



Economic Research Center

Research report
on “State Program for education
of Azerbaijan youth abroad in the
years of 2007/2015”

ERC has completed the implementation of the project on the “Increasing of public awareness regarding with the implementation of the state program on education of Azerbaijani youth abroad in the years 2007-2015”

With the framework of the project the State Program and legal framework that determines its implementation has been investigated, advanced foreign experience in this field has been studied, a comparative analysis has been carried out. Besides, the implementation process of the program has been investigated, surveys and interviews with representatives of the parties involved in this process have been conducted. During the research period, 13 request for information have been sent to the state agencies involved in the implementation of the program. The responses have been analyzed by the ERC experts. As a result, the expert group have developed a package of proposals and recommendations to improve the program’s implementation process, increase transparency and accountability in this sphere, and enable to create equal terms and conditions to all young people, who has necessary knowledge and skills.

One of the main directions of the project was conduction of awareness campaign on the opportunities of the program among interest groups; organizing of media campaign consisted of journalist investigation devoted to the progma and its implemenation process; organizing of round tables with the participation of interested and affected groups; as well as rendering of methodical and information assistance to young people to participate in this program.

The informative booklet and a poster have been prepared by ERC and distibuted among high school students. 6 smiliar seminars have been organized at universtities in Baku, Ganja, and Lankaran. A special book consisting of the most interesting questions and answer about the program and its implementation process have been prepared by ERC experts and have been distributed among interested groups. 6 articles, which covers various aspects of the State Program have been published in the national newspapers and web portals ((“Yeni Məsavat”, “Azadlıq”, “Bizim Yol” newspapers and “Qafqazinfo”, “Mediaforum” və “ann.az” web portals)

Economic Research Center (ERC) has investigated the implementation process of “State Program for education of Azerbaijan youth abroad in the years of 2007/2015”. Below are major findings from the research:

- 1. Insufficient transparency and accountability in the implementation of the state programme.**
- 2. Increasingly frequent delays of monthly allowances (accommodation, foods, books, etc.) at the beginning of education year.**
- 3. Non-implementation of measures necessary to reach the objectives in the state programme.** For instance, the state programme envisages an annual of a thousand students studying at all levels of education abroad with state funds in 2015 and a total of five thousand students during the period of 2007-2015 years. Nevertheless, in reality, a total of 1228 students have managed to benefit from this programme over the past five years. It is not convincing that 3772 students will have been sent abroad for studies through the state programme over the next remaining four years of programme implementation.
- 4. Shortcomings in the implementation of the state programme.** Untimely expertise of documents of students financed through Ministry of Education, delays in tuition fees, incomprehensive answers to the questions of applicants, civil society representatives and mass media on the grounds of less time and under-capacity, no explanation of the criteria on which the second (approval) round of selection is based, no usual provision of answers to the questions of applicants who failed the contests signal difficulties in management and superior influence of administrative leverages.

- 5. No appeal right for the contestants of the State programme.**
- 6. Absence of proper particular mechanisms to get back the budget funds spent on students that were removed from the programme due to various reasons (academic failures, not returning of students to the country, untimely submittal of documents, etc.).** As per the information from SOCAR, thirteen students have been removed from the state programme so far and works are underway to get back the funds from them. Considering the removal of some people from the programme in 2008, the fact that no single manat has been returned over the last three years is an indication of ineffective system.
- 7. Lack of students in technical professions.** Although no concrete statistical breakdown analysis of students financed through Ministry of Education in terms of technical studies, humanities and medicine has been done, it is possible to notice a certain pattern on the basis of the division across the professions.
- 8. No special attention to language preparation courses. Both the state programme and relevant legislation contain the provisions on the language preparation courses for talented students to benefit.** Yet, it has been neglected. That the special share of talented students, who do not know foreign language and were sent to attend the language courses, in the reported statistics is around one or two people is because of the preference given to those candidates who already speak the foreign language.
- 9. Recent year's decline in the number of students sent to study in the USA.** According to statistics available until the end of November this year, of 918 students having been sent abroad under the programme, only 31 are studying in the USA. According to the information of State Oil Fund, the education fees of ten in 2008, thirteen in 2009, five in

2010, and three students in October 2011 in the USA have been financed, whereas the rankings of influential agencies such as “Times” show that of the ten top universities in the world for 2011-2012, seven are based in the USA. Lately, International Academic Perspectives Institute has announced the list of the world’s best 2000 universities, where out of 2000 universities, 413 are located in the USA and the first top ten includes seven universities in the USA.

The Ministry of Education explains the decline with the lower preference of youths for US universities and higher fees of tuition education there: “there are such medical universities that require 100 or 150 thousand dollars a year, which can be spent on the studies of 6 to 7 students in Germany”. In the table adopted by Cabinet of Ministers for the norms of monthly allowances of students abroad, the monthly allowances for the US universities are USD 1800 maximum and USD 1400 minimum, while they are 1750 EUR in Great Britain where 23 per cent of students or 209 students financed under the state programme, which is around USD 2333.

Experts believe that the reason of declining number of students sent to the US universities is political. The recent years’ involvement of US-educated youths in democratic developments in the country and their leading role in these processes, are considered to be the product of brain-washing and US universities are informally banned at the state level.

Economic Research Center proposes the following solutions to eradicate the above-mentioned problems:

1. Assigning the programme implementation to Students Admission State Committee, and approving 10-15 members of staff for the units under the Committee.
2. Involving civil society representatives and influential independent intellectuals in the staff composition of Commission of Education under the President.

3. Lowering the score requirements from the existing 550-600 points score so that more youth can benefit from the programme.
4. Setting a quote for the internship of scholarly and pedagogical employees from the regions in universities abroad.
5. Applying concessions to those that won international Olympiads.
6. Making relevant changes and amendments to the legislation for more transparency and accountability in the selection processes, running statistical analysis across social status of parents, gender, and regions.
7. Providing for the appeal right for the contestants.
8. Disbursing half of the education fees to the accounts of students given the increasing cases of delays encountered at the beginning of the education year.
9. Reducing the number of universities and countries in order to concentrate on specific countries and universities.
10. Providing language preparation courses for students in technical fields and setting the quote for technical professions.
11. Incorporating the mechanisms of collateral into the legislation so that it is possible to get back the money spent on students removed from the State Programme.
12. Arranging public awareness-raising campaigns on State Programme.
13. Publishing booklets about the nations, cultures, customs, everyday life and countries so as to accelerate the adaptation process of students in the new environment. This is the practice that is being applied by foreign companies administering education and exchange programmes.