

Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan



Twinning project ENI/2018/395-401

Mission Report

Short-Term Mission on Activity 3.6 Conduct training for external reviewers, establish a pool of trained reviewers

(September 9-13, 2019)

1. Name and Function of the Expert:

Full name of expert

Ms. Rasa Penkauskienė, 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 3.6 Conduct training for external reviewers, establish a pool of trained reviewers

Benchmarks for this activity are:

- a pool of reviewers (at least 100 persons), including student representatives and representatives of the labour market established and trained



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3. Time schedule of mission:

Date and Time	Activity
Monday 9 th of September 2019	Meeting with ANO staff. Discussing the trainings for external evaluators.
Tuesday 10 th of September 2019	Training of external evaluators
Wednesday 11 th of September 2019	Training of external evaluators
Thursday 12 th of September 2019	Training of external evaluators
Friday 13 th of September 2019	Debriefing session. Report writing.

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

Only institutional evaluation has been performed in higher education institutions of Azerbaijan so far. The first Twinning project implemented in 2015-2017 supported the then newly established (2016) Accreditation and Nostrification Office at 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 part of the Component III of the ongoing Twinning project certain number of documents concerning the 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 next mission was implemented under the Activity 3.5 from 17 to 21 June aimed to review the second drafts of the reports and give further instructions for the improvement.



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The current mission which is being implemented under the Activity 3.6 aims to train the reviewers. The objective of this mission is to deliver training on programme evaluation-related issues for the reviewers who will take part in pilot programme evaluation activities.

During the mission, Twinning experts shared their experience in the development of training for the experts in respective countries. Twinning experts developed material for training, which is presented in the Annexes.

Experts have trained the reviewers to apply the methodology and the criteria as well as indicators for programme evaluation that are set in the methodology while reading the self-evaluation report. Information on Bologna process and quality assurance issues, main principles of quality assurance in EHEA, Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015 purposes, scope and principles were introduced.

Participants have been trained to conduct the interview with target groups during the site-visit. Information on interview ethics and techniques was provided. Future experts were introduced with the Confirmation of Absence of Conflict of Interest document.

Participants also were trained to write the report on evaluation as well as to formulate recommendations to the higher education institution.

During the sessions, participants were not only introduced with the information related to the topic but also they took part in the practical exercises. Practical exercises were designed to learn to apply the information: during the session 2, participants were reading the provided self-evaluation report, analysing it according to the criteria, formulating the questions and the list of missing information. During the session 4, participants were simulating interviews with programme self-evaluation group and with representatives of the labour market. During the session 6, participants were analysing recommendations to the higher education institutions and formulating the recommendations individually.

After the training sessions participants were given a test to evaluate knowledge gained during the training activities. All participants passed the test successfully.

The last day of the mission was devoted to the meeting with the representatives of ANO and the project team to provide feedback from implemented training.

5. Achievement of the Expected Results

Planned action was *achieved*:

Experts have trained 16 reviewers from higher education institutions.

6. Unexpected Results

During the previous missions HANDBOOK ON METHODOLOGIES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDY PROGRAMMES EVALUATIONS (hereinafter - Methodology) was elaborated. The Methodology is aimed to regulate the external evaluation of study programmes organised by ANO. Nevertheless the fact that pilot accreditations are planned quite soon, the methodology



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has not finished yet. There are still missing parts, as well as terminology should be revised in order it is used consequently. The main point to which Twinning Experts would like to pay attention is the need to develop mechanism for assessing the evaluation areas and criteria. In the current version of Methodology it is not developed yet, it is not clear whether evaluation area or evaluation criteria should be assessed and what is the assessment grid and how it is possible to come to the final assessment.

7. Issues Left Open After the Mission

This Mission aim is achieved. However Twinning experts would like to point out that Methodology should be finalized before the pilot accreditations.

8. Recommendations (including recommendation for future missions)

The overall impression was that training participants managed to achieve a considerable progress in the given frame of time for the training.

In addition, the experts would like to make following comments:

- ANO should further develop the principles of expert selection. The selection of participants should be supported with clear selection criteria. English language should be one of the criteria as reviewers will take part in international evaluations. Student representatives and labour market representatives should be also included in the training. Regular trainings for the reviewers who will be involved in the programme evaluation activities is one of the most important functions of the Quality assurance agency (ANO).
- 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 framework of the regulations for higher education in Azerbaijan.
- When conducting training for the experts who will be involved in external evaluation of study programmes in particularly for the students and labour market representatives, additional topics should be included. Such as the study programme structure, aims and learning outcomes of the study programme, learning outcome definition and etc. Thus introducing the experts with the area they are not familiar with.
- There is a need to continue trainings for reviewers in order ANO could have experts pool who have capacity to evaluate the quality of study programmes.
- The methodology for the study programme evaluation should be reviewed and amended before the next training session to ensure that participants are provided with full and adequate information.

9. Acknowledgments (if any)

We would like to thank the ANO staff and to the project staff for support during the mission.

We would like appraise all participants who took part in the training of external reviewers for the input, positive attitude and engagement in all the training activities.



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Annexes

- 1. Presentation on Session 1: Methodology, criteria and indicators for study programme evaluation and Session 2: Practical exercise on how to work with self-evaluation reports**
- 2. Presentation on Session 3: Interview ethics and techniques and Session 4: Practical exercise on interviewing techniques: simulation of interviews**
- 3. Role descriptions for the practical exercise in Session 4**
- 4. Presentation on Session 5: Writing evaluation report and Session 6: Practical exercise on writing recommendations**
- 5. Test for the reviewers**



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