

Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan



Twinning project ENI/2018/395-401

Mission Report

Short-Term Mission on Activity 3.5 Pilot universities undertake a self-evaluation of study programme in a priority area

(June 17-21, 2019)

1. Name and Function of the Expert:

Full name of expert

Ms. Jolita Butkiene, Lithuania

Signature

Full name of expert

Ms. Nora Skaburskiene, Lithuania

Signature

Full name of expert

Ms. Jolanta Silka, Latvia

Signature



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2. **Objective and Tasks of the Mission:**

The mission is carried out within the framework of:

COMPONENT 3: THE QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM IS FURTHER DEVELOPED TO REFLECT THE STUDENT-CENTEREDNESS OF STUDY PROGRAMMES

Activity 3.5 Pilot universities undertake a self-evaluation of study programme in a priority area

Benchmarks for this activity are:

- Minimum 12 self-evaluations of the pilot study programmes implemented



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3. Time schedule of mission:

Date and Time	Activity
Monday 17 th of June 2019	The experts carry out a deskwork in hotel due to public holiday. Reviewing the self-evaluation reports written by pilot HEIs.
Tuesday 18 th of June 2019	<p>11:15-12:45 Three parallel sessions with Foreign Language Teacher SER Group from Azerbaijan University of Languages, Chemical Engineering SER Group from Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University, Math teacher SER Group from Baku State University in Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University</p> <p>14:00 – 15:30 Three parallel sessions with Math&Informatics Teacher SER Group from Baku Engineering University, Computer Science SER Group from Baku State University, Computer Engineering SER Group from Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University in Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University</p> <p>15:30-17:00 Three parallel sessions with Informatics teacher SER Group from Baku State University, Computer engineering SER Group from Baku Engineering University, Foreign Language Teacher SER Group from Khazar University in Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University</p>
Wednesday 19 th of June 2019	<p>09:30-11:00 Three parallel sessions with Computer engineering SER Group from Sumgait State University, Chemical Engineering SER Group from Baku State University, Math&Informatics Teacher SER Group from Sumgait State University in Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University</p> <p>11:15-12:45 Three parallel sessions with Foreign Language Teacher SER Group from Sumgait State University, Informatics Teacher SER Group from Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University, Computer Science SER Group from Azerbaijan Technical University in Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University</p> <p>14:00 – 15:30 Three parallel sessions with Chemical engineering SER Group from Sumgait State University, Physics SER Group from Baku State University, Computer Science SER Group from Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University in Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University</p>
Thursday 20 th of June 2019	<p>09:30-11:00 Three parallel sessions with Math Teacher SER Group from Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University, Physics SER Group from Sumgait State University and Physics Teacher SER Group from Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University in Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University</p> <p>11:15-12:45 Three parallel sessions with Chemical Engineering SER Group from Baku Engineering University, Computer Engineering SER Group from Azerbaijan Technical University, Foreign Language Teacher SER Group from Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University in Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University Report writing</p>
Friday 21 st of June 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Debriefing session in Accreditation and Nostrification Office - Report writing

4. Relevant Background Information/State of Affairs regarding the mission



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Only institutional evaluation has been performed in higher education institutions of Azerbaijan so far. The first Twinning project implemented in 2015-2017 supported newly established (2016) Accreditation and Nostrification Office under the Ministry of Education to build up its capacity in the field of quality assurance in compliance with the principles of the European Higher Education Area. The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Azerbaijan (AzSG) reflecting best EU quality assurance practices were developed jointly by the Twinning experts and ANO staff and pilot institutional evaluations were carried out in three pilot universities. At current stage the Accreditation and Nostrification Office needs to build its capacity in the field of study programme accreditation. As a part of the Component III of the ongoing Twinning project, a number of documents related to programme evaluation (Handbook for Requirements and Methodologies for Programme Evaluation, Guidelines for Assessing Competence-based and Student-Centered Approach of St.Ps, Grid for Self-assessment of Competence-orientedness and Student-centeredness of Study Programmes) have been already developed by the Twinning experts to ensure the compliance of programme accreditation practices in Azerbaijan with EU best practices. As a next step, the higher education institutions were trained on how to conduct a self-evaluation of study programmes and were instructed to write the initial draft of self-evaluation reports on relevant programmes and submit them both in Azerbaijani and English before 25th of April. The second mission under this Activity took place from 29th of April to 3rd of May 2019. The objective of this mission was to hold meetings with the HEIs representatives involved in the SER writing and to support them in this process. The deadline for the submission of the second draft of self-evaluation reports was set for 30th of May 2019. The current mission which is being implemented under the Activity 3.5 aims to review the second drafts of the reports and give further guidelines for the improvement.

5. Achievement of the Expected Results

Planned action was *achieved*:

Experts have reviewed 24 self-evaluation reports presented by higher education institutions of Azerbaijan.

Experts have reviewed the first and the second draft of the reports. Most of the reports were translated into English. However it is necessary to improve the level of English in the reports for the international experts to understand and to make informed conclusions.

During the mission, experts consulted 24 self-evaluation groups on the quality of their reports and improvements needed.

Experts have commented all the reports received and provided recommendations for the improvement.

6. Unexpected Results

No unexpected results appeared.



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7. Issues Left Open After the Mission

No issues were left after the mission, all foreseen activities were implemented..

8. Recommendations (including recommendation for future missions)

The overall impression was that universities managed to achieve a considerable progress in the given frame of time in preparing programme self-evaluation reports (SAR). For all institutions that had been the first time of writing self-evaluation reports on the study programme level. However, after analyzing 24 self-evaluation reports and consultations with the self-evaluation groups, the experts would like to make following comments:

- The universities still do not have a full understanding of the value of the self-assessment of their programmes and consider that as an external requirement from the ANO;
- The internal programme quality assurance systems are still not embedded in the life of the university;
- ESG (2015) guidelines concerning Internal quality assurance have not been implemented, especially these parts need further consideration: 1.2 Design and approval of programmes; 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment; 1.5 Teaching staff; 1.7 Information management; 1.8 Public information; 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes
- There is still a lack of understanding of the competence based, student centred approach, implementation of the ECST credit system. ECTS has been implemented on a very formal way: the work load of the student is not related to the learning outcomes.
- There are restrictions related with the current State standards that do not allow the universities to fully implement competence based approach and hinder the quality of the programmes.

Recommendations to the policy makers and ANO:

- In order to fully embed the concept of competences/learning outcomes into higher education of Azerbaijan, there is an urgent need to review current state standards that restrain from full implementation of the autonomy of universities in building up their study processes. New structure of state standards should be based on the concept of learning outcomes and should NOT involve the list of subjects and topics. According to the principles of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), higher education institutions have primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance. So, it means that they should be responsible for the processes that they have designed and developed themselves. State standards should become reference point both for higher education institutions in assuring that the learning outcomes of certain subject area will be achieved in the programme and the qualification awarded, and for quality assurance agency that would check if higher education institution designs study programme and implements it in effective way. Azerbaijan is full member of the Bologna Process / European higher education area since 2005, this means that they are taking responsibilities described in Bologna process communiques on a voluntary basis and freely agree to implement them;



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- Regular work with the representatives of higher education institutions who are involved in the self-evaluation process in their institutions is one of the most important functions of the Quality assurance agency (ANO).
- As Azerbaijan government wants to introduce competence based approach into its higher education, the parallel work in explaining why such a change is necessary, how this approach could benefit the programmes should be further performed;
- To continue trainings to the academic and administrative staff of the universities explaining the concept of competences and learning outcomes and how they should fit into the curriculum of their programmes and internal quality assurance system;
- On the one hand – the universities have to gain knowledge about the new approach: meaning and advantages of learning outcomes, the process of implementation into their curriculum, on the other hand – Agency has to prepare tools for assessment of new concept: methodological guidelines, recommendations, well trained experts. It is the work of both sides that would bring new concept into life.
- Personal consultations with the ANO staff should be available to all higher education institutions;
- When designing and delivering the trainings of experts who will be involved in external evaluation of study programmes, it is very important to explain the structure of the regulations for higher education in Azerbaijan;
- Having invited foreign experts from different countries, ANO the ministry should also take a chance to get a feedback and recommendations on current legislation structure in Azerbaijan that is related to the study process.

Recommendations to the University management:

- It is important for the top management of universities to promote, support and be involved in the self-evaluation process.
- It is important to improve governance system at universities and provide more independence in decision making to the deans, chairs and other members responsible for the quality of the programmes.
- It is necessary to develop and strengthen internal quality assurance system at higher education institutions by designing structures, processes and tools.
- It is important to involve stakeholders into the programme management in a formalized and regular manner.
- It is important to provide opportunities and support relevant staff in gaining experience on the programme management and internal quality assurance.

ADDITIONAL REMARKS REGARDING TYPOLOGY/CATEGORIES OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

The literature on learning outcomes does not distinguish a common system of typology of learning outcomes. There are several most commonly used methods:

- **Declan Kennedy** (the author of a book “A Learning Outcomes Book D Kennedy”) gives an advice that on programme level there should be no more than 8-10 learning outcomes and does not group learning outcomes into the types;
- **ENAE (European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education)** which authorises accreditation and quality assurance agencies to award the EUR-ACE® label to accredited engineering degree programmes have developed EUR-ACE®



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Framework Standards and Guidelines document which contains a set of learning outcomes for Engineering programmes (link: <https://www.enaee.eu/wp-assets-enaee/uploads/2017/11/EAFSG-Doc-Full-status-8-Sept-15-on-web-fm.pdf>). The learning outcomes in this document are divided into eight learning areas:

- Knowledge and understanding
 - Engineering Design
 - Engineering Analysis
 - Investigations
 - Engineering Practice
 - Making Judgements
 - Communication and Team-working
 - Lifelong Learning
- **In Lithuania** while developing the subject field's descriptors the following typology of learning outcomes was chosen:
 - Knowledge and its application
 - Practical/Research skills
 - Special abilities
 - Social abilities
 - Personal abilities
 - **In Latvia** learning outcomes are defined for each study programme and study course (subject). Learning outcomes demonstrate a set of **knowledge, skills and competence** to be acquired upon completion of a study programme, study module or study course.
 - **Network for Music 'Polifonia'** have developed Learning Outcomes for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycle studies in Music. They divide learning outcomes into five categories:
 - A Knowledge and understanding
 - B Applying knowledge and understanding
 - C Making judgements
 - D Communications skills
 - E Learning skills
 - **EQANIE** - the European Quality Assurance Network for Informatics Education has developed Euro-Inf Framework which contains Learning outcomes for the field of Informatics (link: <http://www.eqanie.eu/media/Euro-Inf-New-Programme-Outcomes-for-Accreditation-2015-10-12.pdf>). Learning outcomes are arranged into the following six categories:
 - Underlying Conceptual Basis for Informatics
 - Analysis
 - Design and Implementation
 - Economic, Legal, Social, Ethical and Environmental context
 - Informatics Practice
 - Other Professional Competences

9. Acknowledgments (if any)



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We would like to thank the Azerbaijan pedagogical university for providing premises for consultations of higher education institutions and special thanks for the project staff for support during the mission.

We would like to appraise all higher education institutions and their staff who devote time and efforts for preparing self-evaluation reports and participating at individual consultations with experts.

Annexes:

- 1. GENERAL REMARKS FOR SELF-EVALUATION REPORTS**
- 2. Self-evaluation reports with remarks from experts**



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