Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan

Twinning project ENI/2018/395-401

Mission Report

Short-Term Mission on Activity 3.4 Hold a training workshop for higher education institutions on how to conduct self-evaluation process

(March 11 – 15, 2019)

1. <u>Name and Function of the Expert:</u>

Full name of expert

Ms. Jolita Butkiene, Lithuania

Signature

Full name of expert

Ms. Asnate Kazoka

Signature
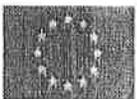
2.   <u>**Objective and Tasks of the Mission:**</u>

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 3.4 Hold a training workshop for higher education institutions on how to conduct self-evaluation process

Benchmarks for this activity are:
- A training workshop for higher education institutions on self-evaluation is conducted

3.   **Time schedule of mission:**

Date and Time	Activity
Monday 11 March 2019	**Deskwork on preparation for the mission in the Accreditation and Nostrifcation Office.**
Tuesday 12 March 2019	**Workshop on how to write a self-evaluation report for study programmes in Educational Sciences in Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University** *Stakeholders: See the Annex I*
Wednesday 13 March 2019	**Workshop on how to write a self-evaluation report for study programmes in Natural Sciences in Baku State University** *Stakeholders: See the Annex I*
Thursday 14 March 2019	**Workshop on how to write a self-evaluation report for study programmes in Engineering Sciences in Azerbaijan Technical University** *Stakeholders: See the Annex I*
Friday 15 March 2019	**A plenary session to sum up the results of the workshops and question and answer session.** *Stakeholders: See the Annex I*

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

Only institutional accreditation has been performed in higher education institutions in Azerbaijan so far. The first Twinning project implemented in 2015-2017 supported the then newly established (2016) Accreditation and Nostrification Office at the Ministry of Education (ANO) to build up its capacity in the field of quality assurance in compliance with the principles of the European Higher Education Area. The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Azerbaijan (AzSG) reflecting best EU quality assurance practices were developed jointly by the Twinning experts and ANO's staff and pilot institutional evaluations were carried out in three pilot universities. At current stage there is a need to build ANO's capacity in the field of study programme accreditation. As part of the Component III of the ongoing Twinning project certain number of documents concerning the programme evaluation (Handbook for Requirements and Methodologies for Programme Evaluation, Guidelines for Assessing Competence-based and Student-Centered Approach of Study Programmes, Grid for Self-assessment of Competence-orientedness and Student-centeredness of Study Programmes) have been already developed by the Twinning experts. The abovementioned documents have been established with the aim that programme accreditation practices in Azerbaijan comply with the EU best practices. As the next step, the higher education institutions need to be trained on how to conduct a self-evaluation of study programmes.

5. Achievement of the Expected Results

This Report is based on the results achieved during the workshops on how to write a self-evaluation report for study programmes conducted in three universities:

1) workshop for Educational Sciences held in Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University;
2) workshop for Natural Sciences held in Baku State University;
3) workshop for Engineering Sciences held in Azerbaijan Technical University,

and a plenary session with the aim to sum up the results and to answer participants' questions.

The workshops were based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015) and documents developed previously by Twinning project experts: Handbook for Requirements and Methodologies for Programme Evaluation, Guidelines for Assessing Competence-based and Student-Centered Approach of Study Programmes, Grid for Self-assessment of Competence-orientedness and Student-centeredness of Study Programmes. These documents are aimed at assisting universities in their preparatory work for the programme self-evaluation report (SER).

The capacity to prepare an analytic self-evaluation report of the study programme is the desirable stage in the development of quality assurance capacity in the higher education institution. In the initial phase of introducing internal quality assurance in a system, preparing the self-evaluation report may pose a significant new challenge to universities. Thus, the workshops performed under Short-Term Mission on Activity 3.4 *Hold a training workshop for higher education institutions on how to conduct self-evaluation process* aimed at providing a guidance for the university staff to prepare a quality self-evaluation report.

The self-evaluation Report (SER) is the key document through which an institution conveys information about itself. Equally, and perhaps more importantly, it is the starting point for critical reflection by the faculty and administration, about the way study programmes are organized and managed; what mechanisms are used to evaluate the standards and quality; how the outputs from these mechanisms enhance study programme content and teaching/learning processes. Also, SER serves as the initial stage in preparation for external review of the programme. Whether conducted by the national or international experts, external reviews share the same objective, which is to examine programme's compliance with the approved standards.

During the workshop sessions, an introduction on the background and purposes of the internal and external reviews, principles and the framework of self-evaluation was presented by the Twinning experts and ANO staff. Experts had an opportunity to relate their experience and to highlight and raise awareness of the challenges of conducting self-evaluation from the perspective of the quality assurance agency and the university. In addition, competence-based, student-centred approaches were discussed in relation to the self-evaluation process of study programmes. Self-evaluation grids on the above mentioned approaches were discussed with the participants of the workshops.

During working group sessions, participants were asked to perform several practical exercises:

- to conduct self-evaluation of one of the areas according to the Programme Evaluation Grid based on the principles presented by the experts;
- to critically revize existing national curricula of the programmes they teach.

- to work with formulation of learning outcomes, learning and teching methods for the selected study courses.

The workshops allowed participants to compare their views, ask questions and clarify issues related to competence-based study programme design and process of the self-evaluation.

The participants were asked to study the Handbook for Requirements and Methodologies for Programme Evaluation, Guidelines for Assessing Competence-based and Student-Centered Approach of Study Programmes, Grid for Self-assessment of Competence-orientedness and Student-centeredness of Study Programmes and to come up with the questions, points for discussion to the Plenary session, organized on the last day of the mission.

The last day of the mission was organized as a questions and answers session to clarify any issues arising from the workshop sessions and documents guiding self-evaluation process. The time-line for the preparation, submission of the programme self-evaluation reports peer-review visits to the selected universities was presented.

It is important to note that further consultations have been scheduled to support universities in the preparation of the self-evaluation report: universities will be provided opportunity to submit their draft self-evaluation reports for the experts' review and feedback in April and June.

The results of the discussions in the workshops and plenary session indicate that:

- ✓ not all workshop participants were informed by their universities about the purpose of the workshops and this had an impact on the dynamics of the workshops;
- ✓ it was not clear whether for the workshops universities had nominated relevant staff who will be involved and responsible for writing self-evaluation report;
- ✓ although universities have established quality units, quality assurance mechanisms of study programmes and procedures are underdeveloped;
- ✓ the structures/practice of collecting and using stakeholders' opinion within internal quality assurance and competence development processes are underdeveloped;
- ✓ there is a lack of understanding about the purpose and benefits of the programme self-evaluation among the university staff;
- ✓ programme management structures are underdeveloped;
- ✓ the level of understanding of the competence-based and student-centred higher education differs among universities;
- ✓ academic staff members have limited academic freedom regarding the design and content of the study programs;
- ✓ academic staff members would like more freedom in developing study programmes as they are not satisfied with how market, society and individuals' needs are reflected in the current state standards;
- ✓ cooperation, networking and dissemination of good practices among universities is underdeveloped;
- ✓ teaching process seems to be more teacher-centred rather than student-centred;
- ✓ student mobility is hindered by the current subject oriented approach to programme design which creates obstacles for recognition of study periods.

The planned mission output conformed to all deliverables defined in the Terms of References (TOR).

6. Unexpected Results

None

7. Issues Left Open After the Mission

- ✓ The detailed content of the support missions scheduled for April and June;
- ✓ The readiness of the universities to perform self-evaluation and the provisional quality of the self-evaluation documentation prepared by the universities.

8. Recommendations (including recommendation for future missions)

- ✓ It is undoubtedly important that universities conceive the whole programme self-evaluation process as a chance and challenge for its own development and quality improvement and not so much as fulfilling external requirements. Only then quality culture is likely to become an internal agenda;
- ✓ It is important that for the further project activities related to self-evaluation the universities nominate relevant staff who is responsible for conducting programme self-evaluation and writing the report;
- ✓ It is important to ensure that the top-management supports and relevant stakeholders (faculty, administration, students, partners) are involved in self-evaluation process;
- ✓ It is important that universities collect feedback on self-evaluation from the relevant stakeholders and use it in the self-evaluation report;
- ✓ It is important to ensure that the results of self-evaluation are discussed among the relevant stakeholders of the study programme;
- ✓ It is important that universities develop their internal quality assurance procedures and mechanisms and develop programme self-evaluation as a regular activity;
- ✓ It is recommended that further missions within the Twinning project include support activities for universities to develop their internal quality assurance systems, to organize trainings/workshops on the internal quality assurance systems, practices and processes in other countries;
- ✓ It is recommended that universities establish clear programme management structures (e.g. programme Committees);
- ✓ It is recommended that training seminars/workshops are organized for universities to establish programme management structures;
- ✓ It is important that universities initiate changes of the teaching and learning environments to support competence-based and student-centred approaches.

9. Acknowledgments (if any)

Experts would like to extend their appreciation to the Twinning team for support in the preparation of the mission and assistance during the mission.

Annexes

Annex I - Lists of participants of workshops in three pilot universities
Annex II- Presentation from the workshops
Annex III- Reference materials

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

Centre international d'études pédagogiques (CIEP)   **Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan**