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:** Ms Liia Lauri

**Dates of the Mission:** 13-17 June 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** |
| **13.06.2016** | **MoE staff**  RTA CP Tofig Ahmadov  CL2 Vusala Gurbanova  Yashar Omarov  Elchin Sardarov PR unit  İsfəndiyar Əmrahov PR unit  **Erasmus+ and EHEA experts** (Aynur Bashirova, Elchin Yusifzadeh, Elmira Ismayilova, Nigar Abbaszade, Sevil Imanova, Ruslan Mammadov, Parvis Bagirov) | Mission Programme Presentations  Draft Communication Strategy  EHEA webpage |
| **14.06.2016** | **MoE staff:**  RTA CP Tofig Ahmadov  CL2 Vusala Gurbanova.  Elchin Sardarov PR unit  İsfəndiyar Əmrahov PR unit  Yashar Omarov  **Erasmus+ and EHEA expert group** | Discussion on the communication of EHEA issues by stakeholder group and ideas to improve the Draft Communication Strategy |
| **15.06.2016** | Preparation of the workshop and the final draft of the Communication Strategy at the hotel (national holiday at SAzerbaijan) | Preparation of the work-sheets and final strategy document |
| **16.06.2016** | **MoE staff:**  RTA CP Tofig Ahmadov  CL2 Vusala Gurbanova.  Elchin Sardarov PR unit  İsfəndiyar Əmrahov PR unit  Yashar Omarov  **Erasmus+ and EHEA expert group** | Completion of the Communication Straegy, feedback from MoE and EHEA expert group |
| **17.06.2016** | Meeting with **Accreditation and Nostrification Organization**  **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:

Although Azerbaijan signed Bologna agreement already in 2005, there is weak awareness of benefits of EHEA related issues among wider audience in the country. The knowledge on the recent developments of higher education system in Azerbaijan remains vague. The communication and networking concerning EHEA issues is rather fragmented among different departments in the MoE and various stakeholders. The people involved in the MoE and in the universities are very committed but the activities related to EHEA communication require better coordination and networking in order not to overburden people involved in implementing it.

Recommendations for MoE:

The Communication Strategy with objectives, target groups, key messages, communication channels, and evaluation will support the MoE in coordination and networking with the universities and stakeholders to implement EHEA 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 based on the Draft Communication Strategy developed during Mission 1 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 14.06 discussed the framework of Draft Communication Strategy on a stakeholder`s perspective defining and prioritizing appropriate communication channels, tools and activities. The possibilities to evaluate impact of communication concerning EHEA activities were also analysed.The workshop applied the participative approach by involving the participants into the development of the Communication Strategy. 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 Communication Strategy.

Recommendations for MoE:

Following recommendations are made in the Communication Strategy to tackle the current problems of communication and networking:

* The level of priority for EHEA issues in the MoE should be raised in order to better communicate to the management of HEIs and make the developments in EHEA also the priority for HEIs.
* The mandate of existing group of Higher Education Reform experts should be clarified. The group could be the bases for coordination of regular information sharing on EHEA related activities and projects among larger group of stakeholders including HEIs, student organizations, educational NGOs and employers representatives.
* The coordination of organization of regular trainings that is provided concerning EHEA should be developed. People participating in the trainings could be expected to be valuable resource to share knowledge and experience in their “home” organizations.
* Better coordination of communication-related activities concerning EHEA developments in Azerbaijan inside the MoE is advised. It is recommended to collaborate closely with the MoE PR and Information Department to enhance the communication.

**5.3. Finalizing the Communication Strategy**

Progress Review:

The draft Communication Strategy served as the bases to workshops on 14.06 and 16.06 at MoE. The participants of the workshop formulated and prioritized concrete means to reach particular stakeholder group as well as the possibilities to measure the effectiveness of communication concerning EHEA. On the workshop on 16.06 the participants gave feedback to the Communication Strategy and agreed on the recommendations made.

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 EHEA website can publish some of the Project related documents.

The results of the mission in terms of the Communication Strategy with annexes about Stakeholders groups and Evaluation tools as well as the Workshop Presentations 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 future missions concerning Component: 2 Coordination and Networking should be informed about the objectives and activities of the Communication Strategy.

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

None

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

Baku, 17.6.2016 Liia Lauri