

Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan



Twinning project ENI/2018/395-401

Mission Report

Short-Term Mission on Activity 4.3 Review the legal and regulatory framework for recognition (doctoral studies) and, if required, submit recommendations to comply with European best practices

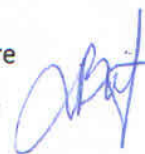
(June 24 – June 28, 2019)

1. Name and Function of the Expert:

Full name of experts

Mr. Leonas Balaševičius, Lithuania

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 4.3 Review the legal and regulatory framework for recognition (doctoral studies in this mission) and, if required, submit recommendations to comply with European best practices

Benchmarks for this activity are:

- A proposal for the amendment of legal regulations for doctoral studies at national and institutional levels

3. Time schedule of mission:

| Date and Time | Activity |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Monday 24 th of June 2019 | <p>Meeting with RTA Ms. Lisa Bydanova, Ms. Vusala Gurbanova, Senior Advisor of the Science, Higher Education and Secondary-Specialized Education Department, CL I, Ms. Nargiz Garakhanova, Senior Advisor of the Science, Higher Education and Secondary-Specialized Education Department, CL IV and Mr. Anar Kazimov, Head of Science Unit of the Science, Higher Education and Secondary-Specialized Education Department, Ms. Nushaba Mammadbaily, Leading Advisor of the Science, Higher Education and Secondary-Specialized Education Department, Mr. Samir Hamidov Leading Advisor of the Science, Higher Education and Secondary-Specialized Education Department of the Ministry of Education – sharing information about the current situation of PhD (doctoral) studies in Azerbaijan. Identified three possible topics for improvement: admission process, study period and thesis defence procedure. Admission process and defence procedure were recently updated by national law. Therefore, our main focus will be on preparing recommendations to improve the study period process.</p> <p>Meeting with Ms. Nargiz Garakhanova, Senior Advisor of the Science, Higher Education and Secondary-Specialized Education Department, CL IV and Mr. Anar Kazimov, Head of Science Unit of the Science, Higher Education and Secondary-Specialized Education Department of the Ministry of Education – analysing recent national laws regarding PhD studies.</p> <p>Preparing a short case study about the evolution of doctoral studies in Lithuania. Analysing “Statute on granting scientific degrees” and “Statute on granting scientific titles” (http://aak.gov.az) June 11, 2019.</p> |
| Tuesday 25 th of June 2019 | <p>Meeting with Ms. Vusala Gurbanova, Senior Advisor of the Science, Higher Education and Secondary-Specialized Education Department, CL I, Ms. Nargiz Garakhanova, Senior Advisor of the Science, Higher Education and Secondary-Specialized Education Department, CL IV and Mr. Anar Kazimov, Head of Science Unit of the Science, Higher Education and Secondary-Specialized Education Department, Ms. Nushaba Mammadbaily, Leading Advisor of the Science, Higher Education and Secondary-Specialized Education Department, Mr. Samir Hamidov Leading Advisor of the Science, Higher Education and Secondary-Specialized Education Department of the Ministry of Education – sharing information about the evaluation of doctoral provisions in Lithuania since 2009. Decision – to prepare recommendations to the higher education institutions about the PhD</p> |

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|---|---|
| | study process improvement. Discussion about the framework of recommendations. |
| Wednesday 26 th of June 2019 | Deskwork. Preparing the draft of recommendations. |
| Thursday 27 th of June 2019 | <p>Meeting with Ms. Vusala Gurbanova, Senior Advisor of the Science, Higher Education and Secondary-Specialized Education Department, CL I and Ms. Nargiz Garakhanova, Senior Advisor of the Science, Higher Education and Secondary-Specialized Education Department, CL IV – discussing the management challenges of the PhD student study period.</p> <p>Meeting with Ms. Vusala Gurbanova, Senior Advisor of the Science, Higher Education and Secondary-Specialized Education Department, CL I and Ms. Nargiz Garakhanova, Senior Advisor of the Science, Higher Education and Secondary-Specialized Education Department, CL IV and Mr. Anar Kazimov, Head of Science Unit of the Science, Higher Education and Secondary-Specialized Education Department – finalising the content that should be included in the recommendations.</p> |
| Friday 28 th of June 2019 | Deskwork. Preparing the recommendations. |

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

The following documents that are relevant to the mission topic were reviewed before the mission:

- The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Science, August 2016;
- State of The Art on Doctoral Studies in Azerbaijan, January 2016, Khazar University;
- The current regulations for Doctoral studies;
- A draft of rules for Doctoral studies - suggested version drafted by members of the university staff;
- A draft of the new version of the general state standards for Higher Education, which comprise a section on Doctoral studies.

5. Achievement of the Expected Results

Planned action was achieved. A proposal of recommendations for regulations of PhD study period process at national and institutional levels was prepared.

6. Unexpected Results

Recent national laws updated admission process to the PhD studies and thesis defence procedure.

7. Issues Left Open After the Mission

One issue was left open for the future. Review of the legal and regulatory framework and preparation of recommendations how to merge two 3rd cycle educational systems: PhD and Doctor of Science preparation into one, to comply with European best practices.

8. Recommendations (including recommendation for future missions)

On PhD study process improvement:

1. The total scope of the PhD programs is 240 credits (ECTS) in a full-time (up to 4 years) or part-time (up to 6 year) course. The regular volume of one-year studies in a full-time course is 60 credits, but is no less than 50 credits. The regular volume of one year studies in a part-time course may be less than 40 credits. The total duration of part-time studies shall not be more than one and a half times longer than the duration of full-time studies.
2. The content of the PhD programs consists of interrelated theoretical, pedagogical and professional training, and scientific research.
3. The volume of theoretical, pedagogical and professional training (doctoral studies – disciplines; including taking minimum exams) is at least 30 credits. Up to 30 credits could be

assigned to the preparation for research – analysis of scientific literature in the dissertation topic, acquiring the necessary skills to work with research infrastructure. The volume of scientific research is up to 180 credits. Scientific research activities usually include theoretical and experimental R&D for a dissertation topic, research internships in other institutions or companies, participation in international and national scientific conferences and events, preparation and publication of articles, books and monographs (for dissertation topic only), writing the thesis, etc.

4. It is recommended that doctoral studies develop knowledge and skills in specialty and English language fields (obligatory disciplines), related scientific fields (if it is necessary for dissertation topic research) and transferable skills (IPR and exploitation of the research results; outreach, communication and dissemination activities; writing articles, preparing posters, and public speaking; open data and data management; the ethical aspects of scientific research; proposal writing and project management, career management).

5. IPR and exploitation of the research result subject should be mandatory for PhD students whose dissertation topic research results are under the Intellectual Property Protection (see Annex, point 7).

6. It is recommended to assign 8 credits for each article published in periodical scientific publications that are included in international descriptive and indexing systems (databases); 4 credits for each article published in other publications. The application of local patents in a dissertation topic is equivalent to 8 credits ((without co-authorship) or 4 credits ((with co-authorship). The application of international patents in a dissertation topic is equivalent to 16 credits ((without co-authorship) or 8 credits ((with co-authorship). Each report and thesis published on national or international scientific events (conferences, congresses, symposiums, etc.) is given 3 credits.

7. The scientific supervisor, in cooperation with the PhD student, prepares a project for the PhD student's work plan (see Annex, point 4 and point 5). The individual work plan consists of doctoral studies and scientific research parts, and is created for the full duration of the PhD program. Amendments to the individual work plan may be made by scientific supervisor after PhD student annual attestation. The scientific council of the higher education institution makes a decision on approving the individual PhD student work plan. The individual work plan should be approved within one month after the appointment of a scientific supervisor. Information on each individual PhD student work plan should be published on the National Management Portal for PhD in Higher Education.

8. The Doctoral department (or equivalent) at the higher education institution should analyze the individual working plans of PhD students. The information on the subjects that should be taught to PhD students should be summarized and submitted to the relevant faculties of the higher education institution.

9. Specialty and foreign language subjects are mandatory for PhD students. The exams and the program of these subjects are approved by the Higher Attestation Commission and the evaluation of the exam results is based on the criteria set by the Higher Attestation Commission. The teaching of other subjects is organized in the respective departments of the higher education institution.

10. The program and credits of the subject (see Annex, point 6) are defined by the chairs and scientific supervisors of the PhD students. The program and credits of the subject should be approved by the scientific council of the faculty. Some subjects could be taught intensively (see

Annex, point 6), which allows to deliver a set of lectures over a very short period (usually 1-2 weeks). This approach should enable the PhD students to acquire the necessary skills and achieve proficiency more rapidly.

11. To ensure a constant and active participation of the PhD students in the taught subject, their ability to apply theoretical knowledge and an objective evaluation of study results, the accumulative evaluation system could be used to achieve this. The final mark of the subject consists of marks from intermediate assessments and a mark from the final assessment, multiplied by weighted coefficients (percentage of each assessment), and having these multiplications summed up. Any PhD student who fails to obtain an assessment of the subject's intermediate tasks is not allowed to participate in the final assessment of the subject. It should be possible to have two repeated assessments: first one – free of charge, second one – payable. The first and second repeated assessments are not allowed, if the PhD student aims to improve an already positive evaluation; previously tried to obtain an assessment in an unfair manner; systematically missed the classes. The second repeated assessment is not allowed, if the PhD student failed in the first repeated assessment; failed to attend the previous assessment without any justified reason.

12. The higher education institution that is admitting PhD students is responsible for organizing the teaching of the subjects written in the PhD students individual work plans. It is recommended for short visits (Erasmus+, participants of international scientific conferences which are organized in the Azerbaijan Republic) to invite guest professors from leading research universities to teach some part of the subjects' content. Any subject mentioned in the individual work plan on the basis of the formal agreement or correspondence of the higher education institution and scientific supervisor can be taught in another higher education institution or organization. Study credits collected at another higher education institution or organization should be recognized at the higher education institution where the PhD student is enrolled. The Doctoral department (or equivalent) at the higher education institution should be responsible for the recognition of study credits.

13. A PhD student participates in the PhD program in accordance with the approved work plan. The implementation of the PhD student's work plan is evaluated during the PhD student's annual attestation. The higher education institution can postpone the deadlines for doctoral studies, scientific research, subject's examination, preparation of a doctoral dissertation due to important reasons (illness, childbirth, etc.).

14. In case it is obvious that a 1-3 year PhD student fails to meet the requirements of the work plan, an extraordinary attestation may be initiated after 3 months, following a proposal by the PhD student's scientific supervisor or head of the Department. A PhD student must carry out the study and / or research activities specified in the annual attestation in those 3 months. A PhD student, who receives a negative evaluation in extraordinary attestation, is expelled from the PhD program by the order of the higher education institution.

15. The 4 year PhD student should be evaluated positive during annual attestation if can submit a dissertation for initial discussion in the Department.

16. The 4 year PhD student, who receives a negative evaluation in annual attestation, is expelled from the PhD program by the order of the higher education institution, but has the right during one year to prepare dissertation for submitting to the initial discussion in the Department. All higher education institution expenses related to the dissertation preparation for submitting to the initial discussion in the Department are covered by the person.

17. A PhD student can submit a dissertation for initial discussion in the Department, if has passed all examinations scheduled in the PhD student's work plan; fulfilled criteria set by the Higher Attestation Commission and has scientific supervisor approval for dissertation text.

I would recommend to use PhD students as a strategic instrument for the long-term improvement of the internationalization of the higher education system. The participation in international networks (Erasmus+, and etc.) by the higher education institutions is strongly encouraged. The higher education institutions could additionally allocate specific funds to allow PhD students to spend some time during their PhD studies abroad. In the long-term, this should have positive effects on the internationalization of the entire education system.

9. Acknowledgments

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the employees of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan: Ms. Nargiz Garakhanova, Mr. Anar Kazimov and Ms. Vusala Gurbanova. They provided most valuable input and feedback during the entire process of elaboration of recommendations.

Annexes

1. **Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training.** https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/policy_library/principles_for_innovative_doctoral_training.pdf [accessed on June 26, 2019]
2. **Survey. Doctoral education in Europe today: approaches and institutional structures.** <https://eua-cde.org/downloads/publications/online%20eua%20cde%20survey%2016.01.2019.pdf> [accessed on June 26, 2019]
3. **Doctoral Education - Taking Salzburg Forward: Implementation and new challenges.** https://eua-cde.org/downloads/publications/2016_euacde_doctoral-salzburg-implementation-new-challenges.pdf [accessed on June 26, 2019]
4. **Plan of doctoral studies.** https://www.vu.lt/site_files/DRS/Doctoral_Studies/Plan_of_doctoral_studies.doc [accessed on June 26, 2019]
5. **Individual study plan of PhD student.** http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=20&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwi_4Ia5r4bjAhWSaFAKHQpoBpk4ChAWMAI6BAGJEAJ&url=http%3A%2F%2Fies.fsv.cuni.cz%2Fdefault%2Ffile%2Fdownload%2Fid%2F22563&usq=AOvVaw2_N5PIjGQ-qRsXj-mJhd40 [accessed on June 26, 2019]
6. **Example of study module programme.** <https://admissions.ktu.edu/?study-program=d-energetics-and-power-engineering#subjects> [accessed on June 26, 2019]
7. **Fields of Intellectual Property Protection.** <https://www.wipo.int/export/sites/www/about-ip/en/iprm/pdf/ch2.pdf> [accessed on June 27, 2019]