

Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan



Twinning project ENI/2018/395-401

Mission Report

Short-Term Mission on Activity 3.2 Undertake capacity building activities for relevant stakeholders (Education Quality Assurance Agency) to enhance their accreditation-related capacities

(June 16, 17, 19 June 2020)

1. Name and Function of the Expert:

Full name of expert

Mr. Almantas Serpatauskas, Lithuania



Signature

Full name of expert

Ms. Jolanta Silka, Latvia



Signature

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 3.2 Undertake capacity building activities for relevant stakeholders (Education Quality Assurance Agency) to enhance their accreditation-related capacities

Benchmarks for this activity are:

- Roadmap for the programme accreditation is developed.

3. Time schedule of mission:

Date and Time	Activity
<p>Tuesday – 16 June 2020</p>	<p>10:30-12:30</p> <p>Online briefing meeting with staff of Accreditation and Licensing Department of newly established Education Quality Assurance Agency (EQAA)</p> <p>Participants: <i>Ms. Lala Abbasova</i>, Head of Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA <i>Ms. Nisa Idrisova</i>, Senior Advisor at Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA <i>Mr. Asiman Ilyasov</i>, Senior Advisor at Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA <i>Mr. Javid Ibadov</i>, Advisor at Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA</p> <p>14:00-16:00</p> <p>Online meeting continues after the lunch.</p>
<p>Wednesday – 17 June 2020</p>	<p><i>The whole day of deskwork by STEs</i></p>
<p>Friday – 19 June 2020</p>	<p>10:30-12:30</p> <p>Online meeting with staff of Accreditation and Licensing Department of newly established Education Quality Assurance Agency (EQAA)</p> <p>Participants: <i>Ms. Lala Abbasova</i>, Head of Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA <i>Ms. Nisa Idrisova</i>, Senior Advisor at Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA <i>Ms. Konul Fatiyeva</i>, Senior Advisor at Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA <i>Mr. Asiman Ilyasov</i>, Senior Advisor at Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA <i>Mr. Javid Ibadov</i>, Advisor at Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA</p> <p>14:00-16:00</p> <p>Online meeting continues after the lunch.</p>

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

The recently created and restructured Education Quality Assurance Agency has asked for providing additional EU expertise to benefit from best EU practices in the field of quality assurance. The aim of this mission was to help Accreditation and Licensing Department of the Agency to develop roadmap for study programme accreditation.

A short-term mission, conducted online, was performed accordingly by 2 EU experts from institutions in charge of quality assurance in higher education in Lithuania and Latvia.

During the mission there were discussed current situation in quality assurance, the new Rules for accreditation of higher and secondary special education institutions, and Institutional evaluation areas, criteria and indicators.

During the mission it was found out that there is an intention to evaluate all study programmes and as a next step is to evaluate higher education institutions within the institutional accreditation in accordance with the newly developed Rules for accreditation of higher and secondary special education institutions, which regulate institutional review and study programme assessment.

There was discussed the online, distance learning and joint programmes assessment, where EU experts share their own experience, indicating that there are no any specific assessment criteria, however existing criteria should be adjusted to the peculiarities of study programmes. For instance, if the programme is implemented online, under the criteria Resources specific equipment, IT programmes and teaching materials should be assessed. According to the joint study programmes, EU experts noted that special requirements for the development of joint programmes are set in the respective laws.

During the discussions with the Agency EU experts suggested to use cluster (study programme group) evaluation approach, which is more systematic and allows to see the situation on each field, its strengths and weaknesses, tendencies, etc. on national level. The number of assessment experts should be depend on the number of programmes in each cluster.

While preparing for programme evaluation it is recommended to find out how many HEIs provide study programmes of the **same study field. Bachelor and master** study programmes of the same study field should be evaluated together to have a view whether master programmes are of higher level, there is no overlapping between master and bachelor programmes as well as similarity of programmes in the same level in the same institution. This approach allows to save organizational and financial resources, do not overburden the whole HEI with too big evaluation workload.

For better planning of evaluation, EU experts recommend to define how many institutions in the country provide programmes in each study field:

Code	Study field and programmes (Bachelor)	Institutions providing programme
060202	Philosophy	
	- History of philosophy	
	- Social philosophy	
	- Philosophy of nature studies	
	- Philosophical problems of humanitarian	

Teacher training study programmes may be evaluated in different ways. One approach could be to evaluate specific subject teacher training programmes with evaluation of relevant study field programmes including teacher training experts in evaluation commission with specific task to have a closer look at didactical side of teacher training programmes (eg. History teacher training programme could be evaluated together with programmes of History study field). Primary, pre primary teacher training, social pedagogics, special pedagogics and similar programmes could be evaluated separately.

Philology study programmes recommended to be evaluated by grouping them by language or at least separately evaluate Azerbaijani (as native) language programmes and separately foreign language programmes.

Training for HEI on self-evaluation and experts (for external evaluation) should be provided to ensure effective results.

When evaluating online, **joint study programmes** specific aspects that are relevant to such programmes should be taken into account. This could be either reference to national standards, if they exist, or international practice (eg. **European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Study Programmes**). Also it could be special criteria included for evaluation of such programmes.

Inclusion of **international experts** in programme evaluation is recommended to have external view and avoiding conflicts of interests between HEi and experts. If expert team is international, usually they can come for site visits in one week. In this case they could visit up to 5 universities and evaluate up to 8-10 study programmes. 1 day site visit is recommended per university and 1-2 programmes. If there are more programmes to be evaluated in the same institution, it is recommended to plan a longer site visit.

5. Achievement of the Expected Results

Planned action was achieved, EU experts provided recommendations for the implementation of study programme accreditation. However, it should be noted that current legislation is quite complicated and could create high administrative burden for the higher education institutions, assessment experts and the Agency.

6. Unexpected Results

Any unexpected results were not identified during the mission.

7. Issues Left Open After the Mission

It should be noted that the Agency has to do a lot of work ahead in order to finalise all necessary regulatory acts, such as Rules for accreditation of higher and secondary special education institutions, the evaluation areas, criteria and indicators for institutions and for programmes, methodologies and others. As well the proper communication with all relevant stakeholders should be in place for successful implementation of the new system.

8. Recommendations (including recommendation for future missions)

After the discussions and relevant documents review, **EU experts would like to suggest the following steps:**

- To finalise all necessary regulations
- To organize communication with all stakeholders involved
- To identify clearly the number of higher education institutions and study programmes in each cluster (field)
- To group all programmes in order to ensure that one experts team assess both bachelor and master level programmes in each cluster
- To compose experts teams taking into account the number of programmes and higher education institutions
- To provide trainings for assessment experts groups

In addition, EU experts would like to pay attention that:

- Current drafts on the Rules for accreditation and intended actions raise doubts on the efficiency of the quality assessment system.
- It seems very complicated and burden for all involved parties.
- It could lead to the overload for higher education institutions, assessment experts and the Agency.
- It raises the administrative and financial burden.

9. Acknowledgments (if any)

We would like to thank Lala Abbasova for the productive discussions and the EQAA and Twinning staff for organisation and support during this mission.