

Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan



Twinning project ENI/2018/395-401

Mission Report

Short-Term Mission on Activity 4.1. Assess the current legal and regulatory framework on education standards, quality assurance, credits and recognition of parts of studies

(June 10 – 12, 2020)

1. Name and Function of the Expert:

Full name of expert

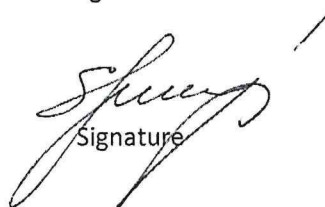
Mr. Almantas Serpatauskas, Lithuania



Signature

Full name of expert

Ms. Jolanta Silka



Signature

2. **Objective and Tasks of the Mission:**

The mission is carried out within the framework of:

COMPONENT 4: RECOMMENDATIONS ON AMENDMENTS OF LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATIVE FRAMEWORK DEVELOPED

Activity 4.1. Assess the current legal and regulatory framework on education standards, quality assurance, credits and recognition of parts of studies

Benchmarks for this activity are:

- Assessing the compliance of the recently revised accreditation rules with the European legal and regulatory framework, regarding practices in quality assurance;
- Relevant recommendations provided.

3. Time schedule of the mission:

Date and Time	Activity
Wednesday – 10 June 2020	<p>14:00-15:00</p> <p>Online briefing meeting with staff of Accreditation and Licensing Department of newly established Education Quality Assurance Agency (EQAA)</p> <p>Participants: <i>Ms. Lala Abbasova</i>, Head of Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA <i>Ms. Nisa Idrisova</i>, Senior Advisor at Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA <i>Ms. Konul Fatiyeva</i>, Senior Advisor at Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA <i>Mr. Asiman Ilyasov</i>, Senior Advisor at Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA <i>Mr. Javid Ibadov</i>, Advisor at Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA</p>
Thursday – 11 June 2020	<p>12:30-14:30</p> <p>Online meeting with staff of Accreditation and Licensing Department of newly established Education Quality Assurance Agency (EQAA)</p> <p>Participants: <i>Ms. Lala Abbasova</i>, Head of Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA <i>Ms. Nisa Idrisova</i>, Senior Advisor at Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA <i>Ms. Konul Fatiyeva</i>, Senior Advisor at Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA <i>Mr. Asiman Ilyasov</i>, Senior Advisor at Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA <i>Mr. Javid Ibadov</i>, Advisor at Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA</p> <p>15:30-17:00</p> <p>Online meeting with staff of Accreditation and Licensing Department of newly established Education Quality Assurance Agency (EQAA) <i>The participants remain the same.</i></p>
Friday – 12 June 2020	<p>10:30-12:30</p> <p>Online meeting with staff of Accreditation and Licensing Department of newly established Education Quality Assurance Agency (EQAA)</p> <p>Participants: <i>Ms. Lala Abbasova</i>, Head of Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA <i>Ms. Nisa Idrisova</i>, Senior Advisor at Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA <i>Ms. Konul Fatiyeva</i>, Senior Advisor at Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA <i>Mr. Asiman Ilyasov</i>, Senior Advisor at Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA</p>

	<p><i>Mr. Javid Ibadov, Advisor at Accreditation and Licensing Department, EQAA</i></p> <p>14:00-16:00</p> <p>Deskwork</p>
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4. Relevant Background Information/State of Affairs regarding the mission

The recently created and restructured Education Quality Assurance Agency asked for EU experts` assistance to check for the compliance of revised rules for institutional accreditation with EU best practices. A short-term mission, conducted online, was performed accordingly by 2 EU experts from institutions in charge of quality assurance in higher education in Lithuania and Latvia.

During the mission, two documents were presented to experts and discussed with representatives of Education Quality Assurance Agency (hereinafter Agency):

- Rules for accreditation of higher and secondary special education institutions and
- Institutional evaluation areas, criteria and indicators.

The Rules for accreditation of higher and secondary special education institutions are about to regulate institutional review and study programme assessment. The document is very detailed, giving the guidance from starting the self-assessment process to the decision making on accreditation. During the discussion experts and Agency representatives agreed that document needs another structure which will allow to describe institutional and programme assessment procedures in more clear manner. A few proposals were suggested on the structure of the document to separate procedures for institutional review and programme assessment, involved parties and their rights and obligations; decision on accreditation of institution, decision on accreditation of programme; evaluation by foreign agencies, appeal procedures; follow-up procedure. Also some aspects that need to be revised or added to the document were agreed such as stage of preparation for evaluation and site visit, clear distinction between draft evaluation report, comments from HEI on draft report and final report writing, documentation that have to be submitted together with self assessment report, procedures for complaints and appeals, selection of experts (Accreditation Commission), non-conflict of interests and other. The comments of experts to the Rules for accreditation of higher and secondary special education institutions were sent to the Agency and also are included to the report mission as Annex no. 1.

As regards evaluation area, criteria and indicators document, experts were asked to review the criteria and advice how to reduce their number leaving the most important, relevant and measurable. Experts proposed to withdraw up to 9 criteria considering them as part of other criteria or as being not so important in evaluating quality of higher education institution. For area 5 Research activity and area 6 Internationalization, experts proposed redrafted version of criteria. The proposals were discussed afterwards and agreed. It also appeared that some new criteria to be added and overall mapping to ESG Part 1 standards is needed.

Also experts were asked to comment grading system to be used in institutional evaluation. The grading system (up to 550 point max) seems to be complicated and not clear why each criteria has different number of points and how the evaluation in points should be done. Experts believe that evaluation in points of each indicator will be even more complicated to accreditation commission or a very detailed and clear explanation and training to experts will be provided. Another issue that is pointed out during discussion is relation of grading scale and assessment of indicators compliance with education standards in percent. However, experts recommend to use a more simplified grading scale (5 or 10 point scale per each evaluation area) and exclude grading for each criteria and indicator. In addition, the assessment scale mentioned in the Rules should be aligned with the document Institutional evaluation areas, criteria and indicators. The

comments and proposals of experts on Evaluation areas, criteria and indicators were sent to Agency in written form and included in the Mission report as Annex No. 2.

5. Achievement of the Expected Results

Planned action was achieved. Experts wrote comments and suggestion on how to improve Rules for accreditation of higher and secondary special education institutions and Institutional evaluation areas, criteria and indicators. All comments and suggestions were discussed with Agency staff members and sent in written form. Now the Agency needs to work on both documents and to amend them according to agreed remarks.

6. Unexpected Results

There were no unexpected results identified during the mission.

7. Issues Left Open After the Mission

The Rules for accreditation of higher and secondary special education institutions needs to be revised and amended according to discussed and agreed comments and proposals that were sent to Agency in written form and included in the Mission report as Annex No. 1.

The evaluation areas, criteria and indicators should be amended according to discussed and agreed comments and proposals that were sent to Agency in written form and included in the Mission report as Annex No. 2. Grading scale and evaluation of compliance to educational standards as well as relation of these two evaluation scales needs to be reconsidered.

8. Recommendations (including recommendation for future missions)

Recommendations regarding Rules for accreditation of higher and secondary special education institutions:

- To redraft document according to proposed new structure of the document.
- To distinguish institutional evaluation and accreditation procedure and programme evaluation and accreditation procedure in the Rules.
- Clearly indicate stages of the procedures.
- Clearly indicate stages of report writing including draft report, possibility for HEI to comment on factual errors in draft report, finalization of evaluation report.
- To set and describe procedures for complaints and appeals following ESG 2.7 standard.
- To set and describe clear procedure and requirements for institutional and programme evaluation by foreign QA agency.
- In case of evaluation of joint study programme it is recommended to use European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Study Programmes https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/04/02_European_Approach_QA_of_Joint_Programmes_v1_0.pdf
- To develop a procedure for selection of Accreditation Commission describing selection principles, code of conduct, non-conflict mechanism, etc.
- To use unified terminology.
- To align evaluation areas, criteria and indicators with the study programme criteria to be discussed in other mission.

- To keep in mind that evaluation procedures should facilitate transparency and accountability.

Recommendations regarding Evaluation area, criteria and indicators:

- To amend list of criteria and indicators according to discussed and agreed comments and proposals;
- To reconsider grading scale of 550 points to a more simplified (e.g. 5 or 10 point scale) and excluding assessment in points of criteria and indicators;
- To explain in detail correlation of grading scale with assessment of compliance to state educational standards or use only one of them (the latter is strongly recommended).
- Mapping in criteria and indicators to ESG Part 1 standards is recommended to ensure that all aspects are covered either by institutional or programme evaluation procedures;
- To start collecting reliable data related to higher education and performance of HEIs on national level.

9. Acknowledgments (if any)

We would like to thank Lala Abbasova for the fruitful discussions and the EQAA and Twinning staff for organisation and support during this mission.

Annexes

Annex. No. 1

The Rules for accreditation of higher and secondary special education institutions

Annex. No. 2

Evaluation areas, criteria and indicators (with comments and proposals by experts before and after discussions with Agency staff).