



Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan



Twinning project AZ/14/ENI/OT/01/17 (AZ/49)

Mission Report

Short-Term Mission on Activity 1.1. Improvement of concept and methodology for competence-based education standards (May 14 – 18, 2018)

1. Name and Function of the Expert:

Bruno CURVALE

Senior Project Leader/Short-term Expert, France

Jean-Luc LAMBOLEY, Prof.

Short-Term Expert, France

Inga Juknytė-Petreikienė, Dr.

Short Term Expert, Lithuania

Gunta Kinta, Dr.

Short Term Expert, Latvia



Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
This project is funded by the European Union

2. Objective and Tasks of the Mission:

The mission is carried out within the framework of:

COMPONENT 1: SELECTED NATIONAL EDUCATION STANDARDS ARE ALIGNED TO INCLUDE A COMPETENCE-BASED FOCUS

Activity 1.1. Improvement of concept and methodology for competence-based education standards

Benchmarks for this activity are:

- Diagnostic of current situation of BC;
- Data on best practices of European competence-based education standards;
- A concept and methodology for transforming education standards to be competence-based.



Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
This project is funded by the European Union

3. Time schedule of mission:

Date and Time	Activity
Monday 14 May 2018	<p>10h00 – 11h00: Welcome of the experts by the Ministry team. Welcome word by Mr. Piriye, Deputy Head of Apparatus (place: MoE)</p> <p>11h – 12h45: Desk work of experts (place: Akt-Room, Museum wing, 3d floor, Ministry’s premises). Point on mission deliverables and work distribution across the week agenda. Preparation of meeting at universities.</p> <p>12h45 – 14h00: Lunch at the Ministry’s canteen</p> <p>14h00 – 16h30: Desk work. Review of 4 documents regarding national standards in higher education (place: MoE)</p> <p>16h30 – 18h15: Meeting with the BC PL (place: MoE)</p>
Tuesday 15 May 2018	<p>9h30 – 13h45: Workshop at MoE “Lessons learnt from implementing competence-based approach: 3 case studies from MS – France, Latvia and Lithuania” (place: Akt-Room, Museum wing, 3d floor, Ministry’s premises)</p> <p>13h45 – 14h45: Lunch at the Ministry’s canteen</p> <p>14h45 – 18h00: Desk work (place: Akt-Room, Museum wing, 3d floor, Ministry’s premises). Drafting a concept and methodology for transformation of national standards into competence-based and continuation of work on the feedback to current national standards.</p>
Wednesday 16 May 2018	<p>10h – 12h40: Visit to the Azerbaijan State University of Oil and Gas: meeting with the Rector; meeting with Vice-Rector and deans of different faculties.</p> <p>12h40 – 14h00: Lunch</p> <p>14h00 – 18h00: experts - desk work (place: hotel premises); senior project leader – meeting with the Department for Accreditation and Nostrification of the MoE</p>
Thursday 17 May 2018	<p>10h – 12h40: Visit to the Baku State University: meeting with the Vice-Rectors and deans of different faculties</p> <p>12h40 – 14h00: Lunch</p> <p>14h00 – 17h00: Desk work (place: MoE);</p> <p>17h00 – 18h00: Debriefing session with MoE staff on mission results.</p>
Friday 18 May 2018	<p>9h00 – 13h00: Desk work (place: hotel premises).</p> <p>13h00 – 17h30: Desk work (place: MoE premises).</p>



Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
This project is funded by the European Union

4. Mission report:

This Report is based on the four provided legal documents¹ and on the information obtained during the visit to the two universities (Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University and Baku State University). We have first to sincerely thank the persons of the Ministry of Education (MoE) who gave us all the precisions asked about the documents, and the academics who patiently answered all our questions.

Obviously this is only a preliminary or introductory Report, because time was too short for the experts to have a complete or deep understanding of the situation of higher education in Azerbaijan, and know about all the peculiarities of the national context. This Report is not at all an evaluation of the higher education system in Azerbaijan; it only aims, basing on relationships of confidence from peers to peers, to identify the obstacles to a good implementation of a competence- based higher education, and to give some tools and councils to overcome these obstacles. After the examination of all the retrieved information, the experts are convinced that the main issue is to set up the most appropriate governance (intended as organizing relationships between the actors), which means to rely on convinced and reactive persons who have a clear awareness of what they have to do, and how to efficiently collaborate between each other.

According to the deliverables, the Report is divided into three parts:

1. Diagnostic of current situation in Azerbaijan;
2. The proposal of a concept and methodology;
3. Materials about the best practices of the European competence-based education standards (in Annex 2).

Diagnostic of current situation in Azerbaijan

Introduction

The **aim** of the situation analysis was to identify main strengths and weaknesses of national higher education system regarding the potential of shifting towards student-centred learning and competence-based higher education. The experts analysed state education standards for higher education, and had focus group discussions involving the Ministry of Education (MoE) and two higher education institutions (HEIs) – Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University and Baku State University.

Due to short time devoted to this exercise, the remarks and conclusions should be considered as general impressions.

Legal document analysis

The major **aim** of the analysis of the state education standards for higher education was to provide rational for potential recommendations concerning the shift towards the development of competence-based state education standards and higher education study programmes.

The experts reviewed the English translations of the following legal documents:

- (1) The state standards and programs for higher education step (approved by the Decision of the Cabinet of the Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 75, 23.04.2010);
- (2) Bachelor's Study Content and Arrangement Rules (approved by Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 117, 24.06.2010)

¹ Decision N° 75 on approval of the state standards and programs for higher education, Decree N° 88 on approval of regulations of Master's degree; Decision N° 117 about approval of Bachelor's study, and Decision N° 129 on approving the rules on the establishment and admission to doctoral studies.



Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
This project is funded by the European Union

- (3) Regulations of Master’s degree awarding and of Master course’s content and Arrangement Rules (approved by the decree of Cabinet of Ministers of the Azerbaijan Republic No. 88, 12.05.2010);
- (4) Rules on the establishment and admission to doctoral studies (approved by the Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 129, 1.07.2010).

See the results of analysis of the mentioned legal regulations in Annex 3.

Discussions with focus groups

The **purpose** of these interactions was to explore the current situation regarding development of Bologna tools, elaboration and approval process of documents regulating study content, as well as practical implementation of state education standards.

The experts had discussions and exchange of experience with the following focus groups: 1) staff of the MoE, Science, Higher, and Secondary Professional Education Department and 2) Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University and Baku State University including representatives of main management of HEIs (rector, vice rectors, deans of faculties, heads of departments), teachers and students. The results of discussions are outlined in the Annex 4.

Strengths and weaknesses for the shift towards competence-based higher education

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political will to shift towards competence-based higher education • Academic will to be helped in developing competence-based higher education. • Established tradition of HEIs to specialize in particular fields, which promotes cooperation between HEIs in terms of defining competences in the field; thus, ensuring comparability of qualifications awarded by different HEIs. • Legal provisions to update state education standards on regular basis. • Strong emphasis on the importance of graduates’ employment, as well as system for assisting graduates to get job. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of understanding of the main concepts in terms of competence-based higher education. • Lack of experience and competence to introduce competence-based higher education in practice. • The procedures of the designing State education standards and study programmes are complicated and time-consuming, which makes higher education less responsive to the labour market needs. • The lack of cooperation between the higher education institutions and employers as regards design of study programmes and placements.

Recommendations

The legislative documents in the background impart the notions of the Bologna Process principles, and there is a clear politic will to reinforce the collaboration between Azerbaijan and EU countries. In fact, both HEIs consider mobility a priority. Thus, in general focus groups demonstrated good knowledge of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) basic principles, as well as willingness to shift towards student-centred learning and competence-based higher education.

Yet the practical implementation of the competence-based higher education was named to be main issue both by the Ministry and HEIs. The following recommendations could be provided regarding the shift towards competence-based higher education:



Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
This project is funded by the European Union

- National Strategy on Education and other legal documents should indicate that competence-based education is the new paradigm which should be applied in all the study programmes.
- In order to communicate in a common language, national authorities and stakeholders (HEIs, employers and students) have to discuss and agree on the terminology used in the context of competence-based higher education. This glossary (terms and their definitions) should be part of legal provisions, e.g. state education standard.
- The national authorities and stakeholders of higher education should agree what arrangements should be stipulated by State and what decided by HEIs, as well as discuss the responsibilities of each stakeholder.
- To foster the responsiveness of higher education to labour market needs, procedures of designing and updating state education standards and study programmes should be considered to make them less time-consuming.
- All the degree programme profiles and syllabi should be described in terms of competences (generic and subject specific) and learning outcomes.
- The Diploma Supplement, using the Europass template, should be awarded automatically to all the graduates and free of charge.
- Since employability is one of the main objectives of all the study programmes, students should have contacts with the socioeconomic world through specific activities assessed and integrated in the curricula (placements, internships, summer jobs, field visits, open days etc.).

The shift towards competence-based higher education involves changes in entire higher education system and relates to several aspects outlined in the other parts of Report.

A concept and methodology for transforming state education standards to be competence-based

Introduction

Provisions on the preparation, implementation and continuous improvement of competence-based curricula are not yet clearly defined and detailed in one overarching document that would be acceptable to all social stakeholders of higher education of Azerbaijan. There is a lack of understanding and using of common language in terms of learning outcomes, competence, qualification, etc. For these reasons, the realization of competences-based studies, and the cooperation between the MoE, employers and HEIs is complicated.

It is necessary to consider some amendments to existing national legal documents on higher education, to promote the competence-based higher education system among the governing bodies, HEIs (academic communities) and employers (labour market) of Azerbaijan, as well as provide the methodological guidelines and support for the implementation of the competence-based higher education. The amendments would help Azerbaijani HEIs moving towards a real competence-based teaching, learning and assessment in higher education, and the Azerbaijani higher education system would be explicitly further developed when introducing the competence-based education approach. All the measures are summarized in this concept and methodology for transforming state education standards to be competence-based (hereinafter – “Concept and methodology”).

Assumptions

Although above mentioned legal documents and practices need to be improved and supplemented to comply with political agreements, legislation and good practices within the EHEA, there are several solid



Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
This project is funded by the European Union

assumptions, including previous, current and future international cooperation between MoE and HEIs for transforming state education standards to be competence-based.

The conceptual and methodological basis for the Azerbaijani competence-based higher education is the experience of different European countries, formulated principles, provisions for their implementation and application.

Concepts

The competence-based curricula approach in higher education means that study programme and each of its subjects (modules) must be oriented towards clearly defined learning outcomes necessary for the acquisition of the competences constituting the content of higher education and professional qualifications. Therefore, the descriptions of the study programmes and the subjects (modules) must indicate the student's workload, the methods and forms of teaching, learning and assessment of achievement of student's learning outcomes. Thus, the most important **notions** of the concept and methodology for transforming state education standards to be competence-based should be: learning outcomes, competence, qualifications, student achievements, student workload, study credit, student-centred teaching and learning, stakeholders, quality assurance.

All stakeholders (especially academic community and national governing bodies) of Azerbaijani higher education must have a common language in terms of competences, learning outcomes, qualifications, etc. This is necessary for the stakeholders to understand each other and communicate on their way towards real implementation of competence-based curricula on the ground.

There are a lot of definitions proposed by different authors across the Europe and other continents. It is desirable to set up a national working group as soon as possible on the development of key concepts of competence-based curricula in Azerbaijani higher education, composed from representatives of academic community (representatives of education science and philology), national Bologna experts team, national authorities to produce the national glossary of terms and notions to be used in competence-based higher education.

All agreed terms and notions to be used in competence-based higher education should be presented in general provisions of all legal acts on higher education and used uniformly in all the national legal and political documents.

A common language in terms of learning outcomes, competence, qualification, etc. will help the stakeholders of Azerbaijani higher education communicating nationally and internationally and will facilitate smooth transition to competence-based teaching, learning and assessment.

Methodology for the development of competence-based study programme

Methodology

The experts agree on the fact that the most used approach to implement a competence-based higher education is to use the Tuning methodology². The European Commission funded project "Tuning Educational Structures in Europe" (launched in 2000) was a university driven project, which aimed at offering a concrete approach to implementation of Bologna Process at the level of HEIs and subject areas. The Tuning approach consists of a methodology to design, develop, implement and evaluate study programmes for each of the Bologna cycles (see Annex 5 for more information).

There are **five reasons** for choosing Tuning methodology:

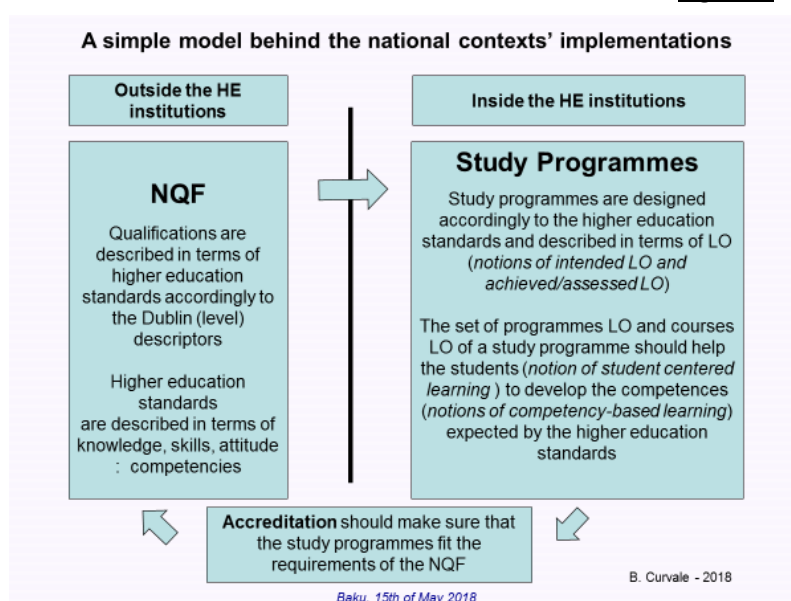
² For more details about Tuning see booklets available online: <http://www.deusto-publicaciones.es/deusto/index.php/es/tuning-es/tuning-russia-ruso-es> (in Russian), <http://www.deusto-publicaciones.es/deusto/index.php/es/tuning-es/tuning-russia-ingles-es> (in English).



Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
This project is funded by the European Union

1. Tuning methodology has been elaborated by academics for academics. It is not a bureaucratic tool.
2. Tuning methodology has been implemented successfully in some European countries, and has been disseminated in America, Africa and Asia.
3. Tuning methodology is based on a common understanding of Bologna Principles, and can be considered as a common tool of the whole EHEA.
4. Tuning methodology concerns not only the academic world (including students), but also all the stakeholders of the socio-economic world; it entirely fits the simple model behind the national contexts implementation presented by the French project (see *Figure 1*).
5. Mastering Tuning methodology is not difficult because it is well-adapted to all the subject areas and it fits the three cycles (Bachelor (long and short cycle), Master, Doctor) both for academic and vocational (professional) education.

Figure 1



Tuning methodology implies:

- Student-centred approach;
- Correct use of the ECTS (measuring student workload necessary to acquire the expected learning outcomes);
- Strong link between teaching/learning methods and student assessment;
- The description of the degree profiles in terms of competences (generic and subject specific) and learning outcomes.

Tuning is a tool useful not only for the implementation of a competence-based higher education, but also for the application of all the Bologna Process principles.

When defining State education standards for higher education, as well as study programmes, it is crucial that the main items are described in terms of generic and subject-specific competences (see Annex 5). Tuning is based on this approach. A lot of work documents has been realized by Tuning, for instance, Tuning gives a glossary of all the technical terms linked to competence-based higher education, and a list of more than 30 generic competences, which is very useful for the designing of the study programme profiles.



Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
This project is funded by the European Union

However, Tuning methodology is not an “automatically functioning tool”. There are no good tools without good workers. People need a minimum of training to use this tool correctly and efficiently.

Two concrete **recommendations** can be proposed:

1. To involve national Bologna experts in this Twinning project. Perhaps some of them already know something about Tuning. Two days with specific workshops can be organized to train the team so that they master this methodology and are able to train other persons. Then the team will be in charge to disseminate the Tuning methodology.
2. To encourage the setting up of a teaching team in each HEI, which would be under the direct responsibility of the vice-rector in charge of education and composed possibly by a member of each faculty, to be trained by the national Bologna experts, and then be in charge of the supervising and monitoring the teaching staffs who have to elaborate the study programme profiles and syllabi.

Potential **difficulties** for the implementation should be taken into account:

- Capacity of the academic institutions to involve all the teachers and the stakeholders;
- These activities require time and additional financial resources.

Competence-based study programme

Principles of developing, updating and implementing the competence-based study programme are as follows:

1. The first step for developers and promoters of a competence-based study programmes is to define the place of graduates of the study programme in the **world of activities**, to base the programme's **necessity** and **possibilities of its implementation**. The needs of the society, the market and the individual, as well as the resources of the higher education institution must be taken into account.
2. It is important to decide on the programme's **competences** that correspond to the prospective activity field of future graduates and identify graduates' **qualification**. The competences and the qualification are defined using National Qualifications Framework, as well as descriptors for study levels in higher education. Various national and international documents that define competences and their levels are used to formulate the general and specific competences required to for the graduates of the study programme. In order to investigate the need for a new study programme and ensure that the programme's competences are developed in line with the needs of contemporary society and future activities of the field sector, the existing **academic institutions** (teaching staff), existing and potential **employers, graduates**, other **field organizations**, are involved in the investigation and definition of competencies.
3. Once the list of competences of the study programme has been designed, it is necessary to provide an instrument for measuring the level of acquisition of each competence – formulating the **learning outcomes of study programme**.
4. The **structure of the study programme** is based on the study subjects (modules) and corresponding to the number of **study credits**. The structure of the study programme must be such as to allow for the continuous and optimal pursuit of the learning outcomes necessary for the general and specific competences and qualification to be attained.
5. When including a study subject (module) into the programme, it should be indicated which **competences** and **at what level** it helps to develop. Depending on the competences to be developed, the **learning outcomes of the subject (module)** are formulated. In other words, only **related to each other parts of the study programme** ensuring coherency of the programme, will make it possible to **purposefully** pursue the final goal of education. This principle applies not only to the obligatory subjects (modules), but also to the electives that help to highlight the profile of the programme and gives students the opportunity to apply the curriculum for their own purposes (e.g., deep specialization, etc.).



Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
This project is funded by the European Union

6. When determining the learning outcomes, it is necessary to evaluate the volume of each subject (module) in **credits**. At this stage, it is important to choose the optimal and consistent with learning outcomes the **teaching, learning and assessment methods** that will support the transfer of intended learning outcomes to student's achievements. For each subject (module) included in the programme, appropriate forms, methods and scope of the lecturer's and student's co-work and independent work, as well as assessment methods for the student's achievement(s) are to be selected. The application of some or other teaching, learning and assessment methods is partly determined by the specifics of the particular field of study.
7. It should be emphasized that competence-based curricula are **student-centred**, so the student must appear in the centre of the teaching/learning process as an active participant in decision making and responsible for the achievement of the learning outcomes. It is, therefore, necessary to provide sufficient time for student self-dependent work, counselling and feedback by applying **study monitoring and evaluation measures**. The planned workload in the programme and in the description of the subject (module) must be constantly monitored, checked (collected and analysed information on the student's actual workload, for example, through student surveys) and, if necessary, recalculated, revised. In the implementation of student-centred learning, an **internal quality assurance system** must exist in a HEI, which, like an **external assessment** of a HEI or study programme, must be non-restrictive, but promotional and developmental.

Roadmap for shifting the state education standards in higher education to be competence-based

The transformation of higher education in Azerbaijan from **content**-based curricula (teacher-centred) to **competence**-based curricula (student-centred) may take place through the following measures (Annex 6):

- Permanent modification, renewal and alignment of national legislation with Bologna Process agreements.
- Dissemination of the Bologna Process and presentation of good practices and lessons learnt of foreign countries on the application of the Bologna Process tools to achieve the Bologna Process goals.
- Support higher education institutions in transforming education standards to implement competence-based curricula on the ground.

Organising the relationship between the actors

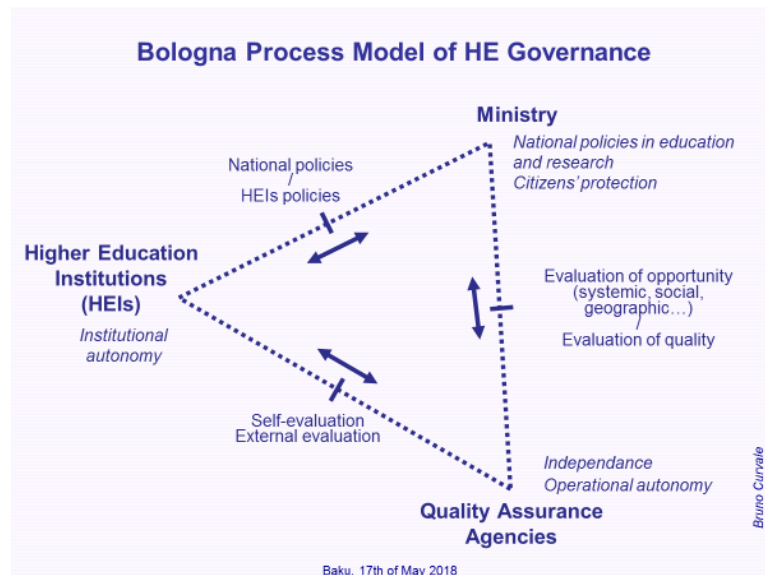
The Bologna process carries with it a model of governance of higher education by the stakeholders whose consequences are important to measure.

The Berlin Communiqué (2003), in particular, and since that date all the actions undertaken within the framework of the process, have strengthened the central idea of governance based on stakeholder dialogue. Ministries, institutions, and quality assurance agencies are linked in a system where everyone plays their part and carries out their responsibilities: the Ministry in its political role in the management and development of the national system of higher education; Educational institutions in their role in the development of scientific research and educational programmes offers which are relevant scientifically and in terms of employability of graduates; Evaluation agencies that inform stakeholders and the public about the quality of training, the governance of institutions and thus participate in informed decision-making.



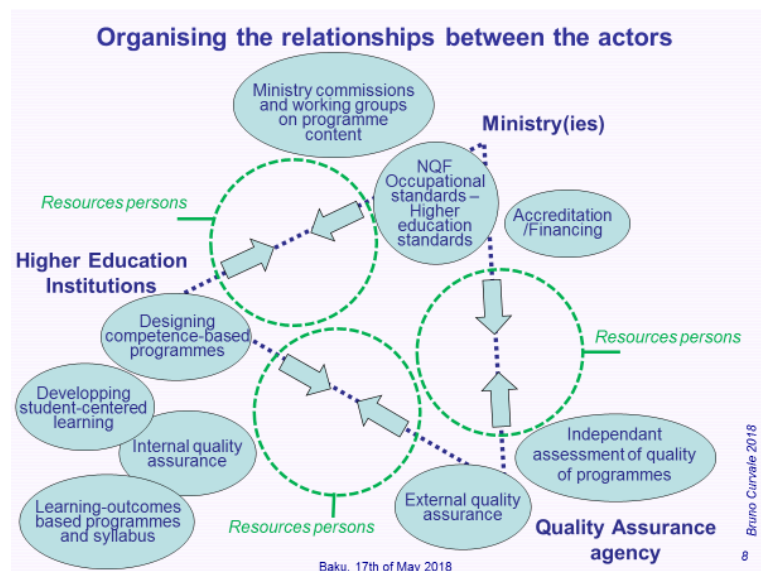
Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
This project is funded by the European Union

Figure 2



This very simple model naturally extends itself to all national adaptations. It is often an opportunity for major transformations of regulatory mechanisms in many countries. It is important to note that each of the actors seize their responsibilities and do not substitute themselves for the action of others.

Figure 3



The relations between the three concerned actors imply not only the use of the tools, concepts and concepts of the Bologna process but above all the setting up of the conditions for an operational



Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
This project is funded by the European Union

dialogue between them. This dialogue to develop in a constructive manner implies the presence of knowledgeable and competent resource persons. It appears clearly at the end of the first mission that the reinforcement of these resource persons and creating the opportunities for dialogue between them will be one of the conditions for the success of this project.

Annexes:

1. The analysis of state education standards
2. The results of focus group discussions
3. Example of how Tuning methodology can help formulating degree programme profiles
4. Roadmap of transforming state education standards in Azerbaijani higher education to be competence-based (national legislation, dissemination, support)
5. Agenda for the workshop at the MoE (15.05.2018) and examples of the best practices of the European competence-based education standards (attached as a separate file)



Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
This project is funded by the European Union

Annex 1. The analysis of state education standards

The experts reviewed the English translations of the following legal documents:

- (1) The state standards and programs for higher education step (approved by the Decision of the Cabinet of the Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 75, 23.04.2010);
- (2) Bachelor's Study Content and Arrangement Rules (approved by Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 117, 24.06.2010)
- (3) Regulations of Master's degree awarding and of Master course's content and Arrangement Rules (approved by the decree of Cabinet of Ministers of the Azerbaijan Republic No. 88, 12.05.2010);
- (4) Rules on the establishment and admission to doctoral studies (approved by the Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 129, 1.07.2010)³.

The experts made the succeeding general notes:

- The aim (objective/purpose) of education in the standards mainly focuses on “training specialists”, but the notions of students' personality development could be recommended to be given equal attention, although the documents in a way recognize the importance of general knowledge and skills (1.2. in (1), 2.1. in (2), 2.1. in (3), 1.2. in (4)).
- Simultaneously the legal documents include provisions of rather varied detail, i.e. some aspects are over-general and some very detailed, e.g., titles for subject courses or duration of breaks between classes. The stakeholders of higher education and national authorities should agree what arrangements should be stipulated by State and what decided by HEIs, as well as discuss the responsibilities of each stakeholder.
- The legal documents do not include the list of used main terms or reference to other legal regulations where such glossary could be found (perhaps due to the translation the terminology varies by the legal document).
- Mainly terminology used in the state education standards are from the teacher- or subject-centred approach (perhaps issue of translation). Examples: state control on quality (1), training (1), “free work implemented under the teacher's leadership” (2) etc.
- The legal documents include reference to and willingness to follow the principles of student-centred and competence-based education, e.g.:
 - 1.2 [...] “depending on the needs of society and labour market.” (1)
 - 1.3. [...] “assessment of students' level of knowledge, abilities and skills;” (1)
 - “8.1. Higher educational programs [...] reflecting learning outcomes [...] number of weekly curricular and extracurricular hours, [...] assessment and monitoring of learning outcomes.” (1)
 - “8.6. Educational process in higher educational institutions is arranged on the basis of credit system which complies with European Credit Transfer System.” (1)
 - “3.4. The method, rules and plan of admission of documents and the timing of examinations are announced by admission institution in mass media.” (4)but in general the standards do not provide proof that the principles of the new paradigm are implemented in the entire HE process.
- Sometimes the structure of documents may be a little bit misleading, as the text under the section titles does not always reflect the concept of titles (could be issue of translation).
- State education standards are approved for a limited period of time, which is very positive in terms of responding to the needs of society and labour market. However, the procedures for updating the

³ For the reference see these legal documents online: <http://ehea.edu.az/en/documents/18>.



state education standards are not outlined and there is no explicit reference to other legal regulations, which stipulate the elaboration or updating of the state education standards.

- Moreover, although state education standards were approved for six years (according to the Law on Education – 5 years), the analysed legal documents were approved in 2010. Therefore, the stakeholders and national authorities could consider whether the procedures of updating state education standards should be made more flexible and less time consuming.
- The state education standards include references to other legal documents regulating HE in order to be able to provide more thorough and objective analysis of current situation the experts would need to review these documents.
- Although all analysed state standards refer to the ECTS, the volume of study programmes is determined in years or hours, i.e. national credit points reflect duration of studies (“one credit is equated to 30 hours”), rather than the workload of student necessary to achieve the intended learning outcomes.
- The state education standards stipulate that exemption from study periods is possible (excluding “humanitarian disciplines”, when students already hold the qualification of the same cycle, however, recognition of prior learning should be based on learning outcomes. (1)
- There is some overlap between (1) and (2), (3) and (4), yet in fact (2), (3) and (4) should complement the (1), i.e. provide more detailed provisions.
- Some notions (regarding terminology and content) were lost or misunderstood due to the difficulty of translations.

Notes regarding particular legal document:

(1) The state standards and programs for higher education step

- “2. Content of higher education” – regarding the text below the section title, more suitable heading would be “2. Mission of higher education”, as the text of section more focuses on aim and objectives of HE. Furthermore, the heading of point 2.1. names two separate aspects – content and organisation, – which creates additional confusion.
- Point 5.2. differentiates between specialists and teachers, although teachers are also specialists – in the field of education.
- Point 3.5. implies that quality assurance of higher education is not arranged according to the principles of Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The aspects of quality assurance should be reflected through the entire document as it embraces whole higher education system.
- “6. Quality indicators of tutors” – the section does not reflect student-centred approach; although teachers should be able “to use in their work innovative education, [...] new [...] teaching technologies”, their professional development is reflected only regarding their “scientific level, knowledge and skills”. Furthermore, 1st and 3rd indicators are not measurable; thus, they cannot be assessed (perhaps the words “indicator” and “tutors” are not suitable).
- “7. Level of knowledge, abilities and skills of students” – the section outlines the purpose of students’ assessment, principles and procedures, but it does not clearly state that assessment is focused on achieved learning outcomes. The state education standards should stipulate the requirement to assess achieved students’ learning outcomes. For example, one of the principles (7.3.) is “develop [students] wills to improve education and achieve improvement in the quality of education”, which is positive to promote learners’ interest in the education quality, but not realistic or measurable.
- Point 8.3. refers to international classifications (UNESCO), but could also include EQF or NQF.
- Point 8.4. well-explains the division of disciplines (“humanitarian” and “professional training on specialty”) and could serve as basis for describing learning outcomes more explicitly. Yet learning outcomes are not mentioned in the context of “educational programs on specialties”



Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
This project is funded by the European Union

structure, but could be integrated in the “qualification characteristics and professionalism of graduates”.

- Point 8.5. lists the “educational and methodical documentation” only for Master, but the document does not provide this regulation for Bachelor and Doctor.

(2) Bachelor’s Study Content and Arrangement Rules

- Section “1. General Provisions” could also impart the glossary of specific terms used in the state standard (if they are not explained in (1)).
- The state education standard in detailed way stipulates the duration of classes, independent work and classroom work, ratio between “humanities” and “vocational training subjects on a speciality” (2.5-2.27); however, the structure of description could be improved (e.g. could be made from more general to detailed) to have consequence as regards units of measurement (weeks, hours, percent), as well as to include reference to expected learning outcomes. Furthermore, the extent of detail for provisions could be considered, e.g. regarding the duration of classes, titles of subjects.
- Points 2.26 and 2.27 impart the notion of recognition of prior learning, but lack the reference to learning outcomes to be validated.
- Point 2.27. mentions “sub-Bachelor” degree, but none of the analysed documents provide explanation of the term.
- The state education standard imparts the list of documents regulating the content of Bachelor’s studies, yet the link and consequence (i.e. descriptions of specialities → study programmes → syllabi) as regards their aim and learning outcomes between these documents could be more explicitly described.
- Point 2.22. seems to imply that students’ “free work” (independent work) contributes to the quality of teacher’s education; perhaps it would be valuable to explain the relation between the independent work and teacher education.
- Point 3.3. is one of good examples how quality assurance is integrated in higher education system.
- “4. Requirements toward Training Level of Bachelor’s Degree Graduate” – could serve as basis for developing cycle descriptor for Bachelor; however, continuity for the descriptors of Master and Doctor should be ensured (i.e. competences imparted in the succeeding cycle are based on the previous cycle). It should be written based on National Qualification Framework and its descriptors of each level. Unless the National Qualification Framework is not approved, it could be based on Dublin descriptors, adopted in 2005.

(3) Regulations of Master’s degree awarding and of Master course’s content and Arrangement Rules

- “1.10. It is determined by Cabinet of Ministers of Azerbaijan Republic that admission to Master’ course in the state education institutes is up to 20% consists of Bachelors’ who studied the same speciality (relatively to who studies on paid and free of charge basis” – when stipulating such restrictions, some clarification could be provided in order to understand the context.
- “2. Requirements put forward to educational contest and teaching process on master’s level” – perhaps due to the translation the title of section does not reflect the content of text below it (it seems that “contest” should be replaced with “content”).
- The state education standard does not include:
 - Requirements concerning the level of “training” to be achieved (as section 4. in (2));
 - Clear entrance requirements in order to ensure the quality of students;
 - Procedures of final examination (only reference to the regulations of MoE);
 - Requirements for teaching staff’s qualifications. It could be recommended that the number of teaching staff holding a PhD degree could be 50-60% as a minimal requirement.



(4) Rules on the establishment and admission to doctoral studies

- Point 1.4. indicates that full-time doctoral students should leave employment; as the doctoral studies are considered to be attractive for foreign students (according to the Section 7), it would be valuable to provide rational for such limitation.
- Point 3.27. in a way reflects expected competences (cycle descriptor) for the Doctor of Philosophy, but the state education standard does not stipulate this aspect for the Doctor of Sciences, although these qualifications are considered of different hierarchical level. If both qualifications have the same learning outcomes, the place of point 3.27. in the document should be changed accordingly.
- Section 7 focuses on the right of foreign students to enrol doctoral studies, similar provision should be provided for Bachelor and Master.
- The legal document provides detailed description of entrance procedures, including entrance examination in foreign language.



Annex 2. The results of focus group discussions

Focus groups: 1) staff of the Ministry of Education, Science, Higher, and Secondary Professional Education Department (MoE); 2) Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University (U1) and Baku State University (U2)

The discussions allowed to draw conclusions concerning several aspects listed below.

Expectations of leaders of academic communities regarding the Twinning project and development of higher education:

- The project is expected to provide methodology how to elaborate competence-based study programmes (MoE, U1, U2) in order to ensure their correspondence to EHEA principles and guidelines, which is important for development on national economy (U1).
- Both U1 and U2 stressed the importance of international mobility of students.
- When designing new study programmes and plans (according to the state education standards), the documents should include list of study subjects, competences necessary for labour market, as well as possibilities of employment (U1).

Understanding of concepts

- The understanding of terminology used in the context of Bologna Process could be improved, as well as regarding the terms used to describe other national higher education systems.
- During the discussions with the Ministry, questions were raised concerning such terms as learning outcomes *versus* competence, professional higher education programmes etc.
- Representatives of U1 were involved in the consultation process of developing NQF documentation, but they do not possess explicit information regarding the concept and results of discussions.
- Competence – ability of students to apply in reality what they have acquired during the studies (U1).
- Competence – envisaged theoretical knowledge obtained during study process and ability to apply it in the practice (U2).
- According to U2, teachers are aware of competences imparted in the study programmes, as they have to explain them to the students.

Practical implementation

- HEIs possibilities to design new study programmes are limited: as one qualification is awarded by several HEIs, the greatest part of study programmes is stipulated by the Ministry, while HEIs may decide on selective study subjects (60 CP or 1 year) (U1).
- The process of designing study programmes involves cooperation between HEIs: MoE establishes commission to explore state standards and identify necessary competences → certain profile HEI establishes working group (includes HEIs, Academy of Science, employers) to develop study programme for speciality → the draft of programme is submitted to MoE for approval (the draft is reviewed by another HEI and discussed with the MoE, and then MoE approves the study programme) (U2).
- U2 mentioned several examples of good practice as regards designing competence-based study programmes, yet it was difficult for them to evaluate to what extent the competence-based approach has been introduced.
- At the same time HEIs lack experience and competences to design or update study programmes; therefore, HEIs cannot assume full responsibility of this process (U1). U2 also highlighted the necessity of providing support to teaching staff to improve their knowledge and skills of designing and implementing competence-based study programmes.
- U1 highlighted the importance of in-company learning of students during the study process in order to ensure that students acquire knowledge and skills according to the labour market needs (there is



Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
This project is funded by the European Union

both voluntary and compulsory practical training, the latter – 14 weeks in the last semester of Bachelor studies). Enterprises also provide theoretical study courses at their premises (U1).

- Certain number of study programmes are implemented in English, Russian and Azeri (U1, U2). Most of studies in English involve local teachers, which are provided with higher salary (U1).
- Both U1 and U2 have been involved in the international quality assurance of study programmes. For example, 8 study programmes of U1 have undergone this process, and 5 study programmes are planned to be evaluated.
- U1 has established mechanisms and institution for following the career of graduates; these measures are considered essential for the quality assurance. Furthermore, U1 has mechanisms for providing assistance to graduates to get employment in their speciality. The Master studies are arranged in a way for students to be able to work during the studies, which indicates support to student-centred approach.
- Discussions with students reveal that in classrooms mainly teacher – student communication is applied (frontal teaching methods) (U1).
- Regarding the students' assessment, mainly oral examinations at the end of semesters are organised. Practical training is assessed via student's report (prepared according the criteria set by HEI), which is evaluated both by HEI's staff and mentor at the company, and discussion with the student (U1). However, the assignments accomplished by students are not assessed against the expected learning outcomes.
- Diploma Supplement is awarded only upon the request of student for international mobility (U1).
- U1 has established system and institution for the further development of teaching staff: compulsory learning courses each five years (regarding national legislation), opportunities to participate in international conferences and mobilities. The learning courses focus both on the study subject topics and teaching skills and methodology.
- U1 has established system for the assessment of teachers – at the end of each semester students complete 6 question survey regarding the work quality of each teacher, the results of survey are available only to the HEI management. The number of scientific publications in the journals referenced in the Web of Science impacts the salary of teachers.

Main challenges

- Although there are good examples, there is still a lack of cooperation with enterprises, which are reluctant to be involved in the designing of study programmes or provide support to HEIs and students (U1, U2).
- Lack of cooperation and communication with other HEIs in order to promote exchange of experience, resources, as well as foster HEIs' capacity to design study programmes (U1).
- Lack of the latest study equipment to provide students with possibilities to obtain knowledge and skills required in the labour market; therefore, the cooperation with enterprises is crucial (U1).
- Lack of teaching staff's knowledge and skills to design and implement competence-based study programmes (U2).
- Both U1 and U2 highlighted the necessity to change mind-set in order to promote student-centred approach in higher education.

Main advantages

- Students participate in the in-company learning, which facilitates the exchange of experience between the HEI and enterprises regarding labour market needs and latest technologies (U1).
- Strong focus on research and science development including the development of teacher education, i.e. teacher education study programmes are already based on competences (U2).



Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
This project is funded by the European Union

Annex 3. Example of how Tuning methodology can help formulating degree programme profiles

This is a concrete but fictive example of how Tuning methodology can help formulating degree programme profiles; the template is complete, but it may be reduced⁴. In any case, Tuning recommends that the presentation of a degree programme profile does not surpass 2 A4 pages.

MASTER OF SCIENCES	
Leadership and Management in Health / Social care services	
Type of degree & length	<i>Single degree / 120 ECTS (= 4 semesters)</i>
Institution	<i>Title of HEI: to be completed</i>
Accreditation. Organisations(s)	<i>Ministry of Education, Department of Accreditation and Nostrification</i>
Period of Reference	<i>The study program is validated for x years starting from 2018</i>
	<i>QF for EHEA: 2nd cycle; EQF level 7 NQF level: to be completed</i>
A	Purpose
	The purpose of this master programme is to enable registered health / social care practitioners to assume a clinical / professional leadership role in the health / social care sector. The successful graduates should demonstrate a robust, evidence-base, scientific and personal knowledge of the effectiveness of leadership and management strategies in improving health / social care services in their field of practice.
B	Characteristics
1	Discipline(s)/ Subject areas The main disciplines are health / social care leadership and professional development. Leadership and professional development applied research
2	General/ Specialist Focus Specialist: health / social care leadership and management
3	Orientation Applied
4	Distinctive Features The interdisciplinary degree has a requirement for the production of service improvement project
C	Employability and further Education
	Employability Clinical / professional leadership roles of large teams / clinical units
	Further Education Doctoral studies Advanced specialist, consultant practitioner, executive leadership courses of studies
D	Educational style
	Learning/ teaching approaches There is a focus on personal self-awareness development, group and project work, seminars and design, implementation and evaluation of a substantive service improvement
	Assessment Critical self and peer reflection, project reports, evidence appraisals, critical

⁴ From Tuning, *A guide to formulating degree programme profiles*, Bilbao, Groningen and the Hague, 2010, p. 80-82.



Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
This project is funded by the European Union

	method	analysis, seminars. Essays and presentations.
E	Programme competences	
1	<p>GENERIC</p> <p>The programme complies with the Atlantis Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency requirements for academic programmes at second cycle level. This includes the generic competences (or key skills) expected of second cycle graduates. The competences listed below represent the synoptic and most characteristic competences of the programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate confidently • Team work • Self and peer reflection • Project and resource management • Culture and diversity 	
2	<p>SUBJECT SPECIFIC</p> <p>Within the context of the student's field of professional practice and client population(s), the graduate is able to demonstrate capability in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective leadership and management skills: development of a significant service improvement project. • Critical appraisal and application: can appraise models of leadership, management and service improvement for their relevance to practice. • Effectively using research skills and knowledge: can design and evaluate an improvement project based on appropriate evidence. • Creativity and innovation: design services sensitive to the health / social care needs of a designated client population. • Analysis and likely impact of current and future policy trends: can plan strategically taking account of predicted and likely trends in the sector. • Judging future workforce needs. • Influencing strategic debates at local or national level. 	
F	Programme learning outcomes	
	<p>Within the context of the student's field of professional practice, organisation and client population(s), the graduate is able to demonstrate capability in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically review their personal leadership and management skills so as to develop a personal action plan for achievement by the end of the programme. • Analyse their organizational culture(s) and critically debate the impact of the culture on staff performance, client experience and health outcomes. • Draw on a range of evidence to justify and defend change / improvement that should lead to positive outcomes for the organization / people concerned. • Plan, execute and critically evaluate their leadership and management of effective, appropriate and sustainable change in their work environment. • Show a critical knowledge of the factors that promote working environments conducive to the generation of creative and innovative solutions to organisational or client bases problems. • Anticipate future workforce needs taking into account of ethical human resource management and public health drivers. • Critically debate the current and future roles of clinical leaders and managers in the light of current policy developments, global trends and public health targets. • Produce management reports or presentations suitable for executive level appraisal. • Use a range of interpersonal skills to lead and influence others, including the management 	



Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
This project is funded by the European Union

	<p>of conflict situations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically debate how patient safety is enhanced or compromised by leadership, management, strategic and corporate governance practices.
--	---

Example of L.O for a course unit of English

After successful completion of this course unit, the graduate can demonstrate the capacity to:

- Write a report in correct English using the appropriate terminology of health/care sector and respecting the canon of the discipline.
- Animate a debate using a fluent English
- Read easily with good understanding a scientific paper relevant to the subject-area.

Teaching/teaching and assessment methods

The course is aimed at small groups (no more than 12 students) and favours an interactive pedagogy. During workshops, the leader of group presents a topic to be discussed by the group, and animate the debate. The topic is selected from the bibliography given by the teacher.

Final oral exam:

The student makes a critical presentation (no more than 10 min) of a short article from a newspaper or magazine about health/care services.

Final written exam:

The student has to summarize in 15 lines a scientific paper of 12 pages, and discuss the point that they consider the most important, justifying their choice.



Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
This project is funded by the European Union

Annex 4. Roadmap of transforming state education standards in Azerbaijani higher education to be competence-based (national legislation, dissemination, support)

National legislation

National Qualifications Framework is very important component of competence-based approach in higher education curricula to be applied for the development of higher education competence-based study programmes. **Azerbaijani National Qualifications Framework** is compulsory for a coherent and smooth transition at national level to competence-based studies.

As a step forwards achieving greater clarity in the implementation of competence-based curriculum should be approval of **Azerbaijani National Qualifications Framework** for Lifelong Learning. The **descriptors** for each level of higher education for Azerbaijani National Qualifications Framework should be developed referencing them with the “Dublin Descriptors” adopted in 2005 as well. The descriptors should help to define qualifications levels by identifying essential qualitative differences between the three cycles (Bachelor, Master and Doctoral) in higher education and refer them to knowledge and skills serving as the basis for competence-based curricula development in education.

The way to implementation of real competence-based curricula in higher education has to start with the secondary school. Already in secondary education teaching and learning must be competence-based. Thus, the real transition to competence-based curriculum in higher education is much easier for both students and academic staff, since competence-based curricula include not only the description of qualifications, competences and learning outcomes on the paper, but competence-based curricula is based on appropriate student-centred teaching, learning and assessment methods.

Another important legal action towards competence-based higher education studies in Azerbaijan should be done in respect of **Diploma Supplement**. **Diploma Supplement** describes the qualification that the student has received. The purpose of the Diploma Supplement is to improve transparency and facilitate recognition. A standard format is used to help compare qualifications and make them easier to understand. The Diploma Supplement also describes the content of the qualification and the structure of the higher education system in which it was issued. Institutions of higher education should be required to issue a Diploma Supplement for all persons who have completed their studies. Diploma Supplement is a document describing the knowledge and skills which comprises the competences acquired by holders of higher education degrees. It should become an integral part of the diploma.

Azerbaijani concept of a **national credit system** education at bachelor and master levels of higher education institutions approved by the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan No 348 of December 24, 2013 should be adjusted with ECTS User Guidelines, 2015. National credit system should be based on the workload students need in order to achieve the expected learning outcomes of each study subject and whole programme.

On the national level on the one hand the structural requirements focused on the competence-based curricula should be established, on the other hand the quality criteria of study programmes should be sound with structural requirements and must be followed by both HEIs and Accreditation and Nostrification Office of Azerbaijan. Therefore, as a next step forwards achieving the implementation of competence-based curriculum should be approval of **Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance of Higher Education in Azerbaijan** which were drafted in line with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG).

Dissemination

Dissemination of the Bologna Process and presentation of good practices of foreign countries within the national authorities (other relevant ministries) and academic communities of the country could be a



Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
This project is funded by the European Union

good accelerator to improve awareness about the advantages of Bologna Process for academic communities and development of society as well. Raised awareness about Bologna Process in Azerbaijan could be achieved through implementation of various activities (national and international conferences, workshops) and information events (expositions, fairs) organised for different target groups.

Azerbaijani HEIs should be guided to the best ways of implementing reforms recommended in the Bologna documents by national team of Bologna experts, representatives of Accreditation and Nostrification Office of Azerbaijan and members of other composed groups committed to transition of state education standards to be competence based by personal consulting, visits to HEIs and workshops. Student-centred teaching, learning and assessment approach, quality assurance of study programmes, learning outcomes should be introduced in written in national publications and during the meetings to students, teachers and other target groups and discussed widely at national level.

Support

The main challenge is competence-based curricula implementation in practice. In order to reach the real change in higher education, support must be provided to help HEIs' communities to achieve transition to competence-based higher education standards.

The quality of competence-based curricula development and implementation as well as student-centered teaching and learning mostly depends on the academic staff of the HEI. Therefore, the most important measure is the system for the enhancement of competences of academic staff for the capacity building in competence-based curricula.

Workshops at all universities of the country how to (re-)design, develop, implement, evaluate and enhance quality of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycle degree programmes should be held periodically, by foreign and national experts.

Based on the already existing competences enhancement systems of the teaching staff at the HEIs, support for teaching staff should be launched at the HEIs on the differences between teacher-centered and student-centered learning, on what is learning outcomes, on how to write the learning outcomes, because generic descriptors of Bologna cycles and EQF or NQF are not specific enough to be used as programme learning outcomes. Also there should be provided courses on important issue within the ECTS, e.g. student's workload and how the academic staff should estimate it correctly. Courses should be provided on the most critical differences between student-centered and teacher-centered assessment, because the developing assessment that supports learning and motivation is essential to the success of competence-based curricula implementation.

Investment into development of academic staff competences is essential success factor in implementing competence-based studies on the ground. The hardest is transforming the mindset. Therefore, such courses or measures should be constantly provided, not only in terms of this project.

