

The State Program for 2022-2026 for enabling youth to study in prestigious foreign universities

1. A brief summary

“the State Program for 2022-2026 for enabling youth to study in prestigious foreign universities” has been prepared to ensure the implementation of the Order No. 2931 known as “On expanding educational opportunities for Azerbaijani youth in prestigious foreign universities” of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated September 30, 2021.

The main goal of the State Program is to ensure training of competitive and professional personnel capable of supporting the sustainable development of the Republic of Azerbaijan, rapidly acquiring the knowledge on new technologies in global markets, having proper practical knowledge and skills, meeting the standards of current and future labor market by creating opportunities for young people to study in prestigious foreign universities.

The State Program has been developed taking into account the existing international experience and trends in this field.

The State Program assesses global trends in this area and their impact on the country's potential, analyzes the current situation, formulates a long-term strategic vision, sets targets and priorities, including implementation periods, relevant measures, key and other executors, expected effects, and implementation mechanisms have been identified.

The main objectives of the State program are the followings:

- identification of specialties in priority areas;
- identification of educational programs in priority specialties and prestigious foreign higher education institutions;
- Defining selection criteria and procedures for participation in the State Program;
- Establishing rules for financing education abroad;
- Creating opportunities to provide employment for graduates of the State Program.

During the implementation of the State Program, no more than 400 people a year, a total of up to 2,000 citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan will be provided with bachelor's and master's degrees in prestigious higher education institutions abroad. Giving preference to the winners of international subject Olympiads in the selection for higher education at the bachelor's level will encourage talented young people to add value to the future development of our country by graduating from the world's leading universities within the State Program.

The preference for promising young people with high intellectual level and managerial qualities in higher education at the master degree and specialties based on advanced technologies will increase the number of qualified personnel with modern skills in the labor market.

Implementation of the State Program will create conditions for the formation of better human capital in the country and significantly improve the position of the Republic of Azerbaijan in international rankings, train professionals in specialties required by the labor market, the activities of returning graduates using the latest experience and knowledge will contribute to the country's progress.

In addition, the State Program considers establishing mechanisms to ensure the employment of graduates and stimulate career development. According to the strategy of transformation of oil revenues into human capital, the State Program will be funded by the State Oil Fund, as well as technical and financial assistance from international organizations, loans and grants, donations from foreign and local legal entities and individuals, regardless of ownership.

2. Global Trends

The socio-economic development of any country depends on the level of development of human capital in that country. In the context of recent technological changes in the world economy, the formation of highly skilled human capital with digital capabilities, able to actively apply new technologies and ready for increasing competition in the world in the coming years is of particular importance.

Innovations. The role of innovation in the formation of the global value chain is constantly growing. Products, works and services created by new technologies account for 80-95 percent of GDP growth in developed countries. At present, the factors characterizing economic growth are undergoing significant changes. One of the main drivers of these changes is digitalization. The digitalization of the economy is fundamentally changing the management, optimization, sharing and distribution of economic processes and resources around the world. This process increases productivity, encourages businesses to move to innovative ideas, technologies, modern management and business models, and creates new access channels to markets.

By 2030, technologies such as cloud technologies, autonomous vehicles and drones, Big Data and data analysis, The Internet of devices and objects, blockchain, 3D printing, artificial intelligence and machine learning, nanotechnology, robotics, virtual reality will be introduced into the economy and it's expected to have a greater impact. These processes increase the demand for highly qualified personnel who can quickly master new technologies, acquire practical knowledge and skills, and meet the requirements of the modern and future labor market.

Labor Market. Changes in the world economy have had a significant impact on the structure of the labor market and increased its flexibility. The World Economic Forum estimates that 65 percent of children who start primary school today will not work in existing occupations in the future. The flexibility of the labor market and the impact of information and communication technologies on the labor market, the requirements of the Fourth Industrial Revolution led to the emergence of new professions and relevant working conditions. These factors have increased the importance of learning skills, along with knowledge in the content and technology of education in existing and emerging professions and specialties. Considering those factors, large investments are being made in the teaching of new specialties in prestigious higher education institutions, and the educational infrastructure is constantly being improved.

Internationalization of higher education. In the modern world, the knowledge economy and innovative society, ensuring sustainable and comprehensive development are among the important tasks facing all states. Globalization is expanding relations among countries, and as a result, there is growing interest in comparing the performance and effectiveness of education systems. At present, many countries support the policy of training professionals abroad with special state programs. The implementation of such programs is of particular importance in terms of determining the future needs of the country's labor market in priority areas in a globalized world.

3. Analysis of the current situation

In the past, the formation and effective use of human capital has been considered one of the main priorities in order to ensure the sustainable development

of the country, and initiatives in this direction have been supported by the state. The traditions of education abroad, founded by the National Leader Heydar Aliyev, have been successfully maintained since Azerbaijan gained independence, during which state strategies and state programs for the development of human capital have been implemented.

Within the framework of the “State Program on Education of Azerbaijani Youth Abroad in 2007-2015” approved by the Order No. 2090 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated April 16, 2007, a total of 3,558 scholarships were awarded to citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan to study at more than 350 of the world's most prestigious universities in 32 countries. As a result of the successful implementation of this State Program, the involvement of young people in education abroad has made a significant contribution to the socio-economic life of the country, as well as the growth of the share of human capital in national wealth, improving the content and quality of education.

The main goal of the “State Program on Increasing the International Competitiveness of the Higher Education System in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2019-2023” approved by the Order No. 711 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated November 11, 2018 is to use the most advanced scientific achievements and innovative teaching technologies to train a new generation of specialists in the Republic of Azerbaijan and modernize the content and quality indicators of the higher education system of Azerbaijan with international double degree programs. Under the program, 4 dual degree programs have been launched. At present, dual degree programs are being implemented by George Washington University with Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University and ADA University, Baku Engineering University and Inha University of the Republic of Korea, Ege University of Turkey and Azerbaijan State Agrarian University. Within the framework of these programs, in order to strengthen the academic potential of local higher education institutions, 127 Azerbaijani citizens are receiving doctoral education at the most prestigious universities and science centers abroad.

At the same time, intergovernmental scholarship programs are being implemented to organize the education of Azerbaijani youth abroad at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels. At present, about 700 citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan study in the People's Republic of China, Latvia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Romania and other countries within the framework of these programs.

The Azerbaijan-French University, which has been operating since 2016, offers dual degree programs in bachelor's and master's degrees in geophysical engineering, oil and gas engineering, chemical engineering and computer science. Simultaneously, dual degree programs are implemented at ADA University, Azerbaijan State University of Economics, Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction, Baku State University, Baku Higher Oil School and other universities.

Despite the above, scholarship opportunities for Azerbaijani citizens at the bachelor's and master's levels in prestigious higher education institutions of relevant countries under existing scholarship programs do not meet the growing demands of the country's economy. Also, in accordance with global challenges and taking into account the future requirements of the labor market, the opportunities for training in the Republic of Azerbaijan in a number of specialties are limited. The academic potential and laboratory capacities of existing higher education institutions should be strengthened in terms of training for future professions.

At the same time, it is necessary to create opportunities for talented Azerbaijani youth, who have won gold, silver or bronze medals at prestigious international subject Olympiads every year, to study at the state level at the expense of the state in prestigious foreign universities.

Approved by Presidential Decree No. 2469 of February 2, 2021, "Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development" calls for long-term economic development to rely on modern and strong education, namely, human capital through education. Provisions on sustainable increase of the share of participation in national wealth are of special importance for the development of human capital in the country. It is important to implement educational programs abroad in order to meet the demand for training in a number of specialties, including information technology, engineering, fundamental and applied sciences, environment, transport, energy, education, public health and others,.

The need to build highly skilled human capital to manage the infrastructure to be created using the latest technologies to restore the liberated territories as a result of Azerbaijan's historic victory in the 44-day Patriotic War also highlights the use of educational opportunities abroad.

At the same time, given the challenges of the post-pandemic and the new strategic era, as well as development goals, high intelligence must become a major source of strength for the country's rapid progress in competition and development, and the role of creative and innovative youth in economic activity and governance. To this end, the creation of additional opportunities for Azerbaijani youth to study at the master's and bachelor's degrees in leading foreign universities in the areas are required to guarantee the country's future development.

4. Target indicator

The target of the State Program is to ensure the education of up to 2,000 citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan in prestigious foreign universities in 2022-2026, with a total of no more than 400 people per year. Under the state program, at least 80 percent of educational institutions in foreign universities will cover the master's level of higher education.

5. Objectives of the State Program

The main goal of the State Program is to ensure training of competitive and professional personnel capable of supporting the sustainable development of the Republic of Azerbaijan, rapidly acquiring the knowledge on new technologies in global markets, having proper practical knowledge and skills, meeting the standards of current and future labour market by creating opportunities for young people to study in prestigious foreign universities.

- The main objectives of the State Program are as followings:
- meeting the needs of the society for professionals with knowledge, skills and competencies in priority areas, taking into account global trends and the potential of socio-economic development of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
- Orientation of talented young people to educational programs in prestigious foreign universities in order to acquire modern skills necessary for the sustainable development of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
- Continuation of state support for young people to study abroad and the creation of an effective funding mechanism in this regard;
- Stimulation of education of talented young people, including winners of international subject Olympiads, as well as promising young professionals with high intellectual level and managerial qualities at the bachelor's and master's levels of higher education in prestigious foreign universities;
- Creation of opportunities for employment of young people who have successfully completed their education in prestigious foreign universities within the State Program in priority areas that will ensure the sustainable development of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

6. Priority areas of the State Program

6.1. Preparation of a list of specialties in the priority areas of socio-economic development

It is necessary to ensure that the specialties that young people will study in prestigious foreign universities correspond to the priorities of socio-economic development of the country. Highly competitive human capital must be formed for the long-term sustainable and rapid development of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The need for highly competitive human capital covers almost all sectors of the economy. During the implementation of the State Program, the following priority specialties will be given priority:

- information technologies;
- engineering;
- statistics and data analysis;
- fundamental and applied sciences;
- public health;
- education;
- environment
- aviation and space;
- public administration;
- transport and logistics
- energy;
- economics;
- finance;
- architecture and design
- Agriculture

The identification of specialties in the noted priority areas will enable the training of highly qualified personnel, able to compete in the global markets, in prestigious foreign universities.

6.2. Preparation of a list of educational programs in priority specialties and prestigious foreign universities

There are various organizations in the world that determine the rankings of higher education institutions on individual educational programs. It is also possible to study at the level of international standards in priority specialties in higher education institutions of a number of countries with which the Republic of Azerbaijan cooperates in the field of education.

At the same time, there are prestigious foreign higher education institutions in the world with long-term successful experience in certain specialties. Taking into account all these and other aspects, a list of educational programs in priority specialties and prestigious foreign higher education institutions will be prepared.

6.3. As a result, the graduates of these higher education institutions will not only contribute to the socio-economic development of the Republic of Azerbaijan by acquiring the latest knowledge and skills, but also be formed as internationally competitive personnel and they will strengthen the academic potential of higher education.

6.4. Development of a Regulation on the criteria and procedures for the selection of young people to study abroad

The State Program is targeted to support the education of talented, intelligent and promising young people who are citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan in prestigious foreign universities. In this regard, the winners of international subject Olympiads, international competitions and contests will be given preference at the bachelor's level of higher education in prestigious foreign universities, and promising young people who have completed the bachelor's degree with high results, intellectual level and managerial qualities at the master's level.

The criteria and procedures for youth selection will be based on the principles of transparency, fairness and objectivity..

6.5. Development of Rules for financing education in foreign universities

The funding mechanisms to be established in the Rules for Financing Education in Foreign Higher Education Institutions will be based on the principle of mutual responsibility and trust, and the obligations of the parties will be clearly defined. The rules will properly assess the risks of academic failure and non-return to the country, and set preconditions to prevent these risks.

The rule to be developed will allow young people to study at prestigious foreign universities at public expense and return to the country after graduation to contribute to the sustainable development of the Republic of Azerbaijan as highly qualified personnel.

6.6. Ensuring the employment of graduates of the State Program

Within the framework of the State Program, it is especially important to ensure the employment of young people who have successfully completed their education in prestigious foreign universities in priority areas that will ensure the sustainable development of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In order to implement this priority, a mechanism will be developed to provide job offers and career advancement in the areas needed. Priority will be given to the employment of graduates in this State Program in governmental agencies.

7. Sources of funding for the State Program

The implementation of the measures planned in the State Program will be funded from the following sources:

- State Oil Fund of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
- technical and financial assistance of international organizations (funds);
- loans and grants;
- donations of foreign and local legal entities and individuals.

8. Monitoring and assessment of the State Program

8.1. Monitoring the implementation of the State Program, taking measures for timely resolution of problems and proper organization of coordination between executive bodies will be directed by the Ministry of Education through the administrative committee established based on State Program according to “State Program on Increasing the International Competitiveness of the Higher Education System in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2019-2023” approved by the Order No. 711 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated November 26, 2018

8.2. For the successful implementation of the State Program with the required tools, processes and other means, it will be monitored and evaluated according to the rules developed in accordance with international methodologies. During the monitoring and evaluation, attention will be paid to the implementation of measures on the merits, expected results and indicators related to the relevant priority, compliance with the implementation period will be checked.

9. Action Plan for the implementation of the State Program

| Row № | Name of the measure | The main executive body | Other executors | Exec ution period | Result indicators | | |
|-------|---|-------------------------|---|-------------------|--|--|--|
| | | | | | Initial results | intermediate results | Final results |
| 9.1. | Preparation of a list of educational programs for prestigious foreign higher education institutions in accordance with the priority specialties | Ministry of Education | Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour Social Protection Of Population, State Oil Fund | 2022 | Determining the selection criteria for educational programs in accordance with the priority specialties of prestigious foreign higher education institutions | Approval of the list of educational programs in priority specialties and prestigious foreign higher education institutions | Organization of education of young people in accordance with the approved list of educational programs |
| 9.2. | Establishing criteria and procedures for selecting young people to study | Cabinet | Ministry of Education, | 2022 | Collection of proposals on the criteria and procedures for the | Approval of the Rules on the criteria and procedures for the selection of young | Organization of selection of young people to study in prestigious foreign |

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| | abroad | Of ministers | Ministry of Economy State Oil Fund Ministry of Justice | | selection of young people to study abroad | people to study abroad | higher education institutions in accordance with the approved selection criteria and procedures |
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| 9.3. | Determining the form of contract to be concluded with the participants of the State Program | Ministry Of Education | State Oil Fund | 2022 | Preparation of a draft contract form with the participants of the State Program | Approval of the contract form with the participants of the State Program | Concluding contracts with participants of the State Program |
| 9.4. | Approval of the rules for financing education in foreign universities | Cabinet Of ministers | Ministry of Education, State Oil Fund Ministry of Justice | 2022 | Study of proposals on financing education in foreign higher education institutions | Approval of the Rules for financing education in foreign universities | Financing the education of young people in foreign universities in accordance with the approved Rules |
| 9.5. | Selection of young people to study in foreign universities, taking into account the selection criteria and procedures | Ministry of Education | State Oil Fund | 2022- 2026 | Acceptance of applications from young people wishing to study in foreign universities | Conducting competitions to select young people who want to study in foreign universities | Approval of the final list of young people eligible to participate in the State Program |
| 9.6. | Monitoring the success indicators of the participants of the State Program during the training period | Ministry | | regularly | Collection of information on educational indicators of the participants of the State Program during the training | Assessment of student achievement during the study period | decision-making on the continuation of funding for the education of the participants of the State Program depending on the results of the assessment |

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| | | Of Education | | | | | of educational indicators |
| 9.7. | Supporting events organized to promote Azerbaijan in the countries where the State Program participants study | Ministry Of Education | Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Culture , State Committee for Work with the Diaspora | regularly | Organization of cultural, social and political events involving students abroad | Creating conditions for the participation of the participants of the State Program in the organized events | Communicating the truth about the Republic of Azerbaijan to the world community |

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| | | | Ministry of Youth and Sport | | | | |
| 9.8. | Collection of expired graduates' reports of State Program | Ministry Of Education | Ministry of Foreign Affairs and State Oil Fund | regularly | Approval of the list of documents to be attached to the graduate report | Receipt of the graduate report and attached documents from the participants of the State Program whose education period has expired | Inclusion of the names of the participants of the State Program in the list of graduates of the State Program, taking into account the indicators of success, through the submitted graduate reports |
| 9.9. | Ensuring the employment of graduates of the State Program | Ministry Of Education | Ministry of Education, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population | regularly | Collection of proposals for employment of State Program graduates | Defining mechanisms to ensure the employment of graduates of the State Program | Increasing the level of employment of graduates of the State Program through the effective use of their knowledge, skills and abilities |

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| 9.10. | Introducing the graduates of the State Program to the public | Ministry Of Education | | regularly | Collection of proposals on methods and means of introducing the graduates of the State Program to the public | Analysis of collected proposals and approval of the action plan on an annual basis | Introduce the graduates of the State Program on the annual action plan to the public |
| 9.11. | Monitoring the use of funds allocated for the financing of the State Program | State Oil Fund | Ministry of Education | Two times A year | Establish conditions and procedures for monitoring the intended use of funds | Monitoring the use of funds for their intended purpose | Analysis of the results of monitoring the use of funds for their intended purpose and submission of the final report |

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| 9.12. | Integration of information related to the State Program into existing electronic information resources and expansion of their use | Ministry of Education | The Ministry of Transport and Digital Development | 2022-2024 | Collection of proposals for electronic receipt of applications, graduate reports, issuance of electronic certificates and electronic services of young people studying abroad | Formation of electronic application system and electronic cabinets of students, as well as improvement of existing electronic information resources related to other services | Electronic services within the State Program |
|-------|---|-----------------------|---|-----------|---|---|--|