TWINNING AZERBAIJAN

Support to the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan for Further Adherence of the Higher Education System to the European Higher Education Area (AZ-ad-EHEA)

**AZ/14/ENP/OT/31**

**EU Short Term Expert Mission Report**

1. **Basic Information**

**Component and Activity:**

Component: 4. Standards and Guidelines for QA in HE

Activity: 4.6 Analysis of the Pilots

**Names of the Experts:** Ms Helka Kekäläinen, Ms Heli Mattisen, Ms Kirsi Hiltunen, Ms Kati Isoaho, Mr Hannu Apajalahti, Mr Tauno Otto, Mr Heikki Malinen, Mr Touko Apajalahti, Ms Tiia Bach, Ms Lagle Zobel

**Dates of the Mission:** 5 – 9 June 2017

**Contractor:** Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) /

Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA)

**2. Relevant Background Information/State of Affairs**

The objective of Activity 4.5 was to coordinate a trial/test run of the Standards and Guidelines at three higher education institutions in Azerbaijan. The main aims of the pilot evaluations was to support the strategic management of institutions, provide external feedback to the institutions’ own internal quality assurance procedures, as well as inform the internal and external stakeholders of the compliance of the institutions’ quality assurance with the ESG.

The three pilot universities (Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University, Azerbaijan State Economic University and Azerbaijan Technical University) submitted their self-evaluation reports in January – February, 2017. The site visits of the pilot universities took place in April, 2017 and the assessment reports were finalized in May – June, 2017.

The pilot evaluations had an institutional approach with the focus on teaching and learning. The evaluation reports provide the pilot institutions with information regarding their strengths and good practices, as well as recommendations for the institutions’ further development and suggestions to the MoE regarding the regulations governing higher education in Azerbaijan. The summary of main strengths and areas of improvement of UNEC, ASPU and AZTU is set out in Annex I of this report.

**3. Objectives and Tasks of the Mission**

The overall aim of the Component 4 is to develop Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Azerbaijan, in line with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG). The main objectives of Missions of Activity 4.6 were:

* to analyze the results of the pilot evaluations and to integrate remarks into the revised proposal for the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, and
* to propose a roadmap for the implementation of an EHEA compatible QA system (including an ENQA compatible QA Agency for HE), and ensure appropriate dissemination.

**4. Time Schedule of the Mission**

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| **Date** | **Activities/Meetings**  BC experts met  (title and institution) | **Remarks** |
| 05 June, 2017 | Kick-off meeting of STEs, ANO representatives and MoE representatives at MoE.  Feedback meeting introducing the results of the pilot evaluation to the representatives of the Azerbaijan State Economic University. | - |
| 06 June, 2017 | Feedback meeting introducing the results of the pilot institutional evaluation to the representatives of the Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University.  Feedback meeting presenting the results of the pilot institutional evaluation to the representatives of the Azerbaijan Technical University. | - |
| 07 June, 2017 | Seminar day 1 for international and local evaluation team members, representatives of pilot universities, observers in the pilot evaluations and ANO to share and analyse the pilot evaluation experiences in the form of a Learning Café. | - |
| 08 June, 2017 | Seminar day 2 for international and local team members of pilot evaluations and representatives of ANO to discuss and provide recommendations for Revised Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance of Higher Education Institutions in Azerbaijan and the future evaluation process. | - |
| 09 June, 2017 | Mission review with STEs, representative of MoE and ANO. Writing of the Mission Report. | - |

**5. Achievement of the Expected Results**

The expected results for the mission were achieved: the results of the pilot evaluations were analysed and recommendations were prepared for the future activities of the Accreditation and Nostrification Office (ANO) in Azerbaijan.

From Monday, June 5, to Tuesday, June 6, feedback meetings were conducted with the Azerbaijan State Economic University, the Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University and the Azerbaijan Technical University. During the meetings, the members of evaluation panels gave a presentation outlining the main strengths and areas of improvement of each institution, followed by a discussion about possible follow-up activities by the HEIs. The HEIs also had an opportunity to give a short presentation on the impact of the evaluation and to describe some good practices identified in their university during the evaluation process.

On Wednesday, June 7, an analysis of the pilot evaluations took place in the format of a Learning Café workshop, where the representatives of the HEIs and the panel members had an opportunity to share during four respective sessions their opinions and suggestions on the topics of 1) self-evaluation, 2) criteria and manual for pilot evaluations, 3) site visit end the evaluation process, and 4) the evaluation report. The project managers of the panels served as rapporteurs to these sessions and compiled a summary of the key findings under each topic set out in Annex I to this report.

On Thursday, June 8, a discussion took place between the STEs, panel members and the representative of ANO resulting in recommendations for ANO’s further activities in the areas of assessment criteria, self-evaluation, composition of panels and training, the site visit and writing of the evaluation report. These recommendations support the implementation of an EHEA compatible QA system in Azerbaijan and are set out in Annex II to this report.

**6. Unexpected Results**

On June 2, 2017, an Action Plan on the implementation of the Order №2199 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the “Additional measures with regard to increasing the efficiency of business environment and to further improving the standing of our country in international ratings” was approved by the Order of the President of Republic of Azerbaijan[[1]](#footnote-1). In Section 9.1.2.3 of this Action Plan (Quality of education system), it is stated that standards and guidelines for quality assurance in Azerbaijani higher education system are developed **in line with the relevant European Standards and Guidelines within the TWINNING programme of the European Union​.**

**7. Issues Left Open After the Mission**

No issues were left open after the mission

**8. Recommendations for Future Missions**

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**9. Conclusions and General Remarks Concerning the Project**

The main findings of the Mission are set out in Annexes I and II to this report as follows:

ANNEX I: The summary of main strengths and areas of improvement of UNEC, ASPU and AZTU and summary of the key findings of the analysis of pilot evaluations

ANNEX II: Recommendations for ANO’s further activities supporting the implementation of an EHEA compatible QA system in Azerbaijan

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1. Please see: <http://president.az/articles/24081> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)