreign researchers to establish new and modern knowledge areas
- National scholarships for Armenian students to obtain education abroad by profiles which are not available in the Armenian higher education system or are not developed (Luys Foundation targets excellency of HEI)
- Allocation from the budget to include a limited number of Armenian HEI into the world ranking thus enhancing their global competitiveness
- Development of support services for international students
- Creation of English degree programmes, joint programmes, summer school programmes
- Recognition of obtained degrees
- Special focus on development of online English programs
- Establishment of representative offices abroad for the purpose of attracting students
- Creation of branding and marketing campaign study in Armenia
- Involvement of all stakeholder /Government, HEI's, labor market etc./
- Development of scholarship programs for foreign students to study in Armenia, particularly, to have tuition-free education.

- Improving the demand for international students in the Armenian labour market during their study
- ❖ **Mobility/student, academic staff/incoming and outgoing//:** The mobility data shows that the national strategy on internationalization has affected both the mobility of students and staff /Germany, Estonia, Russia/. The balance between incoming and outgoing staff also depends from the national strategy of each country.
- ❖ **Centralized/Decentralized Management:** The assessment of level of decentralization of HEI levels that the lowest level of decentralisation have Armenian HEI.

The above mentioned findings provided helpful baseline information for conducting the following SWOT analysis for Internationalization of HEI Armenia:

SWOT FOR THE HE INTERNATIONALISATION IN ARMENIA

Strength	Weakness
S1: Big diaspora and willingness to explore homeland by the latters	W1: Lack of English language knowledge among academia
S2: Attractiveness of the old culture and the country, landscape, weather (more sunny days), food, low economy	W2: Lack of study programs in foreign language (few courses or programs are available)
S3: Comparatively low fees and living	W3: Inertia of socialist legacy: lack of strategic planning skills, skills and capacities for international recruiting, mindset and stereotypes, social responsibility
S4: Comparatively higher quality in the following areas in the region: Fine and Applied Arts, Medical Science, IT and Science, Archeology	W4: Lack of interdisciplinary approach to the study programs and disciplines, thus not being able to respond to the modern labor market requirement
S5: Willingness and availability of specific experience in providing distance learning	W5: Lack of overall financing, hence lack of funding for international scholarships, portability of scholarships
S6: Availability of Matenadaran and the old manuscripts for doing research in specific fields	W6: High taxation and researchers with high capacities prefer individual networking supporting the ghost economy
-	W7: Lack of accountability mechanisms and tools to guide the institutional changes in line with national

priorities
W8: Lack of policy guidelines at national level
W9: Gap between research and industry, thus not contributing to the knowledge advancement

Threats	Opportunities
T1: Visa regulations: both for outgoing and incoming students (for the regions such as Middle East, Africa) T2: Karabakh Conflict T3: Flow of competent staff to organizations with higher salaries T4: Low motivation of international students to study, more focusing on exploring the country, culture and getting diploma	O1: External funds to direct to the University development in line with the strategies O2: Availability of skillful graduates from different EU and US HEIs working in other fields of the Economy O3: Close border with Iran and attractiveness of Armenian Higher Education as a window to external world O4: Bilingualism of Armenian academia (Armenian-Russian) and possibility to recruit students from CIS region