
Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan

TWINNING PROJECT FICHE

1. Basic Information

1.1. Programme: ENI-Annual Action Programme 2014 for the Republic of Azerbaijan
ENI/2014/33774

1.2. Twinning Number: AZ/14/ENI/OT/01/17 (AZ/49)

1.3. Title: Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan

1.4. Sector: Education

1.5. Beneficiary Country: Republic of Azerbaijan

2. Objectives

2.1. Overall Objective(s)

To further develop Azerbaijan's higher education system through aligning it with a competence-based education approach.

2.2. Project purpose

Increase the institutional capacities of the Ministry of Education, higher education institutions and the Accreditation and Nostrification Office for the continued introduction of the principles, mechanisms, tools and policies of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and to ensure their consistent implementation and application supporting the shift towards a student-centred system and learning outcomes approach.

2.3. Contribution to National Development Plan/ Cooperation agreement / Association Agreement / Action Plan

EU-Azerbaijan agenda

After its enlargement in May 2004, the EU faced a new geopolitical situation and adopted the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which is a new framework for the relations with its neighbours. The ENP aims to go beyond the existing Partnership and Co-operation Agreements to offer neighbouring countries the prospect of an increasingly closer relationship with the EU with the overall goal of fostering the political and economic reform processes, promoting closer economic integration as well as legal and technical approximation and sustainable development.

The central element of the ENP is a bilateral Action Plan (AP) which clearly sets out policy targets and benchmarks through which progress with an individual neighbouring country can be assessed over several years. AP defines a considerable number of priority areas.

With regard to Education, the EU-Azerbaijan ENP Action Plan sets out a priority to be pursued (**Priority N°4 of the AP**) further reform efforts in the field of education to promote human resources development.

In particular, in **article 4.7.1 – Education, training and youth** support is foreseen for the reform and modernisation of the education and training systems within the framework of Azerbaijan’s reform programme, including

- Further reform efforts in the field of education to promote human resources development;
- Economic and social reform: Continue to improve the quality of the educational system and target it to the needs of the economy, with a particular focus on developing an entrepreneurial spirit;
- Improve the accreditation system, and management in higher education institutions;
- Reform higher education sector in line with the principles of the “Bologna process” and strengthen local capacity for policy development and implementation;
- Enhance the quality and capacity of institutions and organisations involved in developing and implementing the quality assurance in the field of education and training;
- Strengthen the adaptation of higher and vocational education to demands of the labour market and the economy by inter alia increasing the involvement of social partners and stakeholders from civil society;

As also indicated in the EU-Azerbaijan ENP Action Plan, co-operation tools, like Twinning, TAIEX and SIGMA play an essential role in the achievement of the Action Plan priorities. In particular, the Twinning instrument, which provides for direct co-operation between EU and Azerbaijani public bodies to support institution building activities, has proved to be particularly efficient in policy areas where the expertise required by the beneficiary country exists mainly in the public sector.

Governmental policy and strategy

Legislation and strategic documents related to the project

Azerbaijan’s education sector is in a state of transition. Important national strategies recognise modernisation of the education system and human capital development as key priorities for the imminent future: The national development concept Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the future (2012) and the State Strategy on Development of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan (2013).

With reference to the higher education reform, the Concept 2020 includes the following main programmatic objectives: Modern management, increased independence for education institutions, Universities developing into centres of education, research and innovation; the expansion of international relations of Azerbaijani institutions through further adherence to the EHEA/Bologna Process.

The State Strategy has five main strategic directions, including:

First strategic direction is aimed at creating **person-oriented education** content based on competences and covers an important target such as development of curricula for all levels of education, including pre-school, general, vocational, college and higher education.

Second strategic direction involves the modernisation of **human resources in education sector**. This direction serves for forming competence education provider who applies modern training methods, and ensures quality acquisition of the content of education. It reflects improvement of professionalism of education providers, establishment of new system of student assessment, and creation of inclusive education methodology, which will reveal talents of students and support those who need special care.

Third strategic direction is the establishment of **management mechanisms**, which will be transparent, responsible for results and effective. This direction covers targets such as modernisation of regulation and management in education system in line with international experience; establishment of results-oriented and transparent management model at education institutions; and creation of new information and reporting systems for education quality assurance and management.

The project is directly relevant to these strategies and is also a key contribution to the being supportive to Azerbaijan in further engaging in and implementing reforms in line with the European Higher Education Area, i.e. the “Bologna Process”.

Existing legislation

The main law adopted to regulate the sector is:

- June 19th 2009 - Education Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan approved by the Law No. 833-IIIQ of the Azerbaijan Republic (with number of amendments)

Education Law prescribes the basic principles of public policy in ensuring the citizens’ educational rights as established by the Constitution of the Azerbaijan Republic and the general conditions for regulating the educational activities. It sets the foundation for the adoption of corresponding laws and other legislative acts at various levels of education. Secular and continuous in nature, education in the Azerbaijan Republic is a strategically important area of priority, which reflects the interests of citizens, society, and the state. Education in the Azerbaijan Republic is based on the International Conventions on Human Rights, as well as international treaties that the Azerbaijan Republic is party to. It develops through integration into the global education system whilst prioritizing national, moral, and universal values in education system.

3. Description

3.1. Background and justification

Azerbaijan undertook some reforms in its higher education system shortly after independence. These reforms got a new impetus when Azerbaijan joined the Bologna Process in 2005. Azerbaijan has since then been establishing and implementing reforms to introduce tools and mechanisms associated with the Bologna Process. Given the complex nature of the system governance for higher education in Azerbaijan, progress has been substantial. Yet, major areas require further development in order to align with European practices. These requirements have been identified and acknowledged by all stakeholders who are willing to drive the reforms further in order to contribute to the social and economic development of the country. This is also evidenced in the policy directives, such as the state strategy, which recognise modernisation of the education system and human capital development as crucial for the country’s success.

Azerbaijan has introduced a **credit system** in line with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). Yet, it is not fully and consistently applied throughout all higher education institutions in line with the principles of the ECTS Users Guide, in particular with regard to taking into account all learning activities of students (workload) and the linkage to learning outcomes.

A **National Qualifications Framework (AzQF)** has been developed, but is still awaiting government approval. This is partially due to the fact that there is not yet a system that would support the AzQF becoming fully operational. The notion of learning outcomes and a general competence-based education approach in learning, teaching and assessment is not widely practiced or understood. A traditional approach prevails, which focuses on content delivery rather than on skills and competence acquisition.

This approach results in problems for the recognition of degrees and parts of studies. The recognition does not follow the main principles of granting it unless there is a substantial change and the burden of proof to showcase education as being equivalent largely falls on the learner. It remains the norm in the country that a decisive factor for granting recognition is the title of a course.

There is an acknowledged general mismatch between skills of graduates (from all education sectors) and the needs and requirements of the labour market. This is a challenge which is further intensified in a time when the economic growth rates have slowed down significantly. It also remains difficult to move between education sectors, for example, entrance to higher education from the vocational sector. This, again, is mainly due to the fact that more emphasis is placed on traditional and formal requirements and not on an assessment of the skills and competences of an individual. A system of recognition of prior learning does not exist.

The forecasting and needs analysis about labour market requirements falls in the competence of the Ministry of Labour and Social protection of Population, which is supposed to inform the Ministry of Education accordingly in order to take into account in educational planning.

State education standards are established and reviewed periodically under the auspices of the Ministry of Education with input by higher education institutions and subsequently adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers. These standards, however, also rather prescribe the content of curricula, contact hours and subjects. The standards, therefore, do not yet embrace a notion of competence-based education.

Governance in higher education comprises a heavy reliance on many committee structures. These structures do not allow for lean management and often place obstacles for effective and efficient decision-making. The governance becomes more challenging in a time where more autonomy is granted to higher education institutions, which to some extent leads to them not using the full potential of the autonomy they have. Students are gradually becoming more involved in the governance of higher education institutions but this is still not widespread practice.

In the area of **quality assurance**, there is slow growing understanding of its importance, both in terms of external and internal quality assurance. The current 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” (1 September 2015 - 1 September 2017) is contributing to the understanding significantly. A new organisation, which enjoys some degree of autonomy from the Ministry of Education and devolved responsibilities, has been established in charge of recognition and external quality assurance, the **Accreditation and Nostrification Office** (ANO). Yet, the ANO is still formally under the auspices of the MoE and does not have final authority over accreditation decisions, which remains with the Accreditation Council of the MoE. Within the abovementioned twinning project, standards for accreditation have been developed that are in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). However, the standards do not yet fully cover the entirety of the ESG. Whilst provisions have been included to strengthen the involvement of students in governance and institutional planning and decision-making, there are currently no references to the more challenging aspects of student-centeredness mentioned in the ESG, i.e. in terms of curricula design in a student-centred manner. However, the development of the standards can be considered as a major step forward, which is accompanied by trainings of the first groups of potential reviewers.

3.2. Linked activities

While several donors are active in Azerbaijan’s education sector, very few have focused priorities on the implementation of the Bologna process in Higher Education. In higher education, the EU supports a wide range of project and initiatives through its previous Tempus and now Erasmus+ programme, supporting the modernisation of higher education. As part of the activities within the Erasmus+ scheme, a network of “Higher Education Reform Experts” (HERE) has been established in Azerbaijan, comprising of individuals with good knowledge of the Bologna Process, including all aspects of relevance to this project. Whilst it will be important to liaise with different Erasmus+ projects currently being carried out and to build on previous activities within the framework of the Tempus programme, this Twinning Project should cooperate closely with the HERE Experts to catalyse its activities.

Whilst no specific projects have taken place that focus on student-centred approaches and competence-based education, this Twinning Project will closely align with any projects that are concerned with quality assurance, governance and curricula reform. In particular, it will build on the achievements of the 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 (EHEA)” (AZ/14/ENP/OT/31), which is expected to end just before this project would start. It is planned that the Twinning Project will develop recommendations for adapting legislation relevant to Quality Assurance and the Higher Education sections of the Azerbaijan Qualification Framework (AzQF) to adhere to the EHEA; enhance the coordination and networking capacity of the Ministry of Education and relevant stakeholders based on good practice examples in the EHEA; develop the AzQF sections relevant for higher education are in line with the EHEA QF in cooperation with HEIs; develop Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in HE in Azerbaijan in line with the European Standards and Guidelines for QA and test them with three HE institutions. Hence, it is not possible to determine precisely what outputs can become of particular use, but this project will ensure that no duplication of efforts will be undertaken and that

especially the Accreditation and Nostrification Office will benefit from a smooth transition, further increasing capacity where required.

The Twinning Project takes into account all achievements made to date in relation to the AzQF and will ensure complementarity to the goals pursued by this initiative. The project will provide a substantial base for the operationalization of the AzQF, as that depends on adapting a competence-based approach at systems and institutional level to ensure that level descriptors are directly translated into tangible skills and competences of learners.

3.3. Results

The following results are expected to be achieved by the end of the project:

Result 1: Selected National Education Standards are re-defined to include a competence-based focus

Description

Current National Education Standards for key professions, based on social and economic relevance, are reviewed in a consultative process, including all major stakeholders, such as institutions, students, labour market, and revised based on recommendations arising from the review process.

A methodology for redefining these to reflect a competence-based approach in terms of learning outcomes is developed, reflecting good international practice. Labour-market intelligence is used to inform the National Education Standards as well as to develop classifications of specialties.

Key output indicator(s)

- i. A concept and methodology for transforming education standards to be competence-based;
- ii. National classifications for specialties in three sectors;
- iii. National education standards for disciplines in three sectors are amended;
- iv. A methodology for transforming labour market intelligence into discipline specific education requirements
- v. Visibility materials and activities that inform about the benefits of competence-based education.
- vi. Study visit on best practise for competence based education system for a minimum of 5 persons

Result 2: Pilot Study programme curricula in priority sectors are improved to be more student-centred

Description

Based on the identification of three priority sectors under Result 1 and taking into account the outcomes of previous Tempus projects, four pilot higher education institutions are identified and a minimum of three curricula of each of their study programmes that fall in the priority sectors are reviewed and amended to incorporate learning outcomes. This is done through the development of a systematic approach for student-centred curricula reform that can in the future be used for a wide range of study programmes. Capacity building activities to develop competence-based approaches for teaching, learning and assessment are organised. This activity will be undertaken in close partnership between the MoE, the higher education institutions, student representatives and representatives of the labour market. If implemented successfully, this will also change the attitude towards recognition and ensure that recognition processes are focused on learning outcomes, rather than titles of courses.

Key output indicator(s)

- i. A concept of student-based study programme curricula;
- ii. A methodological compendium on identifying and defining learning outcomes;
- iii. Trainings on student-centred approaches for teaching, learning and assessment;
- iv. Minimum of 12 study programme curricula revised to incorporate learning outcomes;

Result 3: The quality assurance system is further developed to reflect the student-centeredness of study programmes

Description

Based on the achievements of the previous 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”, the system of quality assurance is further refined. In particular, standards for programme accreditation will be developed to fully adhere to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area with reference to the requirements on student-centred approaches.

Key output indicator(s)

- i. Standards for programme accreditation;
- ii. A handbook on self-evaluation processes of HEI;
- iii. A training workshop for higher education institutions on self-evaluation;
- iv. A minimum of 12 self-evaluation reports for the pilot study programmes;
- v. A minimum of 4 mock accreditations of study programmes;
- vi. Establishment of a pool of trained reviewers, including student representatives and representatives of the labour market;
- vii. Study visit to an EU Member State on best practise for external quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area for a minimum of 5 persons
- viii. Study visit to an EU member state on best practise for student-centred approaches for study programmes for a minimum of 7 persons

Result 4. Recommendations on amendments of legislative and regulative framework developed

Description

Current National Education Standards for selected professions are reviewed and revised based on recommendation. **Current legislative basis will be evaluated. Proposal for changes in regulatory-legislative basis according to the principles of the project will be prepared.**

Key output indicator(s)

- i. A synopsis report on the legal and regulatory system for education standards, credit system, recognition and quality assurance of study programmes;
- ii. **A proposal on the amendment of regulations for recognition at institutional level to allow for recognition of parts of studies based on learning outcomes and in line with European best practices;**
- iii. A proposal for the amendment of legal regulations to ensure that the credit system is based on the concept of learning outcomes and student workload;
- iv. A proposal for the amendment of the legal and regulatory framework for quality assurance.
- v. A proposal to enhance the governance system of three pilot universities.

3.4. Activities

In order to meet the specific mandatory results of this project, the partners may agree on alternative or complementary activities and outputs to those identified in this section.

0. Events

0.1. Project kick-off event

A meeting aiming at presenting the Twinning project to the main stakeholders shall take place at the beginning of the project implementation.

0.2. Quarterly meetings of the Steering Committee

The SC meetings to be chaired by the MS PL and BC PL shall be organised every three months to review main achievements all activities carried out during the previous quarter the project achievements discussed and plan of activities for the next quarter discussed.

0.3. Project closing event

A conference shall present the main results achieved during the project implementation and shall be organised before the conclusion of the project.

Activities related to Result 1:

Activity 1.1 Develop concept and methodology for competence-based education standards;

Activity 1.2 Identify three priority sectors for the development of competence-based education standards on the basis of economic and social relevance, which includes an assessment of the contribution of sectors to the GDP and an analysis of the employability of graduates;

Activity 1.3. Assess and review the current system for using labour market intelligence and skills forecasting within the Ministry of Education.

Note: The review will in particular focus on how the information received from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population is used to inform educational planning in terms of skills and requirements of graduates;

Activity 1.4 Develop methodology to transform labour market intelligence into discipline specific education requirements;

Activity 1.5 Amend education standards for disciplines in the priority areas (incl. legislative arrangements) with a view to describing achievements based on competences and skills, taking into account the AzQF;

Activity 1.6 Devise methodology for developing national classifications of specialities in higher education;

Activity 1.7 Develop national classifications of specialities in the priority sectors;

Activity 1.8 Undertake an awareness raising activity on the benefits of competence-based education in order to support the implementation of student-centred curricula as part of the educational reforms.

Activity 1.9 Organize study visit on best practise for competence based education system.

Activities related to Result 2:

Activity 2.1 Develop and discuss concept of student-centred study programme curricula, which includes the basic parameters for the development and review of study programmes at institutional level;

Activity 2.2 Develop a methodological compendium on how learning outcomes are identified and designed, which will guide people responsible for development and review of curricula in implementing a student-centred approach;

Activity 2.3 Hold training workshops on innovative teaching, learning and assessment methods, including the allocation of credits based on learning outcomes and student workload in order to ensure that student-centred curricula are also implemented in practice;

Activity 2.4 Review and amend curricula in the priority areas in pilot universities to incorporate learning outcomes and inform and raise awareness about these achievements;

Activities related to Result 3:

Activity 3.1 Develop standards for programme accreditation in line with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area;

Activity 3.2 Undertake capacity building activities for the staff of the Accreditation and Nostrification Office to enhance the staff's role in supporting accreditation procedures;

Activity 3.3 Create handbook on methodologies and requirements for self-evaluations of higher education institutions;

Activity 3.4 Hold a training workshop for higher education institutions on how to conduct self-evaluation processes;

Activity 3.5 Pilot universities undertake a self-evaluation of a study programme in a priority area.

Note: This self-evaluation will also reflect on the internal quality assurance system, in particular the system for the review and development of study programmes;

Activity 3.6 Conduct training sessions for external reviewers.

Note: The trainings will be designed so that they will provide a hands-on approach for academics, students and labour market representatives to conduct accreditation procedures;

Activity 3.7 Undertake a mock accreditation at each pilot university for a study programme in a priority area;

Activity 3.8 Organize study visit on best practise for external quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area for a minimum of 5 persons

Activity 3.9 Organize study visit to the EU member state on best practise for student-centredness of study programmes for a minimum of 7 persons

Activities related to Result 4:

Activity 4.1 Assess the current legal and regulatory framework on education standards, quality assurance, credits and recognition of parts of studies;

Activity 4.2 Assess the recognition practices in the pilot universities and develop proposals for changes to reflect recognition on the basis of learning outcomes and in line with European best practices;

Activity 4.3 Review the legal and regulatory framework for recognition and, if required, amend in accordance with European best practices;

Activity 4.4 Amend the legal provisions on the credit system to reflect that credits are based on learning outcomes and student workload;

Activity 4.5 Assess the university governance system in three pilot universities with a view to ensuring the best approaches that support the development and review of student-centred curricula, in particular through the participation of students in university governance, and develop proposals to enhance the system;

Activity 4.6 Develop proposal for the amendment of the legal and regulatory framework for quality assurance in line with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area to ensure the application of the notion of student-centeredness.

Note: The various activities, benchmarks, schedules and means of verification may be subject to revision during the preparation of the contract between the Twinning Institutions.

3.5. Means/ Input from the MS Partner Administration

The MS partner administration is expected to provide the Project Leader (MS PL) and the Resident Twinning Advisor (RTA) as well as a team of short-term experts (STEs) to support them in the implementation of the project activities.

The MS PL should be a high-ranking civil servant or equivalent staff commensurate with the requirement for an operational dialogue and backing at political level.

The MS PL is the key link between the partners, acting at an overall operational and strategic level. The MS PL is complemented by the RTA. The RTA is seconded and resides in the BC. He/she co-operates day-to-day with the BC partners and coordinates the input of the STEs. STEs will work in Azerbaijan on the basis of specific Terms of Reference (ToR) which will be designed by the RTA for each mission together with the Beneficiary.

It has proved to be an advantage for the project implementation in previous Twinning projects when the MS has designated a senior STE or the PL to be responsible for each mandatory result/component of the project (i.e. a component leader) and to liaise with the respective component leader to be nominated by the Beneficiary Administration (BA). The BA will nominate counterparts to these key roles (see section 6.2).

The required MS experts must either be civil/public servants of the relevant MS administration or be permanent staff of authorized mandated bodies. All the experts must comply with the requirements set in the Twinning Manual.

The nature of the work for technical assistance abroad requests strong initiative, good analytical, interpersonal and language skills. All experts shall possess these qualities.

The RTA should be assisted by a full time project assistant for providing translation and interpretation services on a daily basis and for performing general project duties. The cost of the RTA assistant will be funded by the project. The recruitment procedure may be launched before the signature of the Twinning Contract but the RTA assistant may not start to work and corresponding costs will not be eligible before the start of the Twinning contract.

A full-time interpreter/translator may also be recruited in Azerbaijan and funded by the project. (S)he will perform most of the required interpretation/translation services. Whenever required and needed on a clear justified request, e.g. for simultaneous interpretation during seminars and workshops, additional interpretation may be procured and funded by the project. (S)he will provide day-to-day interpretation/translation to the RTA and project experts during meetings.

The RTA is supported in his or her MS administration for logistics, accounting and administrative tasks.

3.5.1. Profile and tasks of the Project Leader (PL)

The Project Leader (PL) from the MS should be a high-ranking civil servant or an equivalent senior manager in a MS national body with sufficient work experience in the field relevant to the project. The PL will supervise and coordinate the overall thrust of the project.

The PL will supervise and coordinate the overall thrust of the project. (S)he will direct the project and will ensure that all the required strategic support and operational input from management and staff of the MS side are available. Together with the Beneficiary PL, (s)he will organize the Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings. **The MS PL would continue to work in her/his MS administration but should devote a minimum of three working days per month to the project in Azerbaijan with an on-site visit to Azerbaijan at least every three months to participate in the project SC meetings.**

Profile:

Qualification and skills:

- At least a Master degree or a Bachelor’s Degree and at least 10 years’ of professional experience;
- Good command of written and spoken English;
- Working knowledge of Russian/Turkish/Azerbaijani would be an asset
- Specific knowledge of best practices in the area of higher education.

General professional experience:

- At least 10 years of professional experience in Higher Education sector
- Specific experience in the management of the implementation of international projects (including EU-funded projects) would be an asset.

Specific professional experience:

- 5 years’ work experience in or with a public administration of an EU Member State
- Experience in the implementation of national higher education reforms;
- Broad knowledge of the European Higher Education Area and its underlying principles, policies and tools;
- Experience in the field of project management, institutional issues and organization in the field of higher education

Tasks:

- Liaising with the BC Administration at the political level;
- Overall co-ordination, guidance and monitoring;
- Ensuring the direction of the project work;
- Ensuring the achievement on time of the mandatory project results;
- Ensuring the availability on time of Short Term Experts and MS resources;
- Possible leader of one of components;

- Executing other administrative tasks.

3.5.2. Profile and tasks of the Resident Twinning Advisor (RTA)

The Resident Twinning Advisor (RTA) seconded from the EU MS should have at **least five years' work experience as a staff member in a MS** relevant state body at central level, working directly in the field of higher education reforms. A network of functional contacts with related EU and Member State institutions will be an asset. The RTA will be in charge of the day-to-day implementation of the Twinning project in Azerbaijan. (S)he should co-ordinate the project, including the implementation of activities according to a predetermined work plan and liaise with the RTA counterpart in Azerbaijan. **(S)he will reside for the entire implementation period of 24 consecutive months in Azerbaijan and work full-time for the project.** The RTA is expected to be actively involved in the implementation of all activities.

Profile:

Qualification and skills:

- At least a Master degree or a Bachelor's Degree and at least 7 years' of professional experience;
- Broad knowledge of the principles, policies and tools of the European Higher Education Area;
- Good command of written and spoken English;
- Working knowledge of Russian/Turkish/Azerbaijani would be an asset.

General Professional Experience:

- At least 7 years of academic and managerial experience with or in higher education;
- Experience in quality assurance and curriculum reform;
- At least 2 project experience in managing teams of experts;
- Experience in developing, co-coordinating and conducting training programmes.

Specific Professional experience:

- Familiarity with student-centred learning approaches, including learning outcomes and credit systems;
- Knowledge of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area;
- Familiarity with qualifications systems.
- Familiarity with the use of labour market intelligence would be an asset

Tasks:

- Day-to-day coordination and implementation of the project activities in Azerbaijan;
- Preparation of Terms of Reference (ToR) for STEs' missions;
- Managing inputs of short-term experts;
- Provision of own expertise;
- Ensuring the coherence and the continuity of the inputs and the on-going progress;
- Assessing continuously the Twinning-project at all stages and comparing actual progress with the specified benchmarks and time-frame;
- Arranging study tours to MS countries to the staff of MoE and other involved administrators
- Guaranteeing smooth implementation of the different activities;
- Liaising with the BC Project Leader and RTA Counterpart on regular basis;
- Liaising with the EU Delegation and the PAO of Azerbaijan;
- Preparing interim, quarterly and final reports;
- Reporting to the MS-Project Leader.

3.5.3. Profile and tasks of the short-term experts (STEs)

All required EU institutional and technical expertise will be covered by the short-term experts. The short-term experts should have good experience in the relevant subject matter. They should have worked in the required fields for not less than 3 years and have the necessary professional skills to implement the above mentioned activities.

There should be a pool of short-term experts to ensure the smooth implementation of the project. The STEs should be identified by the Project Leader/RTA and will be agreed with the Beneficiary Administration during the negotiation phase of the Twinning contract.

General requirements on STEs are the following:

- Higher education degree in a relevant discipline or at least 3 years of equivalent work experience;
- Good interpersonal and communication skills;
- Computer literacy;
- Good command of written and spoken English;
- Working knowledge of Russian/Turkish/Azerbaijani would be an asset

Indicative fields of experience for the key short-term experts:

- Labour market intelligence;
- Quality Assurance;
- ECTS and credit systems;
- Learning outcomes;
- National classification systems for qualifications;
- Recognition;
- Others (to be defined in the proposal and/or during the contracting phase).

STEs' main tasks:

- Provision of their specific expertise;
- Know-how transfer according to the ToR prepared by the RTA and BA;
- Reporting on their missions;

In addition to their missions in Azerbaijan, the STEs are expected to contribute actively in developing programmes for the study visits proposed in the project.

3.6. Reporting and monitoring

The MS Project Leader must draw up Interim Quarterly Reports and a Final Report. (S)he will be responsible for submitting them to the relevant authority.

For templates and requirements to reporting and monitoring, see the Twinning Manual.

Project Steering Committee (PSC)

The PSC will be convened at least every three months. The PSC will be chaired jointly by the MS PL and the BC PL. The PSC composition will be defined in the Working Plan according to requirements set in the Common Twinning Manual. Representatives from the PAO of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the EU Delegation, the RTA counterpart and BC PL as well as the RTA, MS PL and BC component leaders will participate in the PSC meetings. Observers from other institutions may be involved from time to time in cross-cutting issues. Representatives from other administrations or short term experts, may also be invited if necessary. The PSC will follow the achievement of the project results and the timely implementation of the project activities in order to identify and rectify any problems that may arise in the course of the implementation of the project.

The secretarial support of the PSC will be provided by the RTA and RTA Assistant, who will prepare the agenda of the meetings, the documents to be discussed as well as the minutes of the meetings.

The working language of the Project implementation will be English. Translation and interpretation will be provided where necessary and where permitted in the provisions of the Twinning Manual.

4. Institutional Framework

Azerbaijan has a highly centralised governance system for Higher Education. The Cabinet of Ministers and the MoE govern the HE system. The Cabinet of Ministers decides the education strategy, supervises implementation of the Law on Education and the relevant legislative acts and documents, as well as defines the regulations for the establishment, restructuring and liquidation of higher education institutions. Moreover, the Cabinet of Ministers approves the list of qualifications, education regulations and rules. It also makes certain proposals on the development of the budget and funds for the development of education and defines state standards for education funding, as well as regulations for scholarship and salary payment. Financing is under the remit of the President's Office. The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan also appoints university rectors. The Ministry of Labour is in charge of needs analysis and skills forecasting.

The MoE is the central counterpart and beneficiary of the project, where the RTA will be based. The MoE is the central executive body governing the education system of the country. It participates in the development and implementation of the state policy for education. The MoE is competent to develop standards for higher education (to be approved by the Cabinet of Ministers) and verify their implementation for all universities. The Twinning Project will extend assistance to a wider range of institutions related to the MoE in the implementation of the Bologna process, in particular the Accreditation and Nostrification Office and individual higher education institutions, where pilots will be implemented.

5. Budget

The maximum budget allocated to this Twinning project is € 1,200,000

The Azerbaijani beneficiary administration will provide the RTA and other MS experts with office space in Baku, equipment (computers, printer, telephone and internet access) and other provisions as stated in the Common Twinning Manual.

6. Implementation Arrangements

6.1. Implementing Agency responsible for tendering, contracting and accounting (EUD)

The Implementing Agency responsible for tendering, contracting and accounting is the European Commission represented by **the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Azerbaijan**. Its contact details are:

Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Azerbaijan

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6.2. Main counterpart in the BC

The Programme Administration Office in Azerbaijan (PAO) will support the twinning project implementation process. The person in charge of this project at the PAO is:

Mr. Ruslan RUSTAMLI, Director of PAO

Head of the Department on Cooperation with International organizations

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Beneficiary Administration – Ministry of Education

The Beneficiary Administration has nominated its main counterparts to the MS PL and RTA:

Project Leader –

Name Yagub Piriyeu
Function Deputy Head of Apparatus, Head of Science, Higher and Secondary Specialised Education Department
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RTA counterpart –

Name Sulhaddin Gozalov
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During the contracting phase of the project, the beneficiary administration will nominate leaders for each of the results/components.

6.3. Contracts

One Twinning contract is foreseen for this project.

7. Implementation Schedule

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| 7.1. | Launching of the call for proposals: | May 2017 |
| 7.2. | Start of project activities: | January 2018 |
| 7.3. | Work plan duration: | 24 months |

Sustainability

The Twinning project will have to seek sustainable solutions and approaches based on the adoption of best practices and thus prepare the grounds for Azerbaijani implementation of best European practices in the area of competence-based education.

Sustainability is highly dependent of the commitment of the Beneficiary Administration. Therefore the nomination of a responsible person within the Beneficiary Administration, for each component of the Twinning project, is highly recommended. This person will coordinate and promote the activities during the implementation of the project. The “**component leader**” will then ensure, for her/his component that the actions and work are in line with the results of the project after its completion. The Twinning Project is likely to increase the current workload of the MoE. An appropriate number of staff should be assigned by the Ministry to support the project and the RTA.

Besides, in the final report, twinning partners will include specific recommendations and strategies for consolidating and safeguarding the achievement of mandatory results in the beneficiary administration.

To ensure sustainability, Beneficiary Administrations should be provided with the materials in two languages, English and Azerbaijani. That means that a budget for the translation of Guidelines, Handbooks, Glossaries, Methodology Manuals, etc. developed within the project should be foreseen.

8. Crosscutting Issues

8.1. Equal opportunity

The proposed project will comply with EU equal opportunity policies. Equal treatment of women and men in project implementation at all levels will be one of the most important principles in the project management and implementation. The beneficiaries are already equal opportunity employers. In particular, great attention will be given to the equality principle in the training of personnel and the recruitment of the STEs. Of course, appropriate professional qualifications and experience will be the main decisive factors in personnel recruitment and evaluation but, subject to that, both women and men will have identical prospects.

8.2. Environment

The principle of implementation of this Twinning project is based on a paperless work environment. This means, in particular, minimizing paper use during project implementation by the maximum feasible use of e-mails and, if available, project website and/or project electronic database for co-operation between partners. Documents are automatically saved in electronic format.

9. Conditionality and Sequencing

There is no conditionality for the project as the BA has shown strong ownership in the development of this project.

List of the abbreviations

AP	Action Plan
AzQF	Azerbaijan Qualifications Framework
BA	Beneficiary Administration
BC	Beneficiary Country
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ENPI	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
EU	European Union
HERE	Higher Education Reform Experts
HR	Human Resources
MoE	Ministry of Education
MS	Member State
PAO	Programme Administration Office
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
PL	Project Leader
QA	Quality Assurance
RTA	Resident Twinning Adviser
SC	Steering Committee
SIGMA	Support for Improvement in Governance and Management initiative
STE	Short Term Expert

TAIEX Technical Assistance Information Exchange Office

ToR Terms of Reference

ANNEXE 1: Logical Framework Matrix*

<p>Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan</p>		<p>Programme name and number: Education Support Programme in Azerbaijan (ENPI/2014/38774)</p>	
<p>Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan</p>		<p>Contracting period expires: 28/12/2018</p>	<p>Disbursement period expires:</p>
<p>Total budget: 1,200,000 EUR</p>			
	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Sources of Verification	Assumptions
<p>Overall objective:</p>			
<p>To further develop Azerbaijan’s higher education system through aligning it with a competence-based education approach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive assessment of the progress made towards the implementation of the Bologna Process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EU ENP Progress Report; Bologna Process Implementation Report 	
<p>Project purpose:</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the institutional capacities of the Ministry of Education, higher education institutions and the Accreditation and Nostrification Office for the continued introduction of the principles, mechanisms, tools and policies of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and to ensure their consistent implementation and application supporting the shift towards a student-centred system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The improved capacity of the MoE provides concrete results in steering education reform through suitable processes and methodologies for streamlining competence-based education provision; The improved capacity of the Accreditation and Nostrification Office results in a compliance with the ESG. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EU ENP Progress Report; Decisions by the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan; ENQA evaluation report; Project Interim Reports; Project Final report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government maintains its political will to modernise its higher education system; The Accreditation and Nostrification Office applies for ENQA membership.
<p>Mandatory Results:</p>			
<p>1. Selected National Education Standards are re-defined to include a competence-based focus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A concept and methodology for transforming education standards to be competence-based is developed; National education standards for disciplines in three sectors are amended; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Interim Reports Project Final report; Proposal for National Classifications Visibility materials on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government maintains its political will to modernise its higher education system; The MoE and the Ministry of Labour cooperate effectively in relation to the provision of

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A methodology for transforming labour market intelligence into discipline specific education requirements is developed; • National classifications for specialities in three sectors are developed; • Visibility materials are developed that informs about the benefits of competence-based education; • A study visit of at least 5 MoE members is organised in an EU Member State on competence based education system. 	<p>competence-based education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports on the study visit with involvement of relevant MoE staff 	<p>data that informs about labour market needs and requirements;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MoE deploys adequate human resources.
2: Pilot Study programme curricula in priority sectors are improved to be more student-centred	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A concept of student-based study programme curricula is developed • A minimum of 12 study programme curricula are revised; • A methodological compendium on the use of learning outcomes is developed; • A training workshop on student-centred approaches for teaching, learning and assessment is organised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Interim Reports • Project Final report • Curricula of Study Programmes; • Compendium on learning outcomes; • Workshop report; • Programme regulations on recognition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government maintains its political will to modernise its higher education system; • The MoE and Higher Education Institutions remain committed to reforming curricula; • The MoE and the higher education institutions deploy adequate human resources.
3: The quality assurance system is further developed to reflect the student-centeredness of study programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards for programme accreditation are developed; • A handbook on self-evaluation processes of HEI is developed; • A training workshop for higher education institutions on self-evaluation is conducted; • A minimum of 12 self-evaluation reports for the pilot study programmes are compiled; • A minimum of 4 mock accreditations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Interim Reports • Project Final report • National Standards for Programme Accreditation; • Handbook on self-evaluation; • Workshop report; • Self-evaluation reports; • Mock accreditation reports; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government maintains its political will to modernise its higher education system; • The Accreditation and Nostrification Office and higher education institutions cooperate effectively; • The Accreditation and Nostrification Office and higher education institutions deploy adequate human

	<p>of study programmes are conducted;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pool of trained reviewers, including student representatives and representatives of the labour market is established; • A study visit of at least 5 MoE members is organised in an EU Member State on Quality Assurance in the EHEA; • A study visit of at least 7 MoE members is organised in an EU Member State on student-centeredness of study programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database of trained reviewers; • Reports on the study visits with involvement of relevant MoE staff. 	resources.
4: Recommendations on amendments of legislative and regulative framework developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A synopsis report on the legal and regulatory system for education standards, credit system, recognition and quality assurance of study programmes is compiled; • A proposal for the amendment of legal regulations is prepared to ensure that the credit system is based on the concept of learning outcomes and student workload; • Regulations for recognition at institutional level are amended in line with European best practices to allow for recognition of parts of studies based on learning outcomes; • A proposal for the amendment of the legal and regulatory framework for quality assurance is prepared; • A proposal to enhance the governance system of three pilot universities is developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Interim Reports • Project Final report; • Proposals of and decisions on revised laws, decrees & bylaws; • Proposals and decisions on the amendment of National Education Standards; • Proposal and decision on the amendment of the higher education law regarding the credit system; • Proposal for enhancement of the higher education institution governance system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government maintains its political will to modernise its higher education system; • The MoE and Higher Education Institutions remain committed to reforming curricula; • The MoE and the higher education institutions deploy adequate human resources; • The legal decision-making process will be undertaken in a timely manner.

	Means	Costs	
Events			
0.1. Kick-off meeting			
0.2. Quarterly meetings of the Steering Committee			
0.3. Final conference			
Activities to achieve result 1: Selected National Education Standards are re-defined to include a competence-based focus			
1.1. Develop concept and methodology for competence-based education standards.	RTA; STEs		
1.2. Identify three priority sectors for the development of competence-based education standards on the basis of economic and social relevance, which includes an assessment of the contribution of sectors to the GDP and an analysis of the employability of graduates.	RTA; STEs		
1.3 Assess and review the current system for using labour market intelligence and skills forecasting within the Ministry of Education.	RTA; STEs		
1.4 Develop methodology to transform labour market intelligence into discipline specific education requirements.	RTA; STEs		
1.5 Amend education standards for disciplines in the priority areas (incl. legislative arrangements) with a view to describing achievements based on competences and skills, taking into account the AzQF.	RTA; STEs		
1.6 Devise methodology for developing national classifications of specialities in higher education.	RTA; STEs		
1.7 Develop national classifications of specialities in the priority sectors.	RTA; STEs		
1.8 Undertake an awareness raising activity on the benefits of competence-based education in order to support the implementation of student-centred curricula as part of the educational reforms.	RTA; STEs		
1.9 Organize study visit on best practise for competence based education system.	RTA; STEs		

<i>Activities to achieve result 2: Pilot Study programme curricula in priority sectors are improved to be more student-centred</i>			
2.1 Develop and discuss concept of student-centred study programme curricula, which includes the basic parameters for the development and review of study programmes at institutional level.	RTA; STEs		
2.2 Develop a methodological compendium on how learning outcomes are identified and designed, which will guide people responsible for development and review of curricula in implementing a student-centred approach.	RTA; STEs		
2.3 Hold training workshops on innovative teaching, learning and assessment methods, including the allocation of credits based on learning outcomes and student workload in order to ensure that student-centred curricula are also implemented in practice.	RTA; STEs		
2.4 Review and amend curricula in the priority areas in pilot universities to incorporate learning outcomes and inform and raise awareness about these achievements.	RTA; STEs		
<i>Activities to achieve result 3: The quality assurance system is further developed to reflect the student-centredness of study programmes</i>			
3.1 Develop standards for programme accreditation in line with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.	RTA; STEs		
3.2 Undertake capacity building activities for the staff of the Accreditation and Nostrification Office to enhance the staff's role in supporting accreditation procedures.	RTA; STEs		
3.3 Create handbook on methodologies and requirements for self-evaluations of higher education institutions.	RTA; STEs		
3.4 Hold a training workshop for higher education institutions on how to conduct self-evaluation processes.	RTA; STEs		
3.5 Pilot universities undertake a self-evaluation of a study programme in a priority area.	RTA; STEs		
3.6 Conduct training sessions for external reviewers	RTA; STEs		

3.7 Undertake a mock accreditation at each pilot university for a study programme in a priority area.	RTA; STEs		
3.8 Organize study visit on best practise for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area for a minimum of 5 persons.	RTA; STEs		
3.9 Organise study visit to the EU member state on best practise for student-centeredness of study programmes for a minimum of 7 persons.	RTA; STEs		
<i>Activities to achieve result 4: Adopt legislative and regulative framework according the recommended changes</i>			
4.1 Assess the current legal and regulatory framework on education standards, quality assurance, credits and recognition of parts of studies.	RTA; STEs		
4.2 Assess the recognition practices in the pilot universities and develop proposals for changes to reflect recognition on the basis of learning outcomes in line with European best practices.	RTA; STEs		
4.3 Review the legal and regulatory framework for recognition and, if required, amend in line with European best practices.	RTA; STEs		
4.4 Amend the legal provisions on the credit system to reflect that credits are based on learning outcomes and student workload.	RTA; STEs		
4.5 Assess the university governance system in three pilot universities with a view to ensuring the best approaches that support the development and review of student-centred curricula, in particular through the participation of students in university governance, and develop proposals to enhance the system.	RTA; STEs		
4.6 Develop proposal for the amendment of the legal and regulatory framework for quality assurance in line with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area to ensure the application of the notion of student-centeredness.	RTA; STEs		

* - This Logical Framework Matrix is tentative. The Twinning partners shall revise the content of the Logical Framework Matrix, mainly measurable indicators / benchmarks based on commonly agreed activities and outputs during the drafting of the work plan for this project.

Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan
