

Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan



Twinning project ENI/2018/395-401

Mission Report

Short-Term Mission on Activity 3.2 Undertake capacity building activities for the Ministry of Education staff (including Accreditation and Nostrification Office and other stakeholders) to enhance the staff's role in supporting accreditation procedures

(February 4 – 8, 2019)

1. Name and Function of the Expert:

Full name of expert

Ms. Nora Skaburskiene, Lithuania

Signature

Full name of expert

Ms. Jolanta Silka, Latvia

Signature

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 3.2. Undertake capacity building activities for the Ministry of Education staff (including Accreditation and Nostrification Office and other stakeholders) to enhance the staff's role in supporting accreditation procedures

Benchmarks for this activity are:

- Workshops on accreditation procedures for ANO and pilot universities delivered;
- Training materials prepared for further dissemination.

3. Time schedule of mission:

Date and Time	Activity
Monday 4 February 2019	<p>Meeting in the Accreditation and Nostrification Office. Preparation for the workshops at pilot universities. Identifying topics of trainings concerning externals evaluations at HEIs. Participants: <i>Mr. Tofiq Ahmadov, Head of Accreditation Department, ANO</i> <i>Ms. Lala Abbasova, Chief Specialist at Accreditation Department, ANO</i></p>
Tuesday 5 February 2019	<p>- STEs prepare presentations for workshops at HEIs. - Discussions on new format of state standards for study programmes Participants: <i>Mr. Tofiq Ahmadov, Head of Accreditation Department, ANO</i> <i>Ms. Lala Abbasova, Chief Specialist at Accreditation Department, ANO</i></p>
Wednesday 6 February 2019	<p>Deskwork on drafting a handbook for universities on how to write learning outcomes (See Annex 1)</p>
Thursday 7 February 2019	<p>Workshop on Concept and Principles of Programme Accreditation in Baku State University. Participants: See the Annex 2</p>
Friday 8 February 2019	<p>Workshop on Concept and Principles of Programme Accreditation in Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University. Participants: See the Annex 2</p>

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

The objective of this mission is to deliver workshops on programme accreditation-related issues for the Accreditation and Nostrification Office and pilot universities.

During the mission, Twinning experts shared their experience in development of Trainings for higher education institutions and assessment experts in respective countries. Different types of the trainings were analysed. ANO as a quality assurance agency should contribute to the development of quality enhancement and quality culture in higher education, therefore trainings both for higher education institutions and for experts are an essential part of ANO work. Twinning experts together with representatives of ANO developed Outline for Trainings by ANO, which is presented in Annex 3.

In addition, it should be mentioned that ANO staff also needs capacity building, therefore ANO should participate in international seminars, peer learnings and conferences.

Twining experts presented the scheme on how programme learning outcomes should correlate with external reference points: Dublin descriptors, European Qualification Framework, Azerbaijan National Qualification Framework, European Study field descriptors (for example, EUR-ACE), national study field descriptors. Detailed description of correlation of programme learning outcomes with different reference points is enclosed in Annex 4.

It was discussed that there are many different sources of information explaining how to write learning outcomes. But development of learning outcomes is a conceptually new approach in higher education in Azerbaijan. Therefore not only ANO staff needs knowledge that would help to understand concept of learning outcomes, but academic staff from higher education institutions need to develop the understanding on how to write learning outcomes for their study programmes. During discussion it was agreed that Twinning experts will develop short handbook for higher education institutions on how to write learning outcomes. The handbook contains not only advises on how to develop and write learning outcomes, but also what external reference points should be linked. Several examples of programme learning outcomes were presented. Developed handbook is enclosed in Annex 1.

As ANO's experts do not have experience in evaluating learning outcomes, Twinning experts shared examples from their countries on how the evaluation of learning outcomes is reflected in the experts' reports. Several examples on the evaluation of learning outcomes are presented in Annex 5 and 6.

During the meeting Twinning experts together with ANO representatives and RTA have discussed the draft State standard for higher education and draft State standard for study field of Chemistry. It was noted that standards for study field would benefit from wider description of the nature of study field as they are should be used as reference points in the design, delivery and review of study programmes. Standards for study field should provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with the programme but should not

represent a national curriculum in a subject or to prescribe set approaches to teaching, learning or assessment. Instead, they should allow for flexibility and innovation in programme design within a set framework.

For some study fields, higher education institutions may need to consider other reference points in addition to the State standard for study field in designing, delivering and reviewing programmes. These may include requirements set out by professional and regulatory bodies, national occupational standards and industry or employer expectations.

It was proposed that one expert who has knowledge in development of learning outcomes would review all draft versions of State standards in respective fields and give advises on the overall layout of the information of the standard. Special attention should be paid to formulation of learning outcomes.

The last two days of the mission were devoted for the meetings with the representatives of higher education institutions in order to introduce new quality assessment approach – study programme accreditation. There were discussions on criteria and indicators for study programme evaluation in order to get the feedback from academia. Twinning experts have developed presentations introducing practice of study programme evaluation in respective countries and share their experience with representatives of higher education institutions – Baku State University, Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University, Azerbaijan Oil and Industry University, Technical university and Baku Engineering University. Presentations are enclosed in Annex 7 and 8. The lists of participants are presented in Annex 2.

Representatives of the universities expressed their positive attitude towards draft document “Criteria and indicators for study programme evaluation and accreditation in Azerbaijan”, that is in line with European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG). At the same time they stressed that in the view of current realities in higher education of Azerbaijan, universities would not fully meet all the requirements, but they will be able to identify gaps in their activities. Universities do support the spirit of autonomy of universities, but at the same time they would like to see more detailed criteria of accreditation. They also expressed opinion that they need to establish committees in order to align current programmes with European requirements. At the same time there is a need to review and develop state standards for higher education and study programmes. Higher education institutions should have a right to choose subjects according to study field on their own.

One of the most challenging areas according to university representatives is development of teaching staff. The need of cooperation of universities with labour market enterprises as well as other foreign universities was stressed.

5. Achievement of the Expected Results

Planned action was *achieved*. Both workshops attracted 72 participants, who discussed newly developed criteria and indicators for study programme accreditation.

6. Recommendations (including recommendation for future missions)

In addition, experts would like to provide the following recommendations:

- ANO should further develop Training outline and adapt it to the different needs of stakeholders. This document would serve as a basis for future trainings by ANO staff.
- ANO should further develop capacities of its own staff in order to become a competence centre.
- The guideline on how to write learning outcomes should be disseminated to all higher education institutions of Azerbaijan and used during the trainings.
- The study programmes should be revised in accordance with defined learning outcomes in the state standards for study field.
- It is recommended that one expert who has knowledge in development of learning outcomes would review all draft versions of State standards in respective fields and give advises on the overall layout of the information of the standard and formulation of learning outcomes.

Annexes

Annex 1 – Handbook on how to write learning outcomes for HEIs

Annex 2 – Lists of participants who attended workshops on the topic of program accreditation at two HEIs

Annex 3 – Outline for Trainings by ANO

Annex 4 – External references for Programme learning outcomes

Annex 5 – Examples of assessment of Learning Outcomes

Annex 6 – Examples of mapping of programme learning outcomes and subject learning outcomes

Annex 7 – Presentation of Lithuanian experience in accreditation of study programmes

Annex 8 – Presentation of Latvian experience in accreditation of study directions