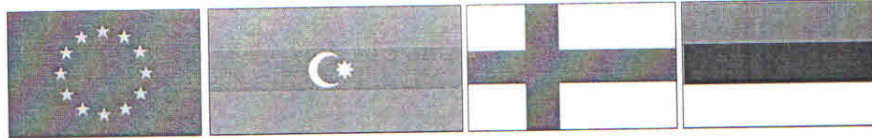




Funded by the EU



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:

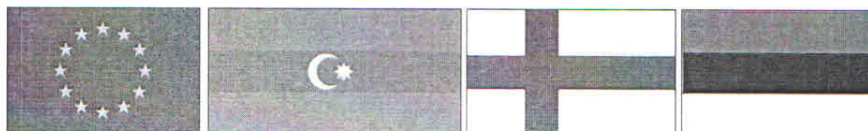
Component: 4. Standards and Guidelines for QA in HE

Activity: 4.3 Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Azerbaijan

Name of the Experts: Ms Helka Kekäläinen, Ms Heli Mattisen

Dates of the Mission: 23-30 May 2016

Contractor: Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) /
Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA)



Funded by the EU

2. Relevant Background Information/State of Affairs

Azerbaijan joined the Bologna Process in 2005. International cooperation in quality assurance has been an essential element of the Bologna Process aiming to create a European Higher Education Area. A central tool in the work has been the publication Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (also known as ESG). The revised ESG 2015 were adopted by the Ministers responsible for higher education in the European Higher Education Area in May 2015. As a result of the participative revision the responsible bodies are confident that they reflect a consensus among all the organisations and ministries involved on how to take forward quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area and, as such, provide a firm basis for successful implementation.

The focus of the ESG is on quality assurance related to learning and teaching in higher education, including the learning environment and relevant links to research and innovation. In addition, institutions have policies and processes to ensure and improve the quality of their other activities, such as research and governance. At the heart of all quality assurance activities are the twin purposes of accountability and enhancement. Taken together, these create trust in the higher education institution's performance. A successfully implemented quality assurance system will provide information to assure the higher education institution and the public of the quality of the institution's activities (accountability) as well as provide advice and recommendations on how it might improve what it is doing (enhancement). Quality assurance and quality enhancement are thus inter-related. They can support the development of a quality culture that is embraced by all: from the students and academic staff to the institutional leadership and management.

The ESG may be used and implemented in different ways by different institutions, agencies and countries. The EHEA is characterised by its diversity of political systems, higher education systems, socio-cultural and educational traditions, languages, aspirations and expectations. In order to create the Azerbaijani understanding of the ESG the Twinning project and the Azerbaijani Ministry of Education invited a drafting group to work on a proposal. The drafting group consists of stakeholders from Azerbaijani universities, representatives from the Ministry of Education, students and experts from Finland and Estonia.

3. Objectives and Tasks of the Mission

The 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 and test them with three higher education institutions. The objective of Activity 4.3 is to assist BC stakeholders with the elaboration of a concrete proposal for the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Azerbaijan (AzSG). A Drafting Group was appointed by MoE in April 2016 to work on AzSG. The aim of the Mission was to formulate a proposal for AzSG to be discussed with the Advisory Group in the seminar on 1 June 2016, and at the same time to draft a manual (incl. the description of the evaluation procedure, assessment areas and criteria) for the pilot evaluations that will take place in spring 2017. After the seminar, the input of the seminar will be analysed and the draft will be developed further.

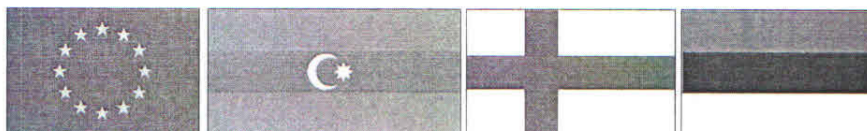


Funded by the EU



4. Time Schedule of the Mission

Date	Activities/Meetings BC experts met (title and institution)	Remarks
23.5.2016	<p>Preparatory meeting: RTA Reijo Aholainen, Language assistant Tarlan Arzumanov, STEs Helka Kekäläinen, Heli Mattisen and Kirsi Hiltunen</p> <p>Preparation for the workshop on drafting work for a possible model of external QA in Azerbaijan: Afgan Abdullayev, Tofiq Ahmadov, Vusala Gurbanova, Mr. Elshan Nuriyev, Ms. Elmira Manafova</p>	<p>Preparation for the workshop and other organisational needs</p> <p>Preliminary drafting of the manual for the pilots</p> <p>Meeting with RTA Counterpart</p>
24.5.2016	<p>Preparatory meeting: RTA Reijo Aholainen, Language assistant Tarlan Arzumanov, STEs Helka Kekäläinen, Heli Mattisen and Kirsi Hiltunen</p> <p>Interviews of (Accreditation and Nostrification Office): Mr. Elshan Nuriyev, Ms. Elmira Manafova</p>	<p>Preparation for the workshop and drafting; interviews</p> <p>Preliminary drafting of the manual for the pilots</p>
25.5.2016	<p>Drafting Group, RTA Reijo Aholainen, Language assistant Tarlan Arzumanov, STEs Helka Kekäläinen, Heli Mattisen and Kirsi Hiltunen</p> <p>Drafting of AzSG:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation process - Composition of the international evaluation group and requirements for members of the evaluation group - Principles for reporting 	Drafting of AzSG
26.5.2016	<p>Drafting Group, RTA Reijo Aholainen, Language assistant Tarlan Arzumanov, STEs Helka Kekäläinen, Heli Mattisen and Kirsi Hiltunen</p> <p>Drafting of AzSG:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Objectives of external evaluation of higher education in Azerbaijan - Outcome of the evaluation - Assessment areas and criteria <p>Meeting with Emin Amrullayev, Natig Ibrahimov</p>	Group work and drafting of AzSG, meeting



Funded by the EU

27.5.2016	Drafting Group, RTA Reijo Aholainen, STEs Helka Kekäläinen, Heli Mattisen and Kirsi Hiltunen Drafting of AzSG: - Assessment areas and criteria - Principles for the self-evaluation report and other material submitted by the HEI for evaluation - Principles for the site visit to be conducted at the HEI	Group work and drafting of AzSG
30.5.2016 (1.6.2016)	AzSG Advisory Group Meeting in Azerbaijan Technical University List of Participants annexed	Introducing the work of the Drafting group to the Advisory group, Discussions, Reporting on the mission

Drafting group members:

Ms. Elmira Ismaylova, Baku State University
 Mr. Ruslan Mammadov, Ganja State University
 Mr. Anar Naghiyev, Azerbaijan University of Languages
 Ms. Nargiz Mammadova, Azerbaijan University of Languages
 Mr. Tofiq Ahmadov, Ministry of Education
 Mr. Afgan Abdullayev, Ministry of Education
 Mr. Sohrab Isayev, Azerbaijan State University of Economics
 Ms. Elmira Manafova, Ministry of Education, ANO
 Mr. Elshan Nuriyev, Ministry of Education, ANO
 Ms. Helka Kekäläinen, Finland
 Ms. Kirsi Hiltunen, Finland
 Ms. Heli Mattisen, Estonia

Guest experts: Mr Natig Ibrahimov, Mr Emin Emrullayev

5. Achievement of the Expected Results

The main result of the mission is the preliminary draft of the manual for pilot evaluations. Based on ESG, taking into account the National Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan, previous interviews and discussions with different stakeholders, the STE's Kirsi Hiltunen, Helka Kekäläinen and Heli Mattisen prepared the first draft of the manual: overall framework and objectives, description of the evaluation process, composition and tasks of the panel, assessment criteria and possible outcomes as well as the proposal for assessment areas and criteria. The drafting group had a 3-day-workshop in Quba. The process of pilot evaluations as well as the possible modifications for further evaluations were discussed and the purpose of the external quality assurance elaborated. Different interactive methods were used in order to facilitate the discussions and agree upon the focus areas for improvement and define the aim of pilot evaluations. Following areas for improvement were defined: strategic management and internal quality assurance;



Funded by the EU

development of learning outcome based study programmes in accordance with the needs of the economy and expectations of the society; student centered teaching and learning; assessment of achieved learning outcomes; research based teaching and learning; internationalization; academic ethics.

The aim of pilot evaluations was set: to support the strategic management of institutions, provide external feedback to the institutions' own internal quality assurance procedures as well as to inform internal and external stakeholders of the compliance of the process and outcomes of teaching and learning to the ESG. The pilot evaluations will have the institutional approach with the focus on teaching and learning. The evaluation report will provide recommendations for institutions' further developments.

3 working groups were asked to elaborate and present criteria for (2-3) assessment areas proposed by STE-s (mission statement and strategic planning; governance and administration; study programmes; teaching and learning; research and development; academic staff; students). As the result of discussions 2 assessment areas (mission statement and strategic planning and governance and administration) were merged and all criteria were discussed during the last session on May 27. Based on the results of the discussions, the STE's drafted a modified version of the manual for pilot evaluations and made agreed amendments to the structure and content of the assessment areas. The overall framework and objectives as well as the reviewed assessment areas were translated into Azerbaijan in order to provide written material for the discussion to the Advisory Group consisting of the vice rectors and other representatives of different higher education institutions as well as representatives of the Ministry of Education. The preliminary draft of AzSG was presented to the Advisory Group by the STE's Helka Kekäläinen and Heli Mattisen and members of the Drafting Group, representatives of the MoE Tofiq Ahmadov and Afgan Abdullayev.

The members of the Advisory Group disputed the complexity of the standards and the extensive number of the criteria. Concrete proposal were made for the improvement: to put more focus on internationalisation, withdraw the criteria for funding etc. The STE's reminded the participants of the enhancement lead approach of the pilot evaluations and of the need to distinguish between different types of external evaluations. As the enhancement lead approach is new for the institutions in Azerbaijan there is a need for further seminars and trainings which will be provided to the pilot institutions in autumn 2016 (Technical University, Pedagogical University, University of Economy).

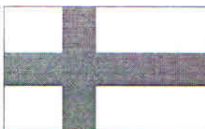
The Twinning Office will publish the preliminary draft of AzSG on the website of the project in order to get written feedback about the assessment areas and criteria. The feedback will be considered and the necessary amendments made by the STE's. At the end of August a seminar for pilot institutions and Advisory Group members will be organized where the updated version of the manual for pilot evaluations will be discussed and the evaluation criteria agreed.

Parallel to the main activity the discussions with the Accreditation and Nostrification Office have been carried out. The people from the ANO are very much aware about the benefit the Twinning project might have for the launching the new external quality assurance system in Azerbaijan and are eager to be involved in all relevant activities.

6.-Unexpected Results



Funded by the EU



The active participation of the newly founded Accreditation and Nostrification Office in the drafting process was a very positive unexpected result of the mission.

7. Issues Left Open After the Mission

There is some more work to be done in the drafting of AzSG. Project Leaders and the RTA office should agree on the circulation of the draft within in MoE and institutions after the draft is finalized.

8. Recommendations for Future Missions

The next missions of Component 4 will take place in 29.8.-2.9.2016 and 12.-16.9.2016. The draft of the AzSG should be discussed in detail with the pilot institutions: Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University, Azerbaijan State University of Economics and Azerbaijan Technical University. The timetable for the 3 trainings for fostering the self-evaluation capacity of the institutions should also be agreed, as well as, the contact persons for the pilot evaluations in the universities should be appointed.

9. Conclusions and General Remarks Concerning the Project

Component 4 is labor intensive and some additional missions might be needed in order to receive the mandatory results in the best possible way. This should be kept in mind when the savings are calculated in the project.

2.6. 2016

(Date and place)

Kella Kelut

(Signature of Expert)

2.06. 2016

(Date and place)

Amatu

(Signature of Expert)