

## AGBU ARMENIAN VIRTUAL COLLEGE WRAPS UP ITS SECOND YEAR OF SUCCESSFUL OPERATION WITH A GLOBAL ONLINE FORUM

*Turkish added as 7<sup>th</sup> instruction language and new AVC Labs to open in Rostov and Tbilisi*

On September 6th, the Armenian General Benevolent Union's (AGBU) Armenian Virtual College (AVC) celebrated the second anniversary of its unique service to the Armenian Nation by holding a Global Online Forum (GOF) to reflect on the wide-range of achievements and announce its future plans.

Launched in June 2009, the AVC has become the first Armenian online university, with a distinct goal to make Armenian education available to everyone everywhere through modern technologies. During its two-year operation the AVC has had nine academic terms with over 1300 participants from 50 countries. AVC's wide geography stretching from USA to Russia, from Venezuela to South Africa, from Argentine to Reunion Island, has proven that AGBU's new education project does live up to its goal to surmount educational barriers which have plagued the Armenian Diaspora for decades.

The GOF was led by Dr. Yervant Zorian, AGBU Central Board member and AVC Founder and President. During the event Mrs. Hasmik Poghosyan, Minister of Culture



RA Culture Minister Hasmik Poghosyan and  
AGBU AVC founder and president Dr. Yervant Zorian

of the Republic of Armenia, other governmental and honorable guests gave welcoming speeches.

*"Among thousands of online universities in the world AVC is the first one that provides and is dedicated to Armenian Education. Today, when only 5 percent of Armenian youth in the Diaspora has access to face-to-face Armenian educational programs, the importance of such an institution is becoming more and more vivid. While our virtual students around the world enthusiastically participate in our existing courses, AVC continues to expand its offerings in multiple directions. I am very pleased to announce today the expansion of our Armenian culture program to cover Armenian Visual Art courses, the adoption of new advanced learning technologies to enable interactive animation in teaching Armenian History, the augmentation of our instruction languages to include Turkish as a 7<sup>th</sup> language, which is beneficiary for our compatriots residing in Turkey and West Europe, and finally the extension of our hybrid education program to the CIS countries by initiating AVC Labs in Tbilisi and Rostov",* said Dr. Yervant Zorian.

*"Two years ago when the project was launched, it was unclear how this brilliant idea will be realized. The results you achieved today are very impressive. I will continue to invest my efforts for presenting this project among all possible circles",* - said Hasmik Poghosyan, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Armenia.

*"Throughout the years the number of Armenian schools in Tbilisi has decreased to only 1 as of 2011 academic year for the Armenian population of more than 80 thousand. As a result 90 percent of Russian school pupils in Tbilisi are Armenians. While it would be good to have traditional Armenian education institutions on-site, AVC is an excellent solution to preserve Armenian identity in communities with no Armenian schools",* - said Bishop Vazgen Mirzakhanyan, Primate of the Armenian Apostolic Church's Georgian Diocese.

The AVC project was initiated in 2004 as an educational program that better addresses the current demands of the Armenian Nation and appeals to present-day students. Since then, the multi-media content has been developed largely in Armenia in collaboration scientists and engineers at Yerevan State University's Center of IT Education and Research.

During its first two years of operation, AVC also introduced a hybrid education method, which targets schools and education institutes by offering a blend of conventional and online pedagogies. AVC implemented this method for the first time with the Ohanesian Friday School of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. After 2 years, nearly 10 schools and communities joined the hybrid education model. Representatives of



AGBU Armenian Virtual College celebrates 2nd year of operation

Armenian communities of Tbilisi and Rostov were present at the GOF. Many AVC students from different countries of the world, as well as AVC Online Instructors and online education specialists participated in the GOF through live online bridges. Live video connections were established with students from USA, Russia, Spain and Uruguay. Students and instructors shared their experiences in Armenian online education at AVC and answered questions from the audience. Today AVC continues to build its three departments; Armenian Language, History and Culture. Turkish is added to the existing six instruction languages, Eastern Armenian, Western Armenian, English, Russian, French and Spanish.

For the video materials please visit: [AGBU AVC 2nd anniversary \(H1 Public TV\)](#) and [AGBU AVC 2nd anniversary \(Shant TV\)](#)

## AGBU AVC OPENS NEW LABS IN ROSTOV AND TBILISI

Dr. Yervand Zorian's promises of expanding the activities of the Armenian Virtual College did not keep us waiting too long. On September 28th, the AGBU AVC opened a new office - an AVC Lab - in the Armenian Community Center of Rostov-on-Don, Russia, with a distinct goal to contribute to the preservation of Armenian identity in the country with the biggest Armenian Diaspora.

Representatives of the local Armenian community, and church, state officials and guests were present at the



Dr. Zorian with the Armenian community of Tbilisi

official opening ceremony. The red ribbon was cut by Harutyun Surmelian, Head of the Armenian Community of Rostov, and Marina Khachatryan, AVC online instructor. Speeches were delivered by Sergey Sayadov, "Hayazg" Fund Chairman and Grikor Anisonian, Editor-in-Chief of "Noyan Tapan" Armenian newspaper of Russia. Marina Khachatryan made a brief presentation of the AVC and its departments, particularly focusing on AVC's experience in implementing the hybrid method of education in different schools throughout the Armenian Diaspora.

The opening of the AVC lab in Rostov was followed by the establishment of a similar AVC office in the "Hayartun" educational-cultural center of Tbilisi on October 8th. Present at the opening ceremony were RA Ambassador to Georgia Hovhanness Manoukian, Advisor to the Georgian President Van Baybourtlian, Head of the Caucasus region department of the RA Diaspora Ministry Taron Shaghoian, benefactor of the center's construction Boris Sahakov, Head of the "Jinishian Memorial Foundation" Armenian office Armen Hakobian, AGBU AVC representative Talar Kazanjian, prominent representatives of the Armenian community of Georgia.



AVC online instructor Marina Khachatryan at the opening of the AVC Lab in Rostov

## AGBU AVC PARTICIPATES IN EDUCATION FORUMS AND EXPOS

On September 19th, "Fruitful Armenia" 7th International Conference was held in Armenia Marriott Hotel with the participation of renowned scholars and experts of the fields of education and agriculture from more than 30 countries. As a leading representative of the Education sector, AGBU Armenian Virtual College was among the participants of the conference, attracting the attention of those present. Dr. Hasmik Khalapyan, Academic Director of the AVC, presented AGBU's newest educational project, highlighting the role of the AVC for all Armenians and particularly those living in the Diaspora, for whom Armenian education, thanks to the AVC, has become available and accessible anytime and anywhere.

On October 7-9th, AVC participated in the 7th Annual International Digitec Expo held at Karen Demirchian Sports and Concert Complex under the auspices of RA Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan. Over 150 companies presented their current and future programs, among them the AVC, which attracted many attendees, especially students. Digitec-Expo 2011 had more than 15,000 visitors.

The 4<sup>th</sup> ArmTech Congress of Armenia's high tech industry was held on October 10-11th, in Armenia Marriott Hotel. An opening address by RA Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan was followed by a session of several keynote speakers, including the ArmTech Co-chair, AGBU Central Board member and AGBU AVC Founder and President Dr. Yervand Zorian. On the second day of the Congress, several presentations about novel technology-based AGBU programs were made in a session entitled "the Role of Education in IT & High Tech Industries", including "Online Learning Technologies for Armenian Education: AGBU Armenian Virtual College", by Yervand Zorian; "A New Educational Strategy: the NUR project", by Lena Baghdasaryan of AGBU Armenia; and "Project Armeniaca: Database Dedicated to the Armenian Monumental Heritage" by Raymond Kevorkian, Curator of AGBU Nubarian Library & Coordinator of Armeniaca Project.



Lena Baghdassarian of AGBU Armenian Representation presents "NUR" project at the 4th ArmTech Congress