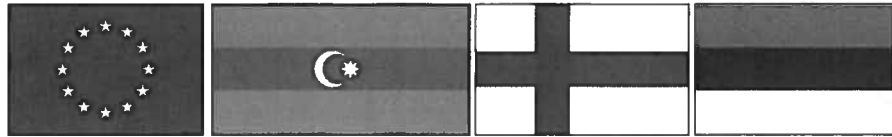




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## TWINNING AZERBAIJAN

# 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. Helka Kekäläinen

**Dates of the Mission:** 28 November – 2 December 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.

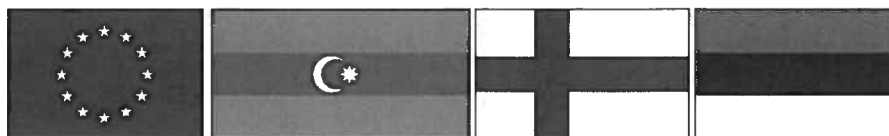
The first draft of the manual was discussed with the Advisory Group in a seminar on 1 June 2016. After the discussion, the Twinning Office published the draft on its website in order to get written feedback on the assessment areas and criteria. The feedback was considered by STEs and other relevant actors 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.

The second missions of the Activity 4.4. were carried out in October 2016. Three one-day trainings were provided for the pilot institutions to continue preparing for the self-evaluation. The task of this particular training were that participants understood the framework of the self-evaluation method, learnt to use self-evaluation as a tool in the institutional reviews as well as started the actual self-evaluation process.



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Selected assessment areas for the October 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.

### **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 these particular self-evaluation capacity trainings was to discuss the rest of the assessment areas and produce material for the self-evaluation reports. The assessment areas for the trainings were Strategic planning (1), Management (2), Human resources (3) and Research Activities (6). Each pilot institution also received detailed schedule of the whole process.

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

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activities/Meetings BC experts met (title and institution)</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
28 November 2016	Meeting at RTA Office (STEs, RTA, project assistants): training preparations  Kick-off meeting at MoE (STEs, RTA, Tofiq Ahmadov, pilot contact persons and project assistants): discussion on the Self-evaluation Report Template	
29 November 2016	Training at Azerbaijan State Economic University	List of participants as an Annex 1
30 November 2016	Training at Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University	List of participants as an Annex 2
1 December 2016	Training at Azerbaijan Technical University  Meeting with pilot contact persons, Tofiq Ahmadov/MoE and project assistants: discussion on the writing of the self-evaluation and site-visit arrangements.	List of participants as an Annex 3
2 December 2016	Participation to the seminar "Accreditation as an instrument for Quality Assurance in Higher Education" at Hotel JW Absheron Marriott  Project paper work at Hotel Marriott	



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

The expected results were achieved as planned. Three trainings were carried out with 47 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, descriptions of the four assessment areas handled in the trainings, a view to the next steps of the evaluation process as well as schedule for the submission of the self-evaluation report and site-visit by institution), available in English
- evaluation forms, available in English and in Azerbaijani

### **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 self-evaluation method in small teams to their own departments/units. The all three universities participate very actively and were able and ready to discover and share their strengths, good practices and areas for improvement.

The institution-wise schedules confirmed for the pilot institutions are:

- Azerbaijan State Economic University: submission of the self-evaluation report on 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan 2017, site-visit on 4-6 April 2017
- Training at Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University: submission of the self-evaluation on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan 2017, site-visit 11-13 April 2017
- Azerbaijan Technical University: submission of the self-evaluation report on 13<sup>th</sup> Feb 2017, site-visit 25-27 April 2017

## **6. Unexpected Results**

No unexpected results.

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

No issues were left open after the mission.

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

To carry out the pilots successfully a mission from the Activity 4.5 will be needed in February to communicate with the pilot institutions the programme of the site-visits, as well as, the practical arrangements.



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

2.12.2016 Baku  
**(Date and place)**

Kellin Kellin  
**(Signature of Expert)**

2.12.2016  
**(Date and place)**

Kellin Kellin  
**(Signature of Expert)**

