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## 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: 4.4 Fostering the Self-Evaluation Capacity

**Name of the Experts:** Ms. Kati Isoaho  
Ms. Marja-Liisa Saarilammi

**Dates of the Mission:** 10-14 October 2016

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



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

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 this work has been the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). Twinning project offers the opportunity for applying the ESG in Azerbaijani higher education. One of the mandatory results of the project is to develop Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Azerbaijan (AzSG) in line with the ESG and test them with three higher education institutions.

A Drafting Group was appointed by the Ministry of Education in April 2016 to work on a proposal for the Azerbaijani Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. The drafting group consisted of representatives from Azerbaijani universities, the Ministry of Education and students as well as Finnish and Estonian experts. The Accreditation and Nostrification Office also joined in the work of the drafting group. Based on the ESG, taking into account the National Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan, interviews in previous missions and discussions with different stakeholders, the first proposal for AzSG (including the description of the overall framework, the evaluation process, assessment areas and criteria) was drafted.

The main aims of the pilot evaluations were also set: to support the strategic management of institutions, to 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 institutions' quality assurance with the ESG. The pilot evaluations will have an institutional approach with the focus on teaching and learning. The evaluation report will provide pilot institutions with information regarding their strengths and good practices as well as recommendations for institutions' further development.

The first draft of the manual was discussed with the Advisory Group in a seminar on 1 June 2016. After the discussion, the Twinning Office published the draft on its website in order to get written feedback on the assessment areas and criteria. The feedback was considered by STEs and other relevant actors in August, and necessary amendments were made on the manual. It was concluded that as the enhancement-oriented approach is new for Azerbaijani higher education institutions, there is a need for further seminars and trainings which will be provided for the pilot institutions in autumn 2016.

The first missions of the Activity 4.4. ("Fostering the self-evaluation capacity") were carried out in September 2016. Three one-day trainings were provided for the pilot institutions to start preparing for the self-evaluation. The content of the training was divided into two main topics: introduction of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance of Higher Education in Azerbaijan. Manual for Pilot Evaluations* and share of the good practices examples of internal quality assurance at the Finnish higher education institutions. In addition to this, participants were asked to identify the relevant units and persons to carry out the upcoming self-evaluation at their institutions.



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### **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 in three higher education institutions. The objective of the Activity 4.4 is to support the capacity to conduct a self-evaluation for the external evaluation in the pilot institutions.

The task of this particular training were that participants

- understand the framework of the self-evaluation method
- learn to use self-evaluation as a tool in the institutional reviews
- to start the actual self-evaluation process

Selected assessment areas for the training were study programmes and their development (4), students (5) and teaching and learning resources and support services (7). Rest of the assessment areas (four altogether) were left for the last workshop in November-December 2016.

### **4. Time Schedule of the Mission**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activities/Meetings</b> BC experts met (title and institution)	<b>Remarks</b>
10 October 2016	Meeting at RTA Office (STEs, RTA, project assistants): training preparations  Kick-off meeting at MoE (STEs, RTA, Tofiq Ahmadov, Vusala Gurbanova and project assistants): discussion on the upcoming trainings	
11 October 2016	Training at Azerbaijan Technical University	List of participants as an Annex 1
12 October 2016	Training at Azerbaijan State Economic University  Drafting the mission report at Hotel Austin	List of participants as an Annex 2
13 October 2016	Training at Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University  Drafting the mission report at Hotel Austin	List of participants as an Annex 3
14 October 2016	Mission review at MoE (STEs, RTA, Tofiq Ahmadov, Vusala Gurbanova, contact persons from the pilot institutions, assistants)	



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Project paper work at RTA office

## **5. Achievement of the Expected Results**

The expected results were achieved as planned. Three trainings were carried out with 63 participants altogether. Participants represented different units and academic fields of the pilot institutions.

The training materials used were as follow (Annex 4)

- slides (purpose of the self-evaluation, description of the entire evaluation process, description of the self-evaluation process, descriptions of the three assessment areas handled in the trainings, a view to the next steps of the evaluation process), available in English
- evaluation forms, available in English and in Azerbaijani

As one of the mission results, the contact persons were nominated for each piloting institution. They are as follows:

Natiq Ahmadov, Azerbaijan Technical University  
 Ragif Gasimov, Azerbaijan State Economics University  
 Senan Aliyev, Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University

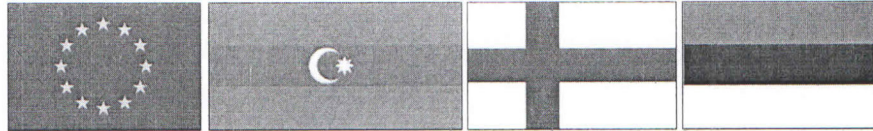
### **Outcomes of the trainings**

The self-evaluation framework, the working-method and the process of self-evaluation were presented to all participants. After that participants applied the SE-method in small teams to their own departments/units. Finally the outcomes of training day were presented to all audience and the STEs commented the using the method.

The all three universities participate very actively and were able and ready to discover and share their strengths, good practices and areas for improvement. Universities found many good practices in their activities, such as, tutoring-system, internship programmes and good learning environments. From the point of view of the STEs this proves that the participants understood the concept and purpose of the self-evaluation.

## **6. Unexpected Results**

At the training arranged at Azerbaijan State Economic University it was asked by the university representatives whether the FINEEC could carry out the programme accreditation for some of the institutions programmes as a part of the pilot evaluations. As the programme accreditations are not included in the project plan it was explained that this is not possible. Additionally, it was noted that the FINEEC carries out institutional audits at the foreign higher education institutions. Furthermore,



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this kind of activity requires that the institution to be audited makes an agreement with FINEEC and pays a sufficient fee.

At the training arranged in the Pedagogical University it was asked, could they perform self-evaluation using SWOT-method. It was discussed that SWOT-method does not relieve the good practices, however, it could be useful tool when universities draft the actual self-evaluation report.

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

No issues were left open after the mission.

### **8. Recommendations for Future Missions**

STEs recommend that

1. Schedule of the upcoming site-visits included in the evaluation process should be confirmed and piloting institutions be informed on it.
2. Furthermore, the submission date of the self-evaluation report should be confirmed for each piloting institution.

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

14.10.2016 Bamn

(Date and place)

MSA SE

(Signature of Expert)

14.10.2016 Bamn

Kut-Isach