

Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan



Twinning project ENI/2018/395-401

Mission Report

Short-Term Mission on Activity 3.7 Undertake a mock accreditation at each pilot university for a study programme in a priority area

(January 13-18, 2020)

1. Name and Function of the Expert:

Full name of expert

Mr. Eckhart Hotzel, France

Signature

Full name of expert

Ms. Michelle Houppe, France

Signature



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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 3.7 Undertake a mock accreditation at each pilot university for a study programme (Foreign Language Teacher) in a priority area

Benchmarks for this activity are:

- Minimum 4 mock accreditations of study programmes implemented



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3. Time schedule of mission:

Date and Time	Activity
Monday, 13 th of January, 2020	Briefing meeting at ANO. Internal coordination meeting among experts
Tuesday, 14 th of January, 2020	Interview sessions at Azerbaidjan State Pedagogical University
Wednesday, 15 th of January, 2020	Interview sessions at Azerbaidjan University of Languages
Thursday, 16 th of January, 2020	Interview sessions at Sumgayit State University
Friday, 17 th of January, 2020	Interview sessions at Khazar University
Saturday, 18 th of January, 2020	Concluding experts' meeting

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

Only institutional evaluation has been performed in higher education institutions of 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 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 staff and pilot institutional evaluations were carried out in three pilot universities. At current stage the Accreditation and Nostrification Office needs to build its 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 St.Ps, Grid for Self-assessment of Competence-orientedness and Student-centeredness of Study Programmes) have been already developed by the Twinning experts to ensure the compliance of programme accreditation practices in Azerbaijan with EU best practices. As a next step, the higher education institutions were trained on how to conduct a self-evaluation of study programmes and were instructed to write the initial draft of self-evaluation reports on relevant programmes and submit them both in Azerbaijani and English before 25th of April. The second mission under this Activity took place from 29th of April to 3rd of May 2019. The objective of this mission was to hold meetings with the HEIs representatives involved in the SER writing and to support them in this process. The deadline for the submission of final draft of self-evaluation reports was set for the end of August 2019. Mock evaluation of six pilot programmes has already been



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conducted so far. The current mission which is being implemented under the Activity 3.7 aims to conduct the mock evaluation of programmes in Foreign Language Teacher in four pilot universities.

5. Achievement of the Expected Results

Planned action was achieved in a satisfactory way. Mock evaluations of English language study programmes were performed in 3 state universities and 1 private: Azerbaijan State pedagogical University, Azerbaijan University of Language, Sumgayit State University and Khazar University. Overall, the visit implemented during this mock process really looked like the visit as it is carried out in France, for example. The peer review was implemented by an expert team, relying on 2 external experts and 4 Azeri: the team has worked very well together and showed enthusiasm and collegial commitment.

6. Unexpected Results

State if any unexpected results were identified during the mission. Add any relevant comments.

Not applicable

7. Issues Left Open After the Mission

State if any issues were left open. Add any relevant comments.

Not applicable

8. Recommendations (including recommendation for future missions)

Self-evaluation reports (SER) are not very satisfactory, except for Khazar University SER which was concise, clear and answered to the items with data. It might be given in example for future trainings.

At the beginning of each SER appears a table named “Key data on the study programme”. It is a good idea but, to have a clear picture of the whole picture at a glance, it is recommended to integrate some key figures to make it more useful. For example, number and typology of teachers, number of students per year.

The Evaluation grid, named “Criteria and indicators for study program” is far too complex and not adapted to the present development state of the academic programs. Some items are not relevant in such a situation, for example those regarding the involvement of stakeholders (employers) and students in the program, as well as the alignment with the labour market needs. Updating the content of the study program, taking into account the faculty and stakeholders recommendations, is a major issue. At the end of the day, it will allow to improve its output and provide the market with good professionals.

Methodological observations about the external visit itself

It was very well prepared and organized in the 4 pilot universities: the top management and the staff were happy to receive external evaluators and the interviews were useful: for a first-time visit, it is a success.



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Nevertheless, the two interviews with panels of alumni and employers are less relevant. Alumni were all very young teachers, without much work experience, sometimes employed by the university itself. Employers were all school directors integrating students during the mandatory internship. This lack of diversity demonstrates the difficulty to liaise with labor market. The feedback gained from these interviews was not very informative and they may not be repeated in future evaluation processes, unless diversified alumni and employers are represented.

Some difficulty has appeared to define the perimeter of the evaluation: English language SP or Foreign language SP? For example some panels included teachers from other language (German) or departments (Psychology, methodology...).

Some panels were too numerous: to allow a fair distribution of speech time, it is better to reduce the panels to 7-8 representatives, as a maximum size. The final list of the attending people should be printed out and handled to the experts team every day.

More precisely:

- Only the teaching staff teaching in the programme under evaluation should participate in the interview;
- Alumni invited to the meeting should not be working or studying in university, which programme is evaluated;
- Only Learning resources that are related to programme under evaluation should be visited;
- Students invited to the interviews should come from different groups and different courses;
- Graduates that are invited should be graduated not more than 5 years ago;
- Panels should not count more than 7-8 people.

The schedule of the visit was very tight and has represented a heavy workload for the experts. For the future evaluations, it is also recommended to let at least 90 minutes for daily debriefing at the end of the visit among the external evaluators. For example, the morning could be devoted to the interviews, until 1:30 PM and, after lunch, the afternoon could be devoted to debriefing and feedback to the university. Another solution would be to extend the visit over 2 days. This is the case when the Hcéres deals with an evaluation program abroad.

At the very end of the process, when the final report is issued, it is recommended to allow the top management of the program to express its observations, in a contradictory phase. It is important to provide the university with any opportunity to feel committed with the process, as an autonomous and major actor of the quality enhancement.

This section shall be 2.5 pages at maximum. All other relevant information shall be attached as annex.

9. Acknowledgments (if any)



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The experts would like to extend their appreciation for the support provided by the ANO, and the head Mrs. Lala Abasova, who liaised with the universities and arranged all the meetings, to Mrs. Aytaj Ataishiyeva for timely communication during the whole evaluation process, and to Mrs. Lisa Bydanova for efficient overall support during this exercise.

The panel of expert would also like to thank the Universities for their nice welcome.

Annexes



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