

Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan



Twinning project ENI/2018/395-401

Mission Report

Short-Term Mission on Activity 4.4 Amend the legal provisions on the credit system to reflect that credits are based on learning outcomes and student workload

(February 3 – 7, 2020)

1. Name and Function of the Expert:

Full name of experts

Mr. Jean-Luc Lamboley, France

Signature



2. Objective and Tasks of the Mission:

The mission is carried out within the framework of:

COMPONENT 4: **RECOMMENDATIONS ON AMENDMENTS OF LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATIVE FRAMEWORK DEVELOPED**

Activity 4.4 Amend the legal provisions on the credit system to reflect that credits are based on learning outcomes and student workload

Benchmarks for this activity are:

- A proposal for the amendment of legal regulations to ensure that the credit system is based on the concept of learning outcomes and student workload developed
- A guideline of good practice for mobility and recognition.

3. Time schedule of mission:

Date and Time	Activity
3 rd of February 2020 Monday	10:00-11:30 (Room No.406) : meeting with RTA Ms. Elizaveta Bydanova and Nargiz Garakhanova, Component Leader IV and Senior Advisor at Higher Education and Research Department of MoE. 13:00-17:00 work desk : last proposals of amendments to the decree n° 348 on ECTS rules
4 th of February 2020 Tuesday	10:00-13:00 work desk : final review of the document on ECTS rules 14:00-17:00 work desk : writing a guideline of good practice for mobility and recognition
5 th of February 2020 Wednesday	10:00-12:30 Meeting with heads of international relations boards 14:00-17:00 : work desk : writing the guideline
6 th of February 2020 Thursday	10:00-13:00 work desk : writing the guideline (end) 14:00-17:00 work desk : writing the 2 annexes of the guideline
7 th of February 2020 Friday	10:00-11:00 : debriefing with Nargiz Garakhanova, Component Leader IV and Yashar Omarov, RTA Counterpart. 11:00-13:00 : final review of the document on ECTS rules and the guideline. 14:00-17:00 : report writing

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

This mission was a continuation of a previous mission, carried out in May 2019. In the previous mission the text of the decree 348 of December 24, 2003 on ECTS was discussed and some recommendations proposed. The focus of this second mission was to develop Guidelines for universities on how to recognize ECTS taken abroad and facilitate student mobility.

The issue of mobility and recognition of periods of studies abroad is linked to a correct understanding and use of ECTS. Hence the Guidelines developed during this mission were focused on defining key terms and principles in this regard.

It was helpful to have during this mission new documents developed recently, like the examples of State standards for 3 pilot study programs, a compendium on identifying and defining learning outcomes, the law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on higher education. Thank to these documents, it was possible to have a concrete approach based on the study of specific cases and to check the coherence of the statements with the law.

5. Achievement of the Expected Results

Planned actions are achieved: the two expected benchmarks have been produced. See annexes 1 and 2.

The meeting with the heads of the International Relations Boards took place the premises of the Ministry of Education (MoE) and was useful for the conception and the writing of the Guidelines. The remarks collected during this meeting were considered. The document needs to be translated in Azeri.

The debate focused on the importance of the learning agreement. The idea that recognizing credits is based on the comparability of the aims of the study program and learning outcomes, and that it is better to record mobility as a whole and not component by component is not shared by the public. Consequently we can understand why in the present situation, recognition is difficult because only based on the contents.

6. Unexpected Results

During the meeting with the Heads of International Relations Boards, the representative of the Ministry agreed the fact that recognition falls under the competence of the H.E institutions, not of the MoE, and admitted that mobility could be encouraged if higher education institutions could depart from the general rule of the State standards. We encourage such open mindedness and flexibility on the side of the MoE, which shall support for development of greater mobility in the country.

7. Issues Left Open After the Mission

It is difficult to determine where should the border line between the autonomy of the universities and the state standards approved by the Ministry. On one side, it should be recommended to give more autonomy to the H.E. institutions in the recognition of the periods of study abroad, because it seems that the legislative framework fixed by the State standards

still does not give sufficient space to the indispensable flexibility, but on the other side the meeting with the heads of the international relation board shows that most academics are not entirely convinced that student (and teacher) mobility is a crucial issue for the future of the H.E. institutions in Azerbaijan.

The fact that recognition should not be based on the similarity of the subjects and their contents but on the equivalence of the learning outcomes is not yet graved in the minds. This statement confirms, unfortunately, that the recommendations already made in the previous mission report of May 2019 are still up to date.

8. Recommendations (including recommendation for future missions)

General recommendations :

It appeared during the meeting that the learning agreement is not well known or is not used in a systematic way. Consequently, it is strongly recommended to develop agreed mobility based on leaning agreements according to the European model, because it is the best way to resolve easily the problems of mobility and recognition.

Recommendation to the Ministry of Education:

To encourage and improve student mobility, we recommend to give the Higher Education institutions the possibility to depart from the general rule of the State standards, especially giving the possibility to list recognized course units taken at another university on the transcript to the Azerbaijani diploma, even if they do not match with the subjects in the State Standards (see articles 6.4 of the amended version of the decree 348 of 24 December 2013 on ECTS, annex 1).

Recommendation to the Higher Education Institutions:

It is recommended to nominate a person who oversees the mobility period (= a mobility supervisor). This person is typically the head of study programs or someone from the relevant chair of the faculty. The main task of mobility supervisor is to help the student to elaborate the learning agreement before leaving for mobility, and check that the recognition is effective when the student comes back in the home university.

It is recommended that windows for mobility are included in all the study plans. Windows of mobility are very suitable, for instance, for internships or language travels. By windows of mobility it is understood a period reserved for international student mobility that is embedded into the curriculum of a study program. It is recommended to plan a lot of free elective courses during the mobility windows time.

Recommendation for future mission:

Workshops could be organized for people in charge of mobility about “how to elaborate a learning agreement”. Two examples are available in annex 1.1. and 1.2 of the Guidelines, but practical exercises could help to understand how these examples have been elaborated and how a learning agreement works.

9. Acknowledgments (if any)

The meeting with a dozen of Heads of international relations boards and the representative of the Ministry was useful and showed the necessity to have a very concrete approach pointing out good practices.

The expert would like to thank in the first turn the Ministry of Education for their invitation to take part in the mission and fruitful exchanges regarding the mission topic. The expert also thanks the Twinning office team for their overall support during the mission.

Annexes

1. The final amended version of the decree n° 348 of December 24 2013 on ECTS
2. Guidelines for a good practice of mobility and recognition (with 2 annexes)