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: 2. Coordination and Networking

Activity: 2.7 Communication Strategy

**Name of the Expert:** Dr. Eila Heikkilä

**Dates of the Mission:** 7-11 March 2016

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

 Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA)

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

The EU-Azerbaijan Twinning Project “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” is signed between the European Union, represented by the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Azerbaijan on one hand and the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) and Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency (EKKA) on the other hand. The Final Recipient of the Action is the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan (MoE).

The overall objective of the project is to further develop Azerbaijan’s higher education system through integration in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The purpose is to increase the institutional capacities of the Ministry of Education and other key institutions of Azerbaijan for the development of Bologna related policies and the implementation of the EHEA objectives and reference tools.

The objective of the Project in Component 2 of Networking and Coordination and Activity 2.7 of Communication Strategy is to assist the Ministry of Education in preparing a public awareness and communication strategy for the issues pertinent to EHEA and Bologna. The purpose is to support MoE in establishing coordination, networking and communication mechanisms leading to improved capacity and awareness of issues pertinent to EHEA and Bologna Process. The Bologna Process is a collective effort of public authorities, universities, teachers, and students, together with stakeholder associations, employers, quality assurance agencies, international organisations, and institutions, including the European Commission, where effective coordination, communication and networking is crucial for successful implementation.

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

Based on the Twinning Contract, the aim of the mission is to carry out the activities of Component: 2 Coordination and Networking. The objective of Activity 2.7: Communication Strategy is to assist in preparing a public awareness and communication strategy on Bologna / EHEA issues and its implementation. In this regard, the specific objectives are:

* Review of the current communication methods and practices on Bologna/EHEA issues in Azerbaijan;
* Twinning Workshop on best practices for the MoE and other target groups;
* Planning of the implementation timetable and evaluation practices.

**4. Time Schedule of the Mission**

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| **Date** | **Activities/Meetings**BC experts met (title and institution) | **Remarks** |
| 7.3.2016 | **Meeting with RTA at 12:00****Meeting with MoE at 2:30 pm****Discussing the needs of Communication Strategy for the Bologna process**Vusala Gurbanova - MoE, senior advisor, CLTofig Ahmadov - MoE, senior advisor, RTA counterpartRuslan Mammadov - Ganja State University - Director of International Relations Office, international Projects managerElmira Ismayilova - Baku State University - Head of International Programs Department, Baku State UniversityAynur Bashirova - Baku Slavic University, Head of Chair of new media and communication technologies | Review of current communication methods and practices on Bologna/EHEA issues in Azerbaijan. Identification of shortcomings and development of new objectives.  |
| 8.3.2016 | **Preparation of the Workshop** and drafting the Communication Strategy at the hotel (National Public Holiday of International Women’s Day) | Preparation of the Workshop Presentation, Worksheet, Case study and other Reference material. |
| 9.3.2016 | **Workshop on Communication Strategy at 2:30 pm** Best practices in Finland, Estonia and other EHEA countriesAnnexes:List of participantsPresentationWorksheet  | Identification of target groups and key messages.Analysing examples from MS in a workshopInput to draft Communication Strategy. |
| 10.3.2016 | **Meeting at 2:30 pm** (Draft) Communication Strategy (objectives, target groups, key messages, communication channels, timescale, evaluation) agreed with the BCAnnexes:List of participantsDraft Communication Strategy | Drafting of Communication Strategy based on BC input. |
| 11.3.2016 | **Common Mission Review** together with the RTA, BC Component Leader and other MoE representatives | Presentation of Mission report.Presentation of Communication Strategy. |

**5. Achievement of the Expected Results**

**5.1. General observations related to the coordination, communication and networking on EHEA and Bologna**

Progress Review:

The meeting on 7.3.2016 focused on needs analysis of the activities related to coordination, communication and networking on EHEA and Bologna. It can be noted that while Bologna agreement was signed already in 2005, there is weak awareness of the benefits of EHEA related issues and Bologna process among the public audience in the country. It is also noted that while the agreement was signed at policy level, there has been weak coordination and networking of MoE and the universities to implement Bologna with coherent and consistent national approach. The lack of a separate unit or department for EHEA and Bologna issues is indicated as one of the reasons for weak performance. In the discussions, the BC has indicated the need of support by the project to continue the coordination, networking and communication on EHEA and Bologna. The need of raising public awareness communicating the benefits of EHEA and Bologna has been highlighted in the discussions on needs analysis.

Recommendations for MoE:

A Communication Strategy Draft communication strategy with objectives, target groups, key messages, communication channels, timescale, evaluation will support the MoE in coordination and networking with the universities and stakeholders to implement Bologna with coherent and consistent national approach. It was agreed in the meeting that in the framework of the Component 2 and Activity 2.7, a coherent and consistent Communication Strategy will be developed to enhance the coordination, networking and communication of MoE with universities and stakeholders.

**5.2. Defining key steps and actions for developing a Communication Strategy on EHEA and Bologna**

Progress Review:

The Workshop at MoE on 9.3.2016 convened the partners and stakeholders to develop a draft Communication Strategy. The purpose with the presentation was to train the key steps in developing a communication strategy, including the objectives, target groups, key messages, communication channels, timescale and evaluation. The case study of Bologna communication by MoE and CIMO in Finland served as best practice models in the workshop. The workshop applied the participative approach by involving the participants into the development of the Communication Strategy regarding key messages and different target audiences (worksheet). There was a good understanding of the needs of different target groups regarding EHEA and Bologna related issues. The ideas of the participants were presented and discussed. The expert analysed and summarised the input of the participants and integrated into the draft Communication Strategy.

Recommendations for MoE:

The participants of the meetings and workshop are an important ‘team’ and network to build up a sustainable Communication Strategy and ownership of EHEA and Bologna in Azerbaijan, including MoE, public and private universities and stakeholders. The internal cooperation with the PR department is a valuable support in the implementation of the strategy. The language needs must be decided regarding the communication.

**5.3. Drafting the Communication Strategy**

Progress Review:

The draft Communication Strategy with objectives, target groups, key messages, communication channels, timescale and evaluation were discussed in the meeting at MoE on 10.3.2016. The strategy serves as a basis for future development and elaboration at MoE, universities and stakeholders. The project needs to further discuss and decide who will lead the University Network of EHEA and Bologna. The MoE needs further support in facilitating the universities’ communication with the stakeholders as well as in communication with other line Ministries on Bologna (Learning Outcomes). It was agreed that the written comments by e-mail from the MoE and partners will be integrated into the next versions of the draft Communication Strategy.

Recommendations for MoE and the Project:

It is recommended to share the results of the project also to the universities in terms of experts’ recommendations, e.g. in Component 3. The Project’s website can publish some of the Project related documents.

The results of the mission in terms of the Draft Communication Strategy, the Workshop Presentation and Worksheet and the lists of Participants are annexed to this report.

**6. Unexpected Results**

The STEs did not recognize any unexpected results.

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

No issues were left open regarding the tasks of the mission.

**8. Recommendations for Future Missions**

The next mission should decide on the institutions and people responsible for the implementation of the Communication Strategy (who does what). The communication strategy needs to be further developed with an action plan for the implementation, including the timetable and evaluation measures. Overall, the Communication Strategy needs to be finalized according to the Project’s requirements.

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

None.

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**(Date and place) (Signature of Expert)**

Baku, 11.3.2016 Dr. Eila Heikkilä