

## **Minutes N3 on the Session of the Coordinating Council of the LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement**

**December 5, 2022**

On December 5 of the current year, a meeting of the Coordinating Council of the LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement was held using the platform Zoom. The meeting was attended by members of the Coordinating Council, Deputy Director of the Center, and representatives of the Center's structural units. Rusudan Sanadze chaired the meeting in accordance with the Article 51, Paragraph 10 of the Provision of the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement. The Council meeting was provided with simultaneous translation. The members of the Coordinating Council were greeted by Mr. Kakhaber Eradze and Mr. Lasha Margishvili, the Deputy Directors of the Center, who thanked the members for their involvement and support. Mr. Kakha noted that the meeting would cover the presentation of the important issues for the Center, such as the 2023 Action Plan, standards for early and preschool care and education, and the draft provisional rule, in the direction of higher education, changes in the authorization statute and financial parameters of the Center for 2023.

According to the agenda, Lasha Zivzivadze presented the draft Action Plan 2023 of the Center. He noted that the Center started working on the Action Plan in September of this year. All structural units of the Center were involved in the process. The document presents the activities in accordance with the strategic goals of the Center, with indicators, evidence, deadlines, responsible units and resources. About 100 activities of seven strategic goals are presented in the project.

Lasha Zivzivadze presented the main activities of each strategic goal. In particular, within the institutional development goal of the Center, by 2023, the Center plans to pilot and implement an employee performance evaluation system. In addition, the Center will take care of the professional development of employees, in particular, by 2023, employees will be trained in the direction of communication and coordination. The mentioned directions were selected based on the findings of the employee satisfaction survey. In addition, for the next year, the Center plans to organize a study visit abroad and engage employees in an online course.

In the direction of internal quality assurance, it is planned to digitize the Center's business processes. Every year, the Center carries out a description of business processes, with the involvement of all departments of the Center. For the next year, the described processes will be placed electronically on the relevant portal, which all employees of the Center will have access to. In addition, in terms of internal quality development, the elaboration of an internal quality system based on the CAF methodology is planned. In each department, a self-evaluation will be carried out using questionnaires, the main challenges will be identified and projects will be implemented to eliminate them. In addition, measures will be taken to implement the internal audit quality assessment system and to make it compatible with the international standards. By 2023, studies on education (POLICY BRIEFS) will be prepared for decision-makers in the direction of education system development. The Center constantly informs the interested parties about the planned changes and the activities of the Center. In this direction, a cycle of meetings will be held with people interested in early and preschool

education and general education. In addition, the students of vocational education will be presented with the main directions of the Center's activities. Next year, an annual international conference on the development of the quality of education will be held. To complete the material technical base, the Center plans to install a fire safety system and alarm system.

In terms of the second strategic goal, Lasha Zivivadze noted that internationalization is the priority of the Center. The first activity regarding this goal is to prepare a self-evaluation for ENQA and EQAR membership. He explained that the self-evaluation is done once in five years; after the submission of the self-evaluation, a visit by ENQA representatives will be implemented and an appropriate decision will be made regarding the continuation of the membership. In addition, next year the ENQA Forum will be held in Georgia, organized by the Center. He noted that this event is very important in terms of raising awareness about the Center internationally.

Implementing thematic analysis for the development of the legal framework for the introduction and recognition of micro-credentials is planned for the next year. For the next year, the evaluation of the quality of vocational education will be carried out using two additional indicators of the European network EQAVET. Within the framework of the Bologna process, the Center continues to actively participate in various working groups. Moreover, next year it is planned to organize the 6th meeting of the experts' panel on the development of qualifications. Work will be continued in the direction of updating/developing sectoral benchmarks.

Within the framework of the third goal, in the direction of service development, it is planned to conduct analyzes of various international practices, including the principles of automatic recognition, the similarities and differences of recognition procedures, and in the directions of the recognition of higher education received online. The Center annually investigates the attitude of customers towards services. In this regard, it will conduct survey next year as well, in order to respond appropriately to the challenges. It was noted that the Center is focused on the development of the services provided. It is planned to evaluate at least 5 services for the next year.

Within the fourth goal, in the direction of general education, the Center plans to implement the updated system of authorization of general education institutions, within the framework of which at least 300 schools will be authorized next year. It should also be noted that there are plans to strengthen capacity for updated standards and procedures. It is planned to develop self-evaluation tools in Azerbaijani and Armenian languages. In addition, it is planned to strengthen the capacities of the Authorization Council, form authorization experts and strengthen their capacities.

Within the framework of the fifth goal, in the direction of vocational education, the Center plans to strengthen the capacity of educational institutions implementing vocational programmes, for educational institutions/legal entities implementing vocational training/retraining programmes, in the direction of quality assurance. Also, for the Authorization Council of vocational educational institutions, the Council granting the right for implementing vocational training/vocational retraining programme. In 2023, an annual conference for experts in the direction of quality assurance of vocational education will be held. Besides, certification of the quality assurance specialists of vocational education is planned for the next year.

Within the framework of the fifth goal, a new direction is introduced in 2023, which is the training programme in the State language. In this direction, it is planned to form a pool of experts, to strengthen their capabilities.

Within the sixth goal, in the direction of higher education, the Center plans to implement the process of cluster accreditation of higher education programmes. Besides, the draft of the doctoral education framework document will be developed and the institutions will be informed. It is planned to pilot the evaluation of new standards for doctoral programmes. In addition, piloting of the sectoral benchmark of medicine will be carried out, and the work will continue in the direction of the introduction of the QMS system in the authorization process. A draft of updated authorization standards and procedures will be prepared and presented to stakeholders. Preparation of thematic analyzes will continue. In addition, the Center will continue to work in Erasmus+ projects, PROFORMAANCE+, SQARE, ETHICS. In the direction of higher education, the Center will continue to strengthen the capacities of the experts. The Center will work to create a platform to support authorization and accreditation activities and professional development.

Within the framework of the seventh goal, in the direction of early and preschool care and education, it is planned to strengthen the capacities of the Council members of institutions, and a guide to the standards of authorization will be developed. It is planned to form the experts' pool and pilot an electronic self-evaluation platform for institutions. In 2023, the self-evaluation process will be implemented in at least 1300 institutions. In addition, the methodology of self-evaluation results will be developed.

In the question-and-answer format, the member of the Coordinating Council, Irma Kurdadze, noted the scale of the Action Plan and asked about the authorization of 300 schools in the direction of general education, whether the Action Plan has been drawn up and whether the pilot will be implemented. Noting that the standards have failed, especially the second, curriculum standard, this is a big challenge for schools. She asked how the Center sees this process. In response, Mr. Kakhaber Eradze explained that ensuring the authorization process of 300 schools is an international obligation for the Center within the framework of the human capital development agreement between Georgia and the World Bank. While implementing the process of diagnostic self-evaluation of schools, the Center has simultaneously identified those schools that have a high readiness for authorization. Among them, the circumstance where the Ministry has already worked on the implementation of the third generation national curriculum is considered. In fact, there are more than 400 schools that have implemented the new generation national curriculum, they have sound infrastructure, including adequate computer equipment. The applications will be received from March of next year and the Ministry and the Center will have one more quarter to appoint specialists in the direction of support to these schools, so that they can fully prepare the schools in terms of the content, as well as the material and technical base, for the authorization process. As for the rest of the schools, the work with them continues in parallel, there is a rather large support programme, both with the support of budgetary and donor organizations. Public schools will be supported by the Ministry, while private schools will be supported by the Center. According to the law, private schools will have an obligation to come into compliance until 2024. The Center still has time to support the introduction of new standards. The process is detailed and planned.

Rusudan Sanadze, the Chairperson of the Coordinating Council asked in the direction of general education, what support mechanism will be provided if the authorization process is unsuccessful. In response, Mr. Kakhaber explained that according to the law, a public school will not be closed if it fails to pass authorization. A detailed development plan is made for it, at this stage, the entire system is already involved in accordance with the competencies. It depends what kind of inconsistency is found. In case there is a question regarding the appropriateness of the school, the Ministry will have to make a decision. It depends on the extent of the defects. Accordingly, the Center has a mechanism and next year the it will start authorization of schools.

The Chairperson of the Coordinating Council put the presented issue to a vote and the absolute majority of those present at the Council agreed to submit the draft Action Plan 2023 for approval in the presented form.

**In favour: 7**

**Against 0**

In accordance with the agenda, Mrs. Nino Khitarishvili, the head of the Early and Preschool Care and Education quality assurance department presented herself as a next speaker and presented the draft provisional rule on the authorization of early childhood education and/or preschool education institution, as well as suspension and termination of institution authorization, and draft standards for the authorization of institutions providing early childhood education and/or preschool education, and/or school readiness. Before presenting the drafts, Mrs. Nino noted that this year there was an amendment to the Georgian Law on Early and Preschool Education, according to which, during the transition period, which lasts until 2030, the issue of kindergartens was delegated to the Center. According to the law, the deadlines and activities that should be carried out during the transition period are defined, and one of the most important activities is the development of the provisional authorization rule and the development of the authorization standards. The mentioned activities should be implemented by December 31 of the current year and be approved by the government. With the support of UNICEF, the Center developed the mentioned document. The document was presented in the public discussion format to the representatives of the institutions, the representatives of the mayor's office of the municipality's, as well as associations of kindergartens. A total of seven meetings were held both in Tbilisi and across the regions of Georgia. The decisions received from them are reflected in the draft. In addition, the document was discussed at the meeting of the Coordination Group. This group is a working group within the Center, which unites representatives of the Ministry, EMIS - the Education Management Information System of the National Center for Teacher Professional Development, various associations, sectoral ministries, and representatives of the World Bank project.

As for the document itself, the first document is an authorization provisional rule, within which programmes and their types were identified. Three types of programmes were defined, which arose from the definitions of the law. The first is the early care and education programme, which involves services provided to parents and legal guardians of children aged zero to 2 years. The second is the preschool education programme, serving children

from age two to first grade, and the third is the school readiness programme, which implies a programme from age five to first grade. In addition to the above, the institution is authorized to implement programmes in other languages and programmes with a bilingual or multilingual approach.

The provisional authorization rule has defined the obligation of the institution to conduct self-evaluation, which is annual and it will have two main objectives. The first is that the institution will implement its compliance with the standards through the self-evaluation every year, and second, the self-evaluation will help it maintain internal assurance mechanisms and establish an evidence-based management system.

The powers of the municipality were written separately in the provisional rule. The law stipulated that the Center is obliged to involve the municipalities during the transition period and take care of strengthening their capacities, as these processes will be transferred to the municipalities after the transition period. The law also defines the obligations of municipalities that they should be involved in these processes. It will be the responsibility of the municipalities to certify the self-evaluation authorization application, together with the kindergarten associations. Also, the municipality is entitled to send a representative during the visit to observe and participate in the process, if necessary. From the Secretariat of the Authorization Council, the representative of the municipality will be sent an invitation to the session of the Authorization Council, he/she will receive the report of the experts, will be fully informed about the institution's argumentative position. He will also enjoy the right of deliberative vote at the Council.

The provisional rule defined the powers and functions of the Authorization Council and the Appeals Council. The members of the Council will be appointed by the Prime Minister, on the recommendation of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia. Members are required to be impartial, objective and to make decisions based on the principle of fairness. The term of office of the Council shall be determined by 2 years. The steps of authorization, staffing of the experts' pool, special types of proceeding and monitoring are also described in the provisional rule. Nino Khitarishvili presented the authorization scheme in detail. She noted that the authorization process will be transparent and all stakeholders will be involved. 180 days are set for the proceeding and within 3 days from the submission of the application, the Center will have the opportunity to delay it if necessary. In this case, the correction period is determined by the institution, from 5 to 15 days. After the defect is corrected, the institution submits an application and the Center recognizes the institution as an applicant. If the application is not submitted within the specified period, the proceedings will be terminated. After the Center recognizes the institution as a seeker, within 60 calendar days, an order to create an experts panel is issued, and the institution is notified of the issuance of the order. If it has an objective justification, it can avoid the expert. The Center will consider the substantiation and if satisfied, will introduce a change in the experts' panel. At the next stage, experts are sent authorization documentation. Next, a visit plan is drawn up, which is agreed with the Center and the institution. After the visit, the report of the visit is prepared. The municipality enters here as one of the parties.

After the report is prepared, it is sent to the Center, which checks the formal compliance. In case of errors, the Center sends it back to the experts' panel for correction. If the defect is not fixed, the draft report will be submitted to the institution. It has the opportunity to get acquainted with the report, and to present an argumentative position. An additional possibility that appeared in this section is that if the assessment of the institution in relation to a specific issue does not coincide with each other, the institution has the right to change its position and send additional documents along with the argumentative report. The institution has 10 days to present argumentative justification. The draft project will be submitted to the Council, a meeting will be scheduled, the information received during the initial authorization application, expert opinion and the institution's argumentative position will be discussed. During oral hearing, the municipality is entitled to attend the meeting and use the deliberative vote. Finally, the Authorization Council will make a decision, which will come into force immediately after it is published on the Center website.

In the provisional rule, in relation to the experts' pool, it should be noted that due to the specificity of the issue, the field is complex and combines many directions. It includes the direction of nutrition, the direction of sanitation and hygiene, and the direction of the curriculum is also formed differently. Accordingly, the experts pool will include experts from four areas, a quality assurance expert who will mainly focus on checking institutional standards, a second perhaps will be a curriculum expert who will focus on curriculum topics and family and community involvement, and the third expert will be from the field of nutrition, who will control whether the institution complies with the requirements established by the food regulation. The fourth will be a sanitary-hygiene expert who checks the requirements established by the sanitary-hygiene regulation.

Unlike other processes, there is a novelty in the decisions of the Authorization Council, and that is the suspension of authorization. In addition to the Center, the external quality evaluators of the institution, is the National Food Agency, in the nutrition direction. If the institutions have stopped the proceeding process, that is, if they have sealed the kitchen, in such a case the Agency will inform the Center and in turn the Center will suspend the authorization until the fault is rectified, for which the Center must receive an appeal from the Agency again.

An important link involved in the process is the Emergency Management Department, which inspects the institution in terms of fire safety. If a fault is detected and suspended from their side, the Center suspends the authorization of the institution.

The third is the results of monitoring, which can be the basis for the suspension of authorization. Authorization will be suspended if the institution is found to be non-compliant with at least one of the standards, but has the resources and a three-month plan to eliminate the non-compliance. Monitoring will be scheduled to determine whether the non-compliance has been resolved, if so, the institution will continue to operate, and if not, then the Authorization Council is authorized to terminate the authorization.

Two types of monitoring are distinguished, planned and unplanned. Planned monitoring is determined by the Center. Information is sent to the institution in writing, and the Council is authorized to refer to the Center regarding planned monitoring, and unplanned monitoring can be carried out at the initiative of the Center or the Council, based on a complaint of 10 parents/legal representatives, or in case of another person's appeal to the

Center, which the Center will consider and have an appropriate response. Forms of monitoring can be implemented in the form of requesting documentation or a report from the institution, it is possible to create an experts panel, or create an experts panel and conduct a visit.

The authorization standard was formed in four main directions. The law establishes five basic conditions. The first condition is to meet state standards for early and preschool education. This issue was broken down into the curriculum standard and the family and community engagement standard. The second requirement, according to the law, is compliance of the building infrastructure with technical regulations. This regulation has not been approved, so a brief description and minimum requirements have been prepared along with the provisional authorization rule. The third requirement required by the law is to meet the nutritional regulations, which will be evaluated by the "food organization and evaluation component" according to the law, the fourth condition is to check the sanitary-hygiene norms, and this is also covered in the fourth standard. The fifth is personnel qualification, which was covered in the personnel management and development section. In this case, the qualification of the pedagogue will be evaluated against the requirements determined by the government decree. Other personnel will be evaluated according to the requirements determined by the municipalities. c. A standard of mission and strategic development is introduced because an institution is an institution. The approach of the Center is that if the institution as an institution is not sustainable, it cannot be successful in its core activities.

The authorization process and assessment itself will be based on a differentiated scheme - *the institution is in compliance with the requirements of the standard, is substantially in compliance, is partially in compliance, is not in compliance*. Terms and conditions are defined. The institution is compliant with the requirements if it fully meets the requirements of the standard. The institution is substantially in compliance with the requirements of the standard if it has minor inaccuracies, it has identified these inaccuracies and has a readiness and plan to correct them in no more than 12 months. If an institution has more weaknesses than strengths, has identified deficiencies, has a willingness and plan to correct deficiencies within no more than 24 months, it is in partial compliance. If an institution does not have identified weaknesses, or does not have a plan or resources to address them, it will not be in compliance.

In the question-and-answer format, Council member Irma Kurdadze asked whether only the Center will participate in the recruitment of the experts' pool or other parties will also be involved. In response, Nino Khitarishvili explained that at this stage the Center will select experts in all four directions. The work on the qualification requirements is ongoing, in this part the Center is assisted by the Center of Teacher Professional Development together with the Ministry of Health. In addition, the Center is working on an assessment tool that will be based on current regulations in the field of nutrition and sanitation and will outline the issues that experts will examine. Health experts are also involved in this part.

The Chairperson of the Coordinating Council put the presented issue to a vote and the Council agreed to the drafts in the presented form.

**In favour: 7**

## Against 0

Nika Parjanadze gave a presentation on the changes made in the direction of higher education in 2022 and noted that the Center has undergone many important changes in 2022, and cluster accreditation is one of them. Therefore, a logical change was made in the authorization provision and he noted that his presentation was related to this topic. He noted that the order on the provision and fees of authorization of educational institutions regulates the authorization process and some changes have been prepared at the level of legislation, the most important change is the amendment to the law on the development of the quality of education, as well as the amendment to the law on higher education, and therefore it became necessary to amend the authorization law. He spoke about the main directions that are set as an initiative. Nika Parjanadze noted that, first of all, a change was made regarding the deadline for making a decision on authorization and noted that this norm is compatible and the same map is used as in the case of accreditation. The decision must be made within 180 calendar days from the submission of documentation to the Center, the same logic applies in the case of cluster accreditation. He noted that higher education institutions are offered online counseling at no cost to prepare them thoroughly for the authorization process. He also spoke about the change in the authorization fee and noted that within 60 calendar days from the submission of the document confirming the payment, it is necessary for the Center to issue an individual administrative-legal act and an authorization experts panel should be created in order for the institution to receive the status of a seeker. He noted that in this case specifying the specific terms is very important. He also spoke about the hybrid format and noted that this format will allow the Council members to offer a more flexible format. He also spoke on the inclusion of additional experts in the work of the Council and cited the case of the Accreditation Council as an example. He reviewed the previous cases when the involved experts were not paid and noted that the Center will cover the service fees of the mentioned experts at its own expense. He emphasized the importance of one issue and noted that within 6 months of receiving the authorization, the higher educational institution must submit an application to the Center and in the authorization application at least one education programme must be indicated for accreditation. He also spoke about the issue of reorganization and noted that until now it was possible to extend the authorization period several times for the purpose of reorganization, in this case the initiative is very important that for the purpose of reorganization, the higher educational institution can extend the authorization process only once. He also discussed the accreditation of educational programmes and focused on the Center's membership in international organizations and their importance, he noted that the Center has accumulated knowledge and experience in this direction in order to start international evaluation of programmes and higher education institutions, and it is important to reflect changes in the authorization statute, it is also important for the Center to join international assessment.

Council member Irma Kurdadze noted that cluster accreditation is such an exhaustive form of self-evaluation, despite many programmes, it is so detailed and understandable that experts spend much less time in this area.

Lasha Margishvili, the Deputy Director of the Center noted that Nika Parjanadze presented in detail all the main issues regarding the changes in the authorization statute, based on the changes in the quality law. He noted that it is planned to analyze the authorization standards by 2023. He also



noted that in 2023, not a single institution has to go through authorization, and in 2024, 27 institutions have to go through this process, and it is desirable that the Center use the first half of 2023 for changes.

The Chairperson of the Coordinating Council put the presented issue to a vote and the Council agreed to the issue.

**In favour: 7**

**Against 0**

Kakhaber Eradze, the Deputy Director made a presentation about the Center's main financial parameters, staff and budget parameters. He noted that the Center has two types of income, budgetary and own funds. As he noted, the increase of the staff unit is not planned for 2023, it is planned to increase the number of freelancers if necessary, and a 10% increase in wages for staff units is also planned. He spoke about the funds requested from the budget and their distribution. In this direction, he also spoke about the issue of authorization of kindergartens and noted that it is written in the law that this process is free and accordingly, there will be a budget allocation here as well, therefore, next year there will be allocations for three main directions, namely: kindergarten direction, schools and state language training programme. He noted that the country has prioritized the implementation of training programmes in the state language, these will be programmes financed entirely by the budget, but quality assurance should be behind it. He also reviewed the Center's revenues and budget and discussed the Center's own revenues, state budget financing in the dynamics of 2 years and noted that the main share comes from own revenues and said that this is a very impressive figure.

The Chairperson of the Coordinating Council put the presented issue to a vote and the Council agreed to the issue.

**In favour: 7**

**Against 0**

**Chairperson of the Coordinating Council:**

**Rusudan Sanadze**



**The Secretary of the Coordinating Council Session:**

**Maka Abuladze**



## Annex 1

<b>The Coordinating Council meeting was attended by the following members of the Council:</b>
a) <b>Rusudan Sanadze</b> - Chairperson of the Coordinating Council;
b) <b>Cay Etzold</b> - Member of the Coordinating Council;
c) <b>Shalva Mekravishvili</b> - Member of the Coordinating Council;
d) <b>Maka Abuladze</b> - Member of the Coordinating Council; Secretary of the session
e) <b>Irma Kurdadze</b> - Member of the Coordinating Council;
f) <b>Tea Gulua</b> - Member of the Coordinating Council;
g) <b>Natia Jojua</b> - Member of the Coordinating Council;
<b>The following did not attend the meeting of the Coordinating Council:</b>
a) <b>Heli Mattisen</b> - Member of the Coordinating Council;
b) <b>Anastasia Kitiashvili</b> - Member of the Coordinating Council;
c) <b>Maia Shukhoshvili</b> - Member of the Coordinating Council;
d) <b>Zaza Purtseladze</b> - Member of the Coordinating Council;
e) <b>Kakhaber Chelidze</b> - Member of the Coordinating Council;

## Annex 2 Agenda of the Council Meeting:

<b>Time</b>	<b>The issue under consideration</b>	<b>Reporter</b>	<b>Position, organization</b>
<b>15:00 – 15:05</b>	Greeting	Tamar Makharashvili Kakhaber Eradze	Director, LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement Deputy Director, LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement
<b>15:05 – 15:35</b>	Review of the 2023 Draft Action Plan of the 2021-2025 Strategy of the LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement	Lasha Zivzivadze	Head of the Planning, Research and International Relations Department, LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement
<b>15:35 – 15:50</b>	Questions - Answers		
<b>15:50 – 16:10</b>	Review of the draft provisional rule for authorization of early childhood care and education and/or preschool care and education institution, as well as the suspension and termination of the institution's authorization Review of draft standards of early childhood care and education and/or preschool care and education institutions	Nino Khitarishvili	Head of the Early and Preschool Care and Education quality assurance department, LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement
<b>16:10 – 16:25</b>	Questions - Answers		
<b>16:25 – 16:40</b>	The draft changes to be made in the authorization regulation, which is related to the changes made in 2022 in the Law of Georgia "On Education Quality Improvement" and in the Accreditation Regulation	Nikoloz Parjanadze	Head of the Department for Quality Assurance of Higher Education, LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement
<b>16:40 – 16:50</b>	Questions - Answers		
<b>16:50 – 16:55</b>	Presentation of the 2023 staff schedule and draft budget of the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement	Kakhaber Eradze	Deputy Director, LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement
<b>16:55 – 17:00</b>	Questions - Answers		
<b>17:00 – 17:05</b>	Summary of the working meeting		