

Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan



Twinning project ENI/2018/395-401

Mission Report

Short-Term Mission on Activity 2.3 Hold training workshops on innovative teaching, learning and assessment methods, including the allocation of credits based on learning outcomes and student workload in order to ensure that student-centred curricula are also implemented in practice

(October 7 –11, 2019)

1. Name and Function of the Expert:

Full name of expert

Ms. Māra Jure, Latvia

Signature



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2. Objective and Tasks of the Mission:

The mission is carried out within the framework of:

COMPONENT 2: PILOT STUDY PROGRAMME IN PRIORITY AREAS ARE IMPROVED TO BE MORE STUDENT-CENTRED

Activity 2.3 Hold training workshops on innovative teaching, learning and assessment methods, including the allocation of credits based on learning outcomes and student workload in order to ensure that student-centred curricula are also implemented in practice

Benchmarks for this activity are:

- 4 trainings (with 100 participants) and training materials on student-centred approaches for teaching, learning and assessment delivered;
- Suggestions for content and organisation of further training workshops

3. Time schedule of mission:

Date and Time	Activity
7 th of October 2019 Monday	10:00-13:00 Attending the meeting under Act 1.5.7 to discuss the revision of the state standard of study programmes in selected programs with RTA Ms. Elizaveta Bydanova and Ms. Vusala Gurbanova, Component Leader I, Senior Advisor at Higher Education Department, Ministry of Education. 14:00-17:30 A separate meeting with Ms. Elizaveta Bydanova.
8 th of October 2019 Tuesday	09:30-13:00 Workshop on writing and assessment of learning outcomes at Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University and Sumgait State University 14:00-17:00 Deskwork
9 th of October 2019 Wednesday	10:00 – 13:00 Deskwork. 14:00-17:30 Workshop on writing and assessment of learning outcomes at Azerbaijan Technical University and Azerbaijan Oil and Industry University. Visit to Department of Chemistry, Azerbaijan Technical University
10 th of October 2019 Thursday	09:30 – 13:30 Workshop on writing and assessment of learning outcomes at Baku State University and Baku Engineering university 14:30-17:00 Deskwork
11 th of October 2019 Friday	10:00-13:30 Report writing 15:00-16:00 Meeting with RTA Ms. Elizaveta Bydanova and staff of the MoE Higher Education Department to debrief about the results of the mission (Ms. Vusala Gurbanova, CL I and Mr. Yashar Omarov, RTA Counterpart) 16:00-17:00 Workshop on grading and grade distribution tables at Ministry of



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

- A methodological compendium on identifying and defining learning outcomes (prepared within Twinning project ENI/2018/395-401)
- Twinning project “Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan” ENI/2018/395-401 2018-2020. Brief introduction into main stakeholders
- Decree No 311 of Cabinet of Ministers of Republic of Azerbaijan “On the approval of the ‘National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning of the Republic of Azerbaijan’”
- STE Welcome package Azerbaijan

5. Achievement of the Expected Results

Planned action was achieved due to particular interest and support of top management of all three HE institutions Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University, Baku State University and Azerbaijan Technical university.

6. Unexpected Results

1) Unexpected result was that academic staff and even administration of universities did not know foreign language (English and Russian). The translation significantly delayed and complicated the communication process, especially during practical exercises. It is not clear how teachers can carry out research work (which requires reading and writing in English). Lack of language does not allow to find an information and video materials about innovative teaching/learning and assessment methods which are available on the Internet in a wide selection.

2) It was felt that HE institutions still lacked modern teaching and assessment facilities (e.g., interactive boards, touchscreen displays with screen-capture properties, clickers for quick formative assessment of large number of students) and teachers did not even have an idea of what was available in this area.

7. Issues Left Open After the Mission

Activity 2.3. requires long preparatory period for STE, which was not case. Due to several reasons (confusing vast amount of information which appeared not addressed to particular STE, late formulation of precise tasks of STE mission, slow communication between STE and audience due to translation during workshops) information about innovative teaching/learning methods/activities and assessment of learning outcomes was provided shortly, mainly by references to publications and video materials available on internet. Valuable materials for this purpose can be find at this site: <https://www.asset-erasmus.com/flayers> (Aligning assessment with learning outcomes: Assessment Tools for HE Learning Environments 2017-2020).

There was no possibility to ensure that student-centred curricula are also implemented in practice – some participants even did not know what are Learning outcomes and how to write them. This shows that situation currently is pretty far away from completed student-centred curricula implementation.

8. Recommendations (including recommendation for future missions)

- 1) MoE should evaluate and rethink inclusion of the long list of teaching/learning methods/activities and assessment methods in the State standard. As expert learned from



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workshops, academic staff was confused by the naming and selection of these methods (e.g., e-studies and distance learning are mentioned as two different methods, but the last is just a kind of the first). Besides that these methods are developing continuously and very fast, and the amount of them is not limited, but the State standard will not be updated so often.

- 2) Expert suggest that MoE should clear up grading system used in Azerbaijan. Even academic staff could not explain the system used in Azerbaijan. National grading system should be described and this information should be available for any interested person. The information can be made widely available, e.g., through CIMEA (A worldwide database of University Grading Systems) or WES (International Grade Conversion Guide for Higher Education (USA)).
- 3) In order to produce grade distribution tables for study programmes, data about assessment results should be regularly collected and analyzed at University level. These statistical data will provide grade distribution tables.
- 4) English language knowledge of teachers could be effectively improved, if MoE would set defined level (e.g., B1 or B2) of English language according widely used language tests as a requirement for election and employment of academic staff. In order to improve English language knowledge Universities should provide language courses for academic staff (free of charge).
- 5) International mobility programs for students and academic staff should be launched and intensively realized. This will improve 1) English knowledge and language skills, 2) widen and quickly improve implementation and use of innovative teaching/learning methods and assessment methods in study process. If Azerbaijan is planning to comply HE with requirements of EHEA, mobility of students and teachers is very important component of this process. Beside that this will allow to renew teaching staff in near future.
- 6) Appropriate living and working conditions are very important for incoming students and visiting professors. Taking this into account serious improvement should be done, particularly regarding sanitary conditions in toilets at universities.
- 7) As participants of workshops did not know English and Russian, a lot of time during workshops was wasted for explanation and translation of printed handouts of presentations and exercises (due to the lack of time it was done only partially). All presentation materials as well as exercises had to be translated and printed out before arrival of experts or at least before workshops. In order to improve quality and effectiveness of the next expert visits this should be taken into account - experts should be completely informed in due time (at least one month instead of several days before the visit) about their mission, envisaged tasks and duties; experts should provide materials for translation and copying before the visit, timely.
- 8) If mission of STE envisages discussions about theoretical questions of pedagogy, one of prerequisites for selection of expert should be doctoral degree in pedagogy.
- 9) It seemed that there are problems with arrangement of rooms for meetings at Ministry of Education – this disturbed planning of work and changed schedule.
- 10) Organization of workshops and group work should be improved – it seemed that participants have never worked in groups and did not know how to do it. Arrangement of tables and chairs in meeting rooms was envisaged only for lectures, not for group work – it made group work almost impossible.

9. Acknowledgments (if any)

The expert expresses gratitude to Ms. Lisa Bydanova, Resident Twinning Advisor, RTA Assistant Ms. Aytaj Atakishiyeva and Language assistant Mr. Tarlan Arzumanov as well as to the representatives of universities, especially top management of ASPU, BSU and ATU for their high involvement and leadership in order to implement necessary changes to comply HE in Azerbaijan with requirements of EHEA and for their help in organization of expert visit.



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Annexes (if any)

- 1) Annex 1. Presentation about LO, teaching/learning methods, assessment methods.
- 2) Annex 2. Presentation for practical part of workshops.
- 3) Annex 3. Presentation about grading systems and grading distribution tables
- 4) Annex 4. Exercise Nr. 1
- 5) Annex 5. Exercise Nr. 2
- 6) Annex 6. Exercise Nr. 3
- 7) Annex 7. Solution of Exercise Nr. 3
- 8) Annex 8. Egracons: Grading Table Data Template



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