

# Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan



Twinning project ENI/2018/395-401

## Mission Report

Short-Term Mission on Activity 4.3 Review the legal and regulatory framework for recognition and, if required, submit recommendations to comply with European best practices

(May 13 – May 17, 2019)

### 1. Name and Function of the Expert:

Full name of experts

Mr. Jean-Luc Lamboley, France

Signature

Ms. Kristina Sutkutė, Lithuania

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 4.3 Review the legal and regulatory framework for recognition and, if required, submit recommendations to comply with European best practices

Benchmarks for this activity are:

A proposal for the amendment of legal regulations for recognition at national and institutional levels

The objectives of the mission are :

To show which are the European best practices for learning outcomes based recognition.

To ensure that the Higher Education Institutions are familiar with the learning outcomes approach.

To submit recommendations to the Higher Education Institutions to comply with these European practices

## 3. Time schedule of mission:

Date and Time	Activities
Monday 13 <sup>th</sup> of May 2019	<b>10:00-12:30</b> Meeting with Ms. Nargiz Garakhanova, Component II Leader to discuss current practices related to recognition of periods of study. <b>14:00-17:00</b> Deskwork. The STEs review the legal framework on recognition of ECTS.
Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup> of May 2019	<b>10:00-12:30</b> Workshop in Baku State University on how to do recognition based on learning outcomes, and to write learning outcomes for subjects <b>14:00-17:00</b> Workshop in Azerbaïdjan Technical University on how to do recognition based on learning outcomes, and to write learning outcomes for subjects
Wednesday 15 <sup>th</sup> of May 2019	<b>10:00-12:30</b> Workshop in Azerbaïdjan State Pedagogical University on how on how to do recognition based on learning outcomes, and to write learning outcomes for subjects <b>14:00-17:00</b> Meeting at Accreditation and Nostrification Office

<p>Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2019</p>	<p><b>10:00-12:30</b> Workshop in Sumqajit State University on how on how to do recognition based on learning outcomes, and to write learning outcomes for subjects</p> <p><b>15:30 :17:30</b> Deskwork.</p>
<p>Friday 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2019</p>	<p><b>10:00-11:30</b> Presentation of the workshop about how to do recognition based on learning outcomes. Review of the rules on organizing the Credit System education (cf. annexe II) Debrief with HE Department about the results of the mission.</p> <p><b>14:00-17:00</b> Report writing.</p>

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

A previous mission focused on the issue of the learning outcomes (see the presentation of Inga Juknytė-Petreikienė). So, the participants were supposed to know what a learning outcome based system means. Consequently the aim of the workshops was not to check if this knowledge was acquired, but to train teachers to write learning outcomes in a very concrete manner.

The previous mission on recognition focused on the activities of the Accreditation and Nostrification Office (ANO) and the revision of the new Law on Recognition. The meetings with higher education institutions revealed that they face many issues regarding recognition of credits because of the strict state standards, which list course units taught during the delivery of the programme. These course units then also have to be listed on the transcript of the diploma. This does not allow higher education institutions to recognize and, consequently, add to the transcript course units and credits, which do not represent the same or similar subjects.

#### **5. Achievement of the Expected Results**

The workshops have been implemented in four universities (BSU, ATU, ASPU, SSU), with a relevant number of participants.

*The first part* of the workshop was devoted to presenting the learning outcomes approach in recognition of study periods. The participants of the workshop were made aware of the good European practices in the recognition of credits and discussed the main issues that they are faced in their recognition activities.

*The second part* of the workshop was devoted to writing learning outcomes (cf. **Annex I**). Around 20% of the participants did not participate to this practical exercise. 56 answers has been collected. The percentages are an average of all the answers but the differences between the 4 universities were not very significant. The main results are :

- 20% show that the teacher has no idea of what a learning outcome is
- 75% show that the teacher knows what a learning outcome is, but is not yet able to describe the content of his/her course in terms of learning outcomes
- 5% of the paper shows that the teacher is able to write the learning outcomes that give a good description of his course.

The main conclusion to be drawn is that teachers need training to be able to write learning outcomes, and consequently we can understand why in the present situation, recognition is only based on the contents.

The positive aspect is the presence, in three universities, of one or two persons who have the competences to train their colleagues.

In addition to the workshops, an interview with experts from ANO was carried out to assess the impact of the first mission. The experts were informed that the new law is in the approval process and is expected to come into force at the end of the year.

#### **6. Unexpected Results**

At the beginning of the exercise the participants seemed a bit afraid because perhaps they considered the exercise as an exam! For this reason not all the participants produced a paper.

## **7. Issues Left Open After the Mission**

It is difficult to determine where should the border line be between the autonomy of the universities and the state standards fixed by the Ministry. On one side, it should be recommended to give more autonomy to the H.E. institutions, - especially in the definition of the study programmes and the designs of the curricula based on a learning outcomes approach- , because it is now the case in all the European countries and it is also a criteria of quality assurance; but on the other side, the academic situation inside these institutions shows that most academics are not entirely prepared to take benefit from this autonomy.

## **8. Recommendations (including recommendation for future missions)**

*Recommendations about the issue of the recognition and competence/learning outcomes based approach :*

1. Nevertheless, in the case of recognition of periods of studies abroad, it may be recommended that the decision, including the amount of transferred credits, should be decentralized and taken at the level of higher Educations Institutions according to consistent criteria with focus on learning outcomes
2. Recognition of periods of study should be based on comparability of learning outcomes. Higher education institution should consider recognizing credits based on the comparability of the aims and learning outcomes of the programme and not individual course units and record nobility as a whole and not component by component.
3. There should be a 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.
4. During the visits, it appeared that the learning agreement or 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 the best way to resolve easily the problems of mobility and recognition The implementation of joint programmes may be also a good way.
5. The writing of the learning outcomes, the description of the study programmes, the choice of the subjects, and the description of the course contents, should be made only by the academic staff of higher education institutions. The Ministry, at the level of the state standards, has the opportunity to give the generic (or transversal) and subject specific (= professional) competences for each study programme ; obviously the learning outcomes of these programmes have to meet with, but for the definition of the leaning outcomes, only teachers can be competent. It may be the responsibility of the National agency of Accreditation to check if the course contents and related learning outcomes of the programmes fit with what is expected by the state standards.
6. Considering that the Diploma Supplement is a very useful document for recognition and a good source for information on the competences and learning outcomes related to the programme, it is recommended that a bilingual Diploma Supplement is automatically issued to all graduates free of charge.
7. Taking into consideration the fact that the ECTS Users Guide represents the good practice in implementation of credit and recognition based on learning outcomes, it is recommended to translate this document into Azerbaijani to make sure that it is accessible to all academics and officials.

8. Recommendations related to the Rules on Organizing the Credit System at Bachelor and Master Levels are provided in **Annex II** of this report, with a particular attention paid to recognition. However, it is recommended to review the document structure and contents after the revision of state standards and other related documents to ensure compatibility and clear alignment.

#### *Practical recommendation for the future missions*

The organization of workshops seems to be the best way to measure the actual and concrete situation inside the universities, by checking how the processes and the Bologna tools are really implemented. A report written by a committee may lie or mask some negative aspects but the papers produced by the participants to a workshop are always objective because they give the faithful reflection of the reality...

For a better functioning on of these workshops, it should be recommended:

1. To give a good definition of what a workshop is (it is not a seminar or a conference..). It is a place where participants have to work and produce something which can be presented, and discussed by the whole group.
2. To find a friendly room well adapted to this kind of exercise, equipped with a screen for the ppt slides, but also a blackboard with pens.
3. To reduce the number of the participants, and organize sub-groups according to the subjects
4. To select people able to understand and write in English. The interpreter cannot translate in time all the papers produced by the workshop; it means that the expert, and the mission, loses a lot of information and the benefits of the workshop are limited.
5. To inform the participants that the workshops are not an exam. All the papers are anonymous, and this type of practical exercise should be considered, by the academics, as a training for lifelong learning.

It may be useful here to note the statement made by a participant: "I have been teaching for 15 years ; so I know what teaching means, and I do not understand why I have to make this kind of exercise."

It is clear that this negative behavior shows that the teacher does not know what is a learning outcome, but also that he has not been well informed.

#### **9. Acknowledgments (if any)**

The experts have been impressed by the commitment of the academics involved in the activities of this mission and by the interest shown by the Central administration. The results of this mission could not have been achieved without the excellent work done by the translator Tarlan and the perfect logistic organization and support provided by Aytaj. Great congratulations to the local team and its leader Lysa.

#### **Annexes**

## Annex 1 : the template proposed for the workshop

<b>Course topic title</b>
<b>Faculty/Department</b>
<b>Subject and Level (Cycle)</b> Bachelor Or Master
<b>Year of study and semester when the course is delivered</b>
<b>Number of ECTS credits allocated</b>
<b>List of the Learning outcomes of the course</b> <b>(No more than 6 ; some of them should be related to generic competences)</b>  1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.

**Annex II : Suggestions for the document “Rules on organizing the Credit system education....”**  
(in red the modifications or statements to be added).

**1.3.** The specifications of educational system organized in accordance with the **European Credit Transfer system (ECTS)**

**1.4.** Introduce the organization of the **European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)**...

**2.1.1 Education credit** is the measure unit of time allocated to mastering of discipline **described in terms of learning outcomes and competences.**

**2.1.10. European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)**

*Better to give the official definition of ECTS :*

**ECTS is a student centered system based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of a study programme, objectives specified in terms of learning outcomes and competences to be required.**

**2.1.11. Prerequisite disciplines**

*The definition is not relevant to “prerequisite” disciplines. It is more valuable for “core” disciplines*

Disciplines whose successful completion is necessary for enrolling in a higher level programme.

### 2.1.18

Replace current assessment by continuous assessment

### 2.1.19

Replace interim assessment by “final exams” is an assessment of student’s performance by subject at the end of a semester

### 3.2.2.

45 hours is too much ; reduce to 40 hours

Cancel the end of the paragraph from “the weekly work load”

### 3.2.15 and 3.2.16

*The English translation is not clear. The end of the paragraph should be written in this way ...*

The main issue is that a **credit cannot be lost**. Better to indicate that in the specific cases of professions with sound changes, some credits may not be recognized in the new curriculum ; the university is responsible for the decision.

## 6. Student and teacher mobility

6.1. Complete as follows the end of the paragraph:

Windows of mobility should be planned in all the study programmes.

6.2.1. Application form of the student (written in language of education.)

6.2.2. Learning agreement

6.2.3 Transcript of records

6.2.4. Information package.

6.4. In the case of agreed mobility, i.e based on learning agreements or mobility inside a joined programme, recognition of credits should be automatic.

**Annex III : Suggestions for the document “Rules on organizing the Credit system education....”**  
(in track changes mode).

**Annex IV: Lists of workshop participants**

