European
Commission

Twinning Fiche

Project title: Strengthening capacities for quality assurance and credit transfer in Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Azerbaijan

Beneficiary administration: State Agency on Vocational Education, Ministry of Education, Republic of Azerbaijan

Twinning Reference: AZ/18/ENI/OT/01/20 (AZ 57)

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EU funded project

TWINNING TOOL

1. **Basic Information**
1.1 **Programme:** Annual Action Programme 2018 "Education for Employment in Azerbaijan" - CRIS number: ENI/2018/041-537 – direct management

<u>For UK applicants</u>: Please be aware that following the entry into force of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement[1] on 1 February 2020 and in particular Articles 127(6), 137 and 138, the references to natural or legal persons residing or established in a Member State of the European Union and to goods originating from an eligible country, as defined under Regulation (EU) No 236/2014[2] and Annex IV of the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement[3], are to be understood as including natural or legal persons residing or established in, and to goods originating from, the United Kingdom [4]. Those persons and goods are therefore eligible under this call.

1.2 **Twinning Sector:** OTHER

1.3 **EU funded budget**: EUR 1,000,000

1.4 **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

2. **Objectives**
2.1 **Overall Objective(s):**
To strengthen human capital in Azerbaijan by enhancing the quality of vocational education and training and by creating flexible learning pathways.

2.2 **Specific objective:**
To improve the capacities of the State Agency on Vocational Education to develop and introduce the quality assurance framework and the credit transfer system in VET.

2.3 **The elements targeted in strategic documents i.e. National Development Plan/Cooperation agreement/Association Agreement/Sector reform strategy and related Action Plans**

<u>EU- Azerbaijan agenda</u>

The framework for EU-Azerbaijan relations is based on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) in force since 1999. In February 2017, negotiations were launched on a comprehensive new agreement between the EU and Azerbaijan, which is to replace the PCA. EU-Azerbaijan Partnership Priorities, which aim to focus cooperation on commonly identified shared objectives, have been endorsed by both sides on 28 September 2018. EU cooperation with Azerbaijan supports the country's reform agenda

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[1] Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community.
[2] Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 laying down common rules and procedures for the implementation of the Union's instruments for financing external action.
[3] Annex IV to the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement, as revised by Decision 1/2014 of the ACP-EU Council of Ministers (OJ L196/40, 3.7.2014).
[4] Including the Overseas Countries and Territories having special relations with the United Kingdom, as laid down in Part Four and Annex II of the TFEU.

in particular in the areas of economic diversification, sustainable growth and social development, good governance and rule of law, and its connection with the EU through enhanced connectivity, mobility and people-to-people contacts. EU support is funded through the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) for the period 2014-2020.

The Commission has adopted the Single Support Framework for EU support to Azerbaijan for the period 2018-2020. The objectives pursued by the annual action programme 2018 to be financed under the European Neighbourhood Instrument are to contribute to the modernisation and quality assurance of the education system including the vocational education and training, taking into consideration the needs and rights of the most disadvantaged groups (including people with disabilities). Specific results are to: (i) enhance education and training sector, relevant to the needs of the labour market; (ii) align competency-based education standards with occupational standards of strategic economic sectors; and (iii) develop, pilot and implement curricula and teaching/training materials. The programme includes the action "Education for Employment in Azerbaijan" with the objectives to:

(i)   develop the legal and institutional basis at all levels of education according to the requirements of an Outcomes-Based Qualification System (OBS) for Lifelong Learning (LLL);

(ii)   design a credit system and improve quality-assurance in VET;

(iii)   modernise selected VET institutions for delivering competency-based training; and

(iv)   improve the system for skill needs/anticipation and development and develop mechanisms for assessment of competences to minimise skills mismatch.

National roadmaps

Development goals for Azerbaijan were defined in 2016 when the government launched Strategic Roadmaps for the development of national economy and 11 key sectors. The Roadmaps cover the strategy 2016-2020, long-term outlook up to 2025 and a long-term vision after 2025. They target key sectors such as agriculture, industry, ICT and tourism, as well as cover cross-sectoral issues such as SMEs development and modernisation of the education system. The primary goals are to speed up economic diversification, maintain growth in the non-oil sector, increase competitiveness and integrate into the world economy. Reforms have been accelerated to improve the environment for private sector development. Human capital development and aligning the labour market development with the national economic plans constitute some of the main targets. Government strategy on matching education and training to the requirements of the labour market was further outlined in the 'Azerbaijan 2020: Look to the future' development concept, the Education Strategy and the Employment Strategy.

The National Strategy for the Development of Education (2013) set out a long-term vision which includes competence-based education, access to lifelong learning, modernisation of educational infrastructure, reforms in education system management based on public-private partnerships and introduction of sustainable financing mechanisms. The accompanying Action Plan further determined the concrete actions in the education sector. It included actions related to the introduction of modern training methods and improvements in quality assurance.

Development of vocational education is recognised as an important step in meeting the country's demand for a qualified workforce in pursue of which the Strategic Roadmap for VET 2016-2025 and beyond was adopted in 2016. It set out the short, medium and

long-term vision for VET development. The targets of the Roadmap included involvement of employers into the VET system, development of outcomes-based funding mechanism, optimisation of the school network, professional development programs with adult training and upskilling, development of sector-based, market relevant training programmes, introduction of mechanisms for recognition of competencies acquired through non-formal schemes and implementation of transparent data monitoring systems.

The State Agency on Vocational Education under the Ministry of Education was established by the Presidential Decree in 2016 to lead the development of VET system in Azerbaijan. In April 2018, Azerbaijan Parliament adopted the Law on VET which defines the principles of state policy in the field of vocational education and provides legal, organizational and financial basis for the system.

The National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning of the Republic of Azerbaijan (AzQF) was adopted in July 2018. The objectives of AzQF are to improve the relevance, quality and transparency of qualifications. It should serve as a tool for systematizing national qualifications and facilitating their comparability inside the country and internationally. Further, it should facilitate lifelong learning. Validation of non-formal and informal learning is recognised as a key component of the AzQF.

3. Description
3.1 Background and justification:

Human capital in Azerbaijan – key issues[5]

In order to support the national priority of economic diversification, there is a need to address the key challenges of human capital development in Azerbaijan. The main one is the shortage of skills due to the low participation in VET which with 14.5% in 2018 belongs to one of the lowest levels in the Eastern Partnership region. The sector has faced many challenges due to the lack of modern infrastructure, adequate teaching staff and weak links with the world of work. The share of expenditure on VET in total education expenditure remains low with 1.4%.

In 2020 Azerbaijan ranks 69th out of 157 countries on the World Bank's Human Capital Index. Enterprises report an inadequately educated workforce as an obstacle to their business performance. According to Azerbaijan's 2019 Business Climate Survey carried out by the German-Azerbaijani Chamber of Commerce, shortage of skilled workers becomes an increasingly significant bottleneck for EU businesses operating in Azerbaijan.

Skills mismatch has been a growing concern affecting over 44% of employed people in the age group 15-29. The country has a young population and it is estimated that in the period 2017-2025, over 125,000 young people will be entering the labour market every year, which is almost 2.5 times higher than the number of jobs created annually.

At the same time opportunities for adult learning, upskilling and career development and professional orientation are limited, particularly outside of bigger urban centres. The system of career guidance is in the initial stage of development.

Skills development – governance, competences

At the government level there are multiple ministries engaged in delivering VET. The main ones are the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Labour and Social

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[5] This section draws from data and findings presented in the Torino Process Report, ETF Assessment 2020.

Protection of Population (MoLSPP). The State Agency on Vocational Education (SAVE) under the Ministry of Education implements and coordinates state policy in the area of vocational education and manages the vocational education (VET) institutions. VET is offered either in vocational schools, vocational lyceums or vocational centres. Graduates of the vocational lyceum receive the high school diploma in addition to the vocational diploma which is considered a precondition to receive further education. Graduates of vocational schools receive only the vocational certificate. Depending on the programme graduates of vocational centres may receive sub-bachelor's degree which is equal to EQF 5. While the exams in the general education are centrally administered by the State Examination Centre, Exams in vocational specialization are administrated by the examination commissions chaired by the employer representatives.

VET law allows VET institutions to provide short-term courses for the period up to six months on demand, based on tuition.

Quality assurance at the national level is regulated by educational standards covering general quality arrangements, whereas external quality arrangements are regulated by the rules for accreditation of educational institutions. The main purpose of the newly established Education Quality Assurance Agency (EQAA) is to organize the effective external quality assurance system in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The State Agency on Vocational Education is responsible for the internal quality assurance for VET institutions. In accordance with 'Regulations on monitoring of vocational education institutions' dated March 2, 2018 the situation in vocational education institutions is assessed with regard to the curricula, personnel, educational infrastructure and teaching processes. The modern concepts of quality improvement through self-assessment, peer reviews and performance monitoring are not known to the vocational schools. SAVE is in need to develop a clear concept of the quality of VET system.

Sub-bachelor degrees are offered in over fifty colleges. Graduates are awarded a 'sub-bachelor' degree (comparable to level 5 of the EQF). The Department of Science, Higher and Secondary Specialised Education of the Ministry of Education is in charge of policy framework of colleges. While most of colleges are subordinated to various higher education institutions.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population (MoLSPP) supervises training provision for unemployed through short vocational training courses. VET institutions supervised by the MoE are contracted by the State Employment Service (SES) to deliver such short-term courses. MoLSPP plays an important role in assessing the labour market trends and in development of occupational standards.

Tertiary education enrolment in Azerbaijan is low (33%) compared internationally and against the neighbouring countries. After joining the Bologna Process in 2005, Azerbaijan has put in place a number of reforms to revamp the higher education sector according to the European standards. A credit system was introduced in line with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System and the two consecutive EU Twinning projects supported the higher education sector substantially with development of quality assurance system, redefinition of the study programs into the language of learning outcomes and improvement of state education standards. The university entrance exam and entrance to colleges (post- secondary vocational education/ sub-bachelor degree) is compulsory for everybody and centrally administered by the State Examination Centre.

The National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Azerbaijan (AzQF) should serve as a main tool for promotion of lifelong learning and for facilitation of national and

international mobility of learners through improved transparency of qualifications and their recognition. AzQF includes qualifications for general education, initial vocational education and training, secondary specialised education (sub-bachelor education), higher education and further education/ adult learning. Qualifications can be obtained through formal, non-formal and informal learning.

The governance of AzQF has been under development. The two recently established bodies, which will play an important role in further implementation of the AzQF are the Lifelong Learning Unit in the Institute of Education and the Education Quality Assurance Agency. The Education Institute participates in development of educational standards and curricula, curriculum and assessment issues mainly for pre-school and general education. The Lifelong Learning Unit will act as a focal point for the AzQF.

The Education Quality Assurance Agency was established in December 2019 by reorganising the former Accreditation and Nostrification Department of the Ministry of Education into the new public legal entity. The main tasks of the Agency relate to managing the processes of: accreditation of education institutions, recognition of foreign credentials, recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, as well as providing advice and methodological support for development of internal quality assurance systems in education institutions.

The cooperation between the institutions on the governance and management of the quality assurance system of VET has not yet materialised into regular processes and workflows. A number of EU-funded projects have been supporting VET sector (for details refer to section 3.3).

The foundations of the modernised qualification system have been laid with the basic legislation on AzQF and a range of newly mandated bodies. Lack of common cooperation platform and coordinated actions between different stakeholders of the education and training system is a main challenge in the governance of qualifications in Azerbaijan. Introduction of a credit transfer system will require trust among the actors. By strengthening quality assurance system in VET, this twinning project will address the necessary preconditions for building trust in the VET programmes. It will also play a role in creating important links between qualifications, supporting the fulfilment of AzQF objectives to encourage participation, raise educational achievement, improve permeability and facilitate more diverse lifelong learning pathways. Introduction of quality assurance system in VET will contribute to the improved attractiveness of VET and higher participation in training.

Existing legislation

The main laws adopted to regulate activities in the sectors are:

- Education Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan approved by the Law No. 833-IIIQ dated June 19, 2009 with revisions;
- Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Vocational Education, No. 1071-VQ dated April 24, 2018 with revisions;
- Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on establishment of the State Agency for Vocational Education under Ministry of Education, dated April 20, 2016;
- Cabinet of Ministers Decree No. 311 on the approval of the 'National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning of the Republic of Azerbaijan', dated July 18, 2018;

3.2 Ongoing reforms:

<u>Sector reforms</u>

During the period 2018-2019 a package of proposals that includes 62 amendments to the Law on Education was adopted with the goal to create a conducive framework for implementation of educational reforms. In April 2018 a Law on Vocational Education was adopted. It defines principles of state policy in the field of vocational education and provides organisational, legal, and financial basis for VET system. Additionally, it provides incentives for cooperation of employers with VET schools and incentives for involvement of industry training experts. The development of secondary legislation followed with regulations on work-based learning, rules on admission to vocational education institution, assessment and progression between different levels of study. The new attestation rules on vocational education was approved by the Board of the Ministry of Education to regulate assessment and examination process in VET institutions. According to new rules the assessments are carried out on the basis of the learning outcomes indicated in curricula, and the professionals assigned by the employers' organisations shall conduct modular and final examination. By means of decree, dated April 16, 2019, the Cabinet of Ministers established new transition provisions from one level of vocational education to the next level. In February 2019, the Cabinet of Ministers approved a new statute of VET institution that transforms vocational institution into public legal entity and allows more autonomy in providing services, including financial management.

The draft law on "Higher Education" was discussed at the plenary session of Azerbaijani Parliament held in January 2020.

Rules on the validation and recognition of non-formal learning have been developed in 2019 and the draft regulation is waiting for the government approval.

Despite number of policy measures already in place, implementation remains a challenge, as it requires significant engagement of all levels horizontally and vertically, including further clarification of the roles of different actors in the system. The obstacles are also associated with funding of VET and skills development in Azerbaijan. Public expenditure on education planned at 4.3% of gross domestic product in 2021. Overall, this figure is lower than the average of 4.5% in Eastern European countries and the average for higher middle-income countries. However, budget allocations for education increased to 11.5% in 2021, which confirms the government's commitment to continue to improve the country's human capital. In general, VET expenditure as a share of total education expenditure is very low and has decreased during the past five years, from 2.1% to 1.6%.[6,7]

3.3 Linked activities:

<u>EU Support</u>

The **Annual Action Programme 2014** contributed to the education sector with a total budget of €19 M. The interventions under this Programme lay the foundations for this twinning project. They included the following projects:

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[6] POLICIES FOR HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AZERBAIJAN: AN ETF TORINO PROCESS ASSESSMENT, European Training Foundation 2020
[7] The law "On the state budget of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2021"

- Technical assistance **'Support to VET in Azerbaijan'** (with the budget of €3.2 M) which was implemented from 2017 to 2020. The principal beneficiary is the State Vocational Education Agency. The project contributed to the development of regulatory framework in VET, improved governance and developed a number of new qualifications and curricula.

- Technical assistance **'Support to implementation of National Qualifications Framework in Azerbaijan'** with the budget of €2.8 M started in January 2018 and was completed in October 2020. The principal beneficiary is the Ministry of Education. The main project objectives are to support the main stakeholders in defining their roles in the implementation of the AzQF, to introduce relevant standards and new curricula in pilot sectors, as well as to improve access to lifelong learning through flexible provision, alternative pathways and validation of non-formal and informal learning. The project deliverables relevant to this twinning project are: the exploration study on potential for more flexible lifelong provision and testing of the credit transfer from sub-bachelor to bachelor programmes. The project has also supported the MoE in developing new classifier of VET training programmes.

- Twinning project **'Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan'** of €1.2 M was implemented in the period 2018-2020. The project worked on supporting student-centred and competency-based system and included a component on quality assurance (self-evaluation and accreditation in particular). Additionally, the project provided inputs and technical recommendations in the area related to recognition of foreign credentials and mobility periods abroad.

- A grant scheme for multifunctional training centres **'Modernising Vocational Education and Training (VET) Centres in Azerbaijan'** with a budget €6.2 M was implemented from 2017 to 2020. The principal beneficiaries are selected VET schools in the regions.

Under the Annual Action Programme 2016 a project supporting the labour market observatory has been launched in 2020 **Support to workforce planning and skills anticipation** (€1.2 M).

This Twinning project is one of the actions under the **Annual Action Programme 2018 'Education for Employment in Azerbaijan'** with the total budget of €14.4 M. The focus of the action is on creating enabling environment for lifelong learning, improvement of quality in VET and closer cooperation with the private sector.

The action will also complement the objectives of the **EU4Youth Programme** which are to: i) increase the employability and participation of young people in society and the economy; ii) support them to become active citizens and entrepreneurs, and to develop skills.

Other donors

GIZ, UNDP and British Council have been active in the area of VET in Azerbaijan,

Private Sector Development and Technical Vocational Education and Training, South Caucasus, a project commissioned by German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) was implemented by GIZ from 2017 to 2020. In Azerbaijan, the project focused on supporting the agriculture and tourism sectors through

short term courses and a close cooperation between the VET schools and the private sector.

The British Council supported curriculum development in selected occupations with the involvement of employers, as well as implemented **Access to Hospitality and Apprenticeship Scheme programme.**

Korean Government supported development of Baku State Industry and Innovation VET Centre. More recently Asian Development Bank is preparing for engagement in VET schools infrastructure development.

3.4 List of applicable *Union acquis*/standards/norms:

The following EU legal acts provide relevant information on the European policy goals and recommendations in the areas of qualifications, credit transfer, lifelong learning, and quality assurance in VET:

- Recommendation of European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (2009/C 155/01);
- Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01);
- COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT, Accompanying the Commission Proposal for a Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience, SWD/2020/123 final, 1 July 2020;
- Proposal for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience, 1 July 2020, {COM(2020) 275 final}

3.5 Components and results per component

The Twinning project will build capacities and provide advisory assistance through activities structured under the following Components:

Mandatory Result 1/ Component 1: Quality assurance mechanisms in VET strengthened

Short description:

This component will focus on building the capacity of SAVE and vocational education institutions in development of a quality assurance framework in line with European policies and best practice. There is no policy or quality assurance framework for VET in place and the current practices operate on the basis of centralised state standards and the procedure of inspection. There is a need to learn about international practices in this area, as well as using of data sources for ensuring continued monitoring of VET providers. Once the goals and mechanism of the policy on quality assurance of the VET system are clarified, the roles of SAVE and respective methodologies and procedures will be developed. This component will further focus on the role of self-assessment in improvement of the quality of teaching and learning in the VET institutions and development of tools which will support the personnel of SAVE and of the VET schools is application of the newly developed framework. Ultimately, this component should contribute to the increased trust in VET system and improved learning outcomes of VET students.

The Mandatory Result 1 / Component 1 is based on the achievement of the following sub-results:

Sub-result 1.1: Quality assurance framework for VET system and VET providers developed

The personnel of SAVE will become familiar with European practices in the area of quality assurance in VET and main elements of the European QA systems. The capacities built will be used for participatory development of QA framework for VET system in Azerbaijan. The framework should include system principles, elements, QA standards with criteria and indicators, as well as define roles of the main stakeholders. It should address a need for potential regulatory changes, and it will be followed by the development of a roadmap for implementation.

Sub-result 1.2: Operational capacities of the personnel of the State Agency on Vocational Education (SAVE), and the practitioners in VET institutions strengthened

The newly proposed roles of VET system stakeholders will be further elaborated in the form of procedures and guidelines. Particular attention will be given to procedures for data collection, evaluation and analysis of VET system with the use of digital infrastructure. Dissemination of the developed materials among the practitioners in the VET institution will take place and capacities of the SAVE personnel and practitioners in VET institutions to operate the newly established system will be built.

Sub-result 1.3: The culture of continuous quality improvement through self-assessment is introduced to VET institutions

Activities necessary to introduce the culture of continuous quality improvement in VET institutions will take place focusing on support in carrying out self-assessment.

Mandatory Result 2/ Component 2: Credit system in VET introduced

Short description:

This component will build on the deliverables of the projects: "Support to implementation of National Qualifications Framework in Azerbaijan" and the "Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan" which contributed to the description of selected programs in VET and Higher Education in the language of learning outcomes and supported development of new classifiers. The NQF project reviewed existing formats of outcomes-based curricula and proposed alignment across IVET, college education and Higher Education, as well as mapped existing practices in credit transfer from level 5 to level 6. The Twinning Project provided advice on recognition of study periods abroad and built capacities of Higher Education institutions in writing learning outcomes.

The expertise of stakeholders from several education and training sub-systems (initial VET, continuous VET, colleges, higher education institutions) on credit accumulation and transfer will be built by familiarising them with European experiences, examples and lessons learnt with the introduction of credit transfer systems in VET. The main goal is to design a framework for credit system which supports vertical and horizontal mobility of skills in Azerbaijan and improves articulation between VET programs, adult training programs, colleges and higher education.

The Mandatory Result 2 / Component 2 is based on the achievement of the following sub-results:

Sub-result 2.1: Technical framework for credit system in VET developed and conditions for its implementation determined

In order to develop the framework of the credit system, the national stakeholders across the education system (VET institutions, colleges, higher education, MoLPP and non-formal training sectors) have to be mobilised to participate in the capacity building activities and discussions on its technical components. European experiences in this area will be shared. The framework for accumulation, recognition and transfer of individual learning outcomes has to address the impact on description of qualifications, curricula and program design, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning within the framework of AzQF.

Sub-result 2.2: Training offer for flexible learning pathways in 2 priority sectors developed covering levels 2-6 of the AzQF

An important aspect of this component will be to initiate and facilitate stakeholders dialog across different education and training subsystems and the world of work with a goal to develop a coherent approach to grouping the learning outcomes into units and to prepare a training offer which facilitates flexible learning pathways. The expected result of activities delivered under this sub-component is to create a set of examples to illustrate how the system of credit transfer could serve the individuals in vertical and horizontal mobility.

3.6 Means/input from the EU Member State Partner Administration(s)*:

The project will be implemented in the form of a Twinning contract between the Beneficiary Country and EU Member State(s). The implementation of the project requires one Project Leader (PL) with responsibility for the overall coordination of project activities and one Resident Twinning Adviser (RTA) to manage implementation of project activities, Component Leaders (CL) and pool of short-term experts within the limits of the budget. It is essential that the team has sufficiently broad expertise to cover all areas included in the project description.

Proposals submitted by Member State shall be concise and focused on the strategy and methodology and an indicative timetable underpinning this, the administrative model suggested, the quality of the expertise to be mobilised and clearly show the administrative structure and capacity of the Member State entities. Proposals shall be detailed enough to respond adequately to the Twinning Fiche, but are not expected to contain a fully elaborated project. They shall contain enough detail about the strategy and methodology and indicate the sequencing and mention key activities during the implementation of the project to ensure the achievement of overall and specific objectives and mandatory results/outputs.

The interested Member State(s) shall include in their proposal the CVs of the designated Project Leader (PL) and the Resident Twinning Advisor (RTA), as well as the CVs of the potentially designated Component Leaders-(CLs).

The Twinning project will be implemented by close co-operation between the partners aiming to achieve the mandatory results in sustainable manner.

The set of proposed activities will be further developed with the Twinning partners when drafting the initial work plan and successive rolling work plan every three months, keeping in mind that the final list of activities will be decided in cooperation with the Twinning partner. The components are closely inter-linked and need to be sequenced accordingly

3.6.1 Profile and tasks of the PL:

The Project Leader is expected to be an official or assimilated agent with a sufficient rank to ensure an operational dialogue at political level.

Profile:

- University degree or equivalent professional experience of 8 years;
- Minimum three years of specific experience in vocational education and training sector with the EU MS relevant administration;
- Very good spoken and written English (at least level 2 on a scale of 1 [excellent] to 5 [basic]).

Assets:

- Experience in project coordination.

Tasks:

- To supervise and coordinate the overall project preparation;
- To supervise, guide and monitor project implementation towards timely achievement of the project results;
- To liaise with the BC administration at the political level;
- To ensure timely availability of the expertise;
- To prepare the project progress report with the support of the RTA;
- To co-chair the project steering committees.

3.6.2 Profile and tasks of the RTA:

The Resident Twinning Adviser will be based in Azerbaijan to provide full-time input and advice to the project for its entire duration. She/he will be in charge of the day-to-day project implementation and coordination of project activities. The RTA can come from a Member State administration or mandated bodies (full or ad hoc).

Profile:

- University degree or equivalent professional experience of 8 years;
- A professional experience of at least 3 years in the field of capacity building programs targeting vocational education and training;
- Very good spoken and written English (at least level 2 on a scale of 1 [excellent] to 5 [basic]).

Assets:

- Experience in project management;
- Experience in implementation of relevant EU legislation and EU instruments related to the project components, in particular EQF, EQAVET and ECVET;

Tasks:

- To coordinate and assure project implementation and implementation of all project activities;

- To prepare the initial and subsequent work plans and project progress reports, together with the PL;
- To assure the coherence and continuity of the successive inputs and the on-going progress;
- To coordinate the activities of all team members in line with the work plan;
- To assess continuously the project progress to assure its timely implementation;
- To prepare the material for regular monitoring and reporting;
- Liaise with MS and BC PLs and maintain regular contact with the BC TRA;
- To provide the technical advice, support and assistance to the Beneficiary institution in the areas specified in the work plan;
- To liaise with the EUD Project Manager;
- To liaise with other relevant institutions in Azerbaijan and with other relevant projects.

3.6.3   Profile and tasks of Component Leaders:

The Component Leaders will work in close cooperation with the RTA and the Beneficiary administration in order to meet the mandatory results. Their main task is to plan and coordinate the activities under their respective areas of responsibility in collaboration with the partner institutions.

Component 1: Strengthening quality assurance mechanisms in VET

Profile:

- University degree or equivalent professional experience of 8 years;
- At least 3 years of professional experience in quality assurance in education and lifelong learning (in particular EQAVET, ENQA, EQF);
- Very good spoken and written English (at least level 2 on a scale of 1 [excellent] to 5 [basic]).

Assets:

- Experience in setting QA standards.

Tasks:

- To provide component coordination, guidance and monitoring;
- To provide practical expertise and technical advice, as well as coaching to the relevant staff in the Beneficiary administration for the execution of activities relevant for the project components;
- To analyse policies and practices in the thematic area relevant to the respective component;
- To support drafting of action plans, training plans, studies;
- To prepare and conduct training programs, to facilitate stakeholders' dialog;
- To draft technical documents relevant to the component's results in close cooperation with the BC counterparts;
- To suggest improvements of relevant procedures and systems;
- To report on activities delivered under the respective component.

Component 2: Contribution to the introduction of a credit system in VET

Profile:

- University degree or equivalent professional experience of 8 years;

- At least 3 years of professional experience with credit systems in VET;
- Very good spoken and written English (at least level 2 on a scale of 1 [excellent] to 5 [basic]).

Assets:

- Experience in EU policies and instruments related to lifelong learning (in particular EQF, ECVET, VNFIL, upskilling pathways).

Tasks:

- To provide component coordination, guidance and monitoring;
- To provide practical expertise and technical advice, as well as coaching to the relevant staff in the Beneficiary administration for the execution of activities relevant for the project components;
- To analyse policies and practices in the thematic area relevant to the respective component;
- To support drafting of action plans, training plans, studies;
- To prepare and conduct training programs, to facilitate stakeholders' dialog;
- To draft technical documents relevant to the component's results in close cooperation with the BC counterparts;
- To suggest improvements of relevant procedures and systems;
- To report on activities delivered under the respective component.

3.6.4 Profile and tasks of other short-term experts:

The short-term experts will work in close cooperation with the RTA, Component Leaders and the Beneficiary administration in order to meet the mandatory result of the project.

Profile:

- University degree or equivalent professional experience of 8 years;
- At least 3 years of professional experience in a respective field related to the purpose of the mission foreseen in the work plan (for example quality assurance in VET, credit accumulation and transfer, lifelong learning, recognition of prior learning);
- Very good spoken and written English (at least level 2 on a scale of 1 [excellent] to 5 [basic]).

Assets:

- Experience in delivering capacity building activities;
- Experience in providing inputs to policy documents, methodological guides and/or handbooks.

Tasks:

- To provide advice, expertise and/or coaching to the relevant staff of the Beneficiary administration for the execution of specified project activities;
- To plan and deliver capacity building activities (workshops, study tours, trainings);
- To suggest improvements of relevant procedures and systems including suggestions to the revision of regulatory framework;
- To provide support in drafting action plans and roadmaps;
- To report on the results of the missions;
- To liaise with RTA and BC counterparts.

4. Budget

Maximum Budget available for the Twinning Grant: **EUR 1,000,000.00**

5. Implementation Arrangements

5.1 Implementing Agency responsible for tendering, contracting and accounting (AO/CFCE/PAO/European Union Delegation/Office):

The Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Azerbaijan (EUD) in Baku will be responsible for the tendering, contracting, payments and financial reporting. EUD will work in close co-operation with the Beneficiary.

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The persons in charge of the project at the EUD are:

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5.2 Institutional framework

The State Agency on Vocational Education was established in April 2016 under the Ministry of Education. It is in charge of the development and implementation of VET policies and state programmes for VET. It manages the network of VET institutions. The Department responsible for Management of Vocational Education Institutions, Quality Assurance and Monitoring staffed with eight persons, will be the primary partners of the project. At policy level, the relevant national institutions include:

- Education Quality Assurance Agency established in December 2019 by reorganising the former Accreditation and Nostrification Department of the Ministry of Education into the new public legal entity. The Agency is responsible for managing the processes of: accreditation of education institutions, recognition of foreign credentials, recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, as well as providing advice and methodological support for development of internal quality assurance systems in education institutions;
- A network of 108 vocational education institutes that includes 1 vocational education center, 45 lyceums and 62 vocational schools;
- The Institute of Education with its newly established Lifelong Learning Unit;
- Science, Higher and Secondary Specialised Education Department of the Ministry of Education;

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- The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population, Employment Policy Department (<u>State Employment Services</u>);
- The Ministry of Education, with its departments responsible for data collection/EMIS.

5.3 Counterparts in the Beneficiary administration:

The PL and RTA counterparts will be staff of the Beneficiary administration and will be actively involved in the management and coordination of the project.

5.3.1 Contact person:

The person in charge of this project at the PAO is:

Ms. Inara MUSTAFAYEVA, Acting Director of PAO

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Beneficiary Administration – the State Agency on Vocational Education under the Ministry of Education

Mr. Royal YOLCHUZADA

Head of Management, Quality Assurance and Monitoring of Vocational Education Institutions Department of the State Agency on Vocational Education under the Ministry of Education

61 A.Orujaliyev str.

AZ1033, Baku, Azerbaijan

5.3.2 PL counterpart

Mr. Jeyhun KARAMOV

Deputy Director of the State Agency on Vocational Education under the Ministry of Education

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5.3.3 RTA counterpart

Mr. Royal YOLCHUZADA

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61 A.Orujaliyev str.

6.   Duration of the project

Execution period (number of months): 27 months i.e. 24 months of implementation plus 3 months.

7.   Management and reporting[7]

7.1   Language

The official language of the project is English. All formal communications regarding the project, including interim and final reports, shall be produced in the language of the contract.

7.2   Project Steering Committee

A project steering committee (PSC) shall oversee the implementation of the project. The main duties of the PSC include verification of the progress and achievements via-à-vis the mandatory results/outputs chain (from mandatory results/outputs per component to impact), ensuring good coordination among the actors, finalising the interim reports and discuss the updated work plan. Other details concerning the establishment and functioning of the PSC are described in the Twinning Manual.

7.3   Reporting

All reports shall have a narrative section and a financial section. They shall include as a minimum the information detailed in section 5.5.2 (interim reports) and 5.5.3 (final report) of the Twinning Manual. Reports need to go beyond activities and inputs. Two types of reports are foreseen in the framework of Twining: interim quarterly reports and final report. An interim quarterly report shall be presented for discussion at each meeting of the PSC. The narrative part shall primarily take stock of the progress and achievements via-à-vis the mandatory results and provide precise recommendations and corrective measures to be decided by in order to ensure the further progress.

8.   Sustainability

The sustainability of the achievement of this project will be assured by the adoption of best practices and solutions at the system level. New policy directions and practices will be proposed by the project. In their development a participatory and facilitative approach will be used in order to create ownership of the process and the results. Involvement of all relevant stakeholders will assure that the developed policy options have adequate acceptance among national partners. Mechanisms for communication and dialog between the agencies and ministries introduced by the project are meant to be a lasting contribution of the project to the lifelong learning policy development in Azerbaijan.

The sustainability of the project results is dependent on the commitment of the Beneficiary administration. Sufficient number of personnel from the Beneficiary administration will be assigned to work in the implementation of the project. Capacity building of the staff will be reinforced by the development of handbooks and guidelines which will be translated in the local language. The training materials will be at the

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[7] Sections 7.1-7.3 are to be kept without changes in all Twinning fiches.

Beneficiary's disposal to multiply and/or scale up the training and/or to update it, should the need arise. Project interventions are meant to reach the level of management practices in the relevant institutions and every-day procedures which should ensure that the results of the project last beyond the project's timeframe.

9. **Crosscutting issues** *(equal opportunity, environment, climate etc…)*

Equal opportunity in the project will be assured in accordance with EU standards and equal opportunity policies. Equal treatment of women and men will be observed in the project staffing, implementation and management. In particular, attention to the equality principle will be given to the selection of personnel for training and capacity building activities.

Relevant project information and all communication and visibility materials must be updated and approved by the EU Delegation through the EU's project communication database 'EUDIGITOOL'. All visibility and communication material will be kept up to date throughout the lifetime of the project. The use of the 'EUDIGITOOL' approval system is a mandatory requirement.

10. **Conditionality and sequencing**

There is no conditionality set for this project as the external conditions for achieving the results of this intervention are present - Beneficiary has demonstrated a commitment in the development of this project.

11. **Indicators for performance measurement**

The indicators for measuring success of the project implementation are linked to the Mandatory Results Components that have been outlined above in the Section 3.5. The logical framework, including the indicators, will be revised during the inception period of the project. The work plan which will be prepared in collaboration with the MS and the SAVE will further specify the indicators.

*The indicators of achievement for **<u>sub-result 1.1</u>**: Quality assurance framework for VET system and VET providers developed*

   a) Staff of SAVE familiarised with European practices and elements of the quality assurance systems in VET:
       – Good practices and elements of the quality assurance system in VET in European countries presented to the staff of SAVE;
       – At least 5 persons from the beneficiary staff obtained practical information on European practices and elements of the quality assurance systems in VET.
   b) Quality assurance framework for VET that addresses the principles end elements of quality assurance in VET, description of internal and external QA mechanisms, QA standards, criteria and indicators for VET system and for VET providers (including aspects of digitalisation and online learning in VET), as well as the roles of stakeholders, developed and discussed among stakeholders:
       – A policy paper on quality assurance framework for VET;
       – A roadmap for implementation of the framework.
   c) Proposals for necessary amendments of regulatory framework drafted and submitted for approval:

– Draft amendments to legal documents (list to be agreed during the inception period).

The indicators of achievement for <u>**sub-result 1.2**</u>*: **Operational capacities of the personnel of the State Agency on Vocational Education (SAVE), and the practitioners in VET institutions strengthened***

a) QA procedures for the relevant departments of SAVE developed including indicators and procedures for data collection, evaluation, analysis and knowledge creation for the purpose of feeding the VET reforms:
   – Manuals of internal and external QA procedures (list to be agreed during the inception period);
   – 2-year operational plan including personnel requirements developed;
   – Concept on integration of online VET Database system as part of overall QA in education and training;
   – Guidelines on collecting and analysing relevant information for VET through the Database.
b) Capacities of the staff of SAVE on implementation of QA methodologies and procedures strengthened:
   – Training programme and materials on QA methodologies, procedures and processes;
   – Number of training sessions conducted;
   – Number of the staff trained;
   – At least 5 persons from the beneficiary staff obtained practical information on good practices in QA system for VET.
c) QA system and procedures for VET institutions developed and disseminated:
   – Guidelines on the QA system and procedures for VET institutions.

The indicators of achievement for <u>**sub-result 1.3**</u>*: **The culture of continuous quality improvement through self-assessment is introduced to VET institutions***

a) Continuous quality improvement system in VET institutions:
   – A handbook on self-assessment process for VET institutions;
   – A training plan for VET providers and training materials;
   – Number of training workshops for VET providers on self-assessment delivered and no. of persons trained;
   – A minimum of 10 self-assessments reports in place.

*The indicators of achievement **for sub-result 2.1: Technical framework for credit system in VET developed and conditions for its implementation determined***

a) Beneficiary staff familiarised with good European practices on credit system in VET:
   - At least 5 persons from the beneficiary staff obtained practical information on good European practices on the credit transfer.

b) Technical framework for accumulation, recognition and transfer of individuals' learning outcomes developed[8].

c) Barriers to implementation of the credit accumulation and transfer system identified and discussed among stakeholders from VET, colleges, higher education, MoLSPP and non-formal training sectors:[9]
   - Report on barriers to implementation of the credit system in VET;
   - At least one workshop on barriers to implementation of the credit system in VET;
   - Detailed recommendations for necessary regulatory changes with particular focus on the requirements related to assessment, validation of non-formal learning, description of qualifications and recognition of units of learning outcomes elaborated.

*The indicators of achievement for **sub-result 2.2**: Training offer for flexible learning pathways in 2 priority sectors developed covering levels 2-6 of the AzQF*

a) Capacities of key stakeholders on learning pathways created:
   - A working group on flexible training pathways established;
   - At least one roundtable with key stakeholders (VET, HE, MoLSPP and the world of work) on the learning pathways;
   - Number of staff of key stakeholders trained on learning pathways.
b) Flexible learning pathways in 2 priority sectors developed covering levels 2-6 of the AzQF:
   - Occupational mapping for 2 priority sectors (with examples of progression routes for minimum two LLL pathways per sector);
   - Qualification/education standards for at least 12 occupations covering levels 2-6 of AzQF developed/existing reviewed;
   - Number of Units of learning outcomes which can be subject to vertical and horizontal mobility (through validation of non-formal and informal learning, short courses, accumulation and credit transfer) for minimum of 12 occupations covering levels 2-6 of AzQF mapped;
   - At least one workshop for the stakeholders from VET, HE, college and adult education on the topics of unitisation of learning outcomes and equivalency took place;
   - Guidelines on credit transfer for providers of VET, adult education, colleges and higher education institutions developed;
   - Guidelines and recommendations on how the progression between different levels of study can best work with and without the credit system presented.

12. Facilities available

The Beneficiary commits itself to deliver the following facilities:
   - Adequately equipped office space for the RTA and the RTA's assistants for the entire duration of the secondment;

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[8] The framework introduces technical components of the credit system and addresses the impact of the proposed system on: curricula and programs design, description of qualifications, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning.

[9] The report addresses barriers for the system to be put in practice as well as potential barriers for individuals to use the opportunities provided by the proposed credit system (for example: insufficient information and guidance)

- Supply of the office room including access to computer, telephone, internet, printer, photocopier;
- Adequate conditions for the STEs/MTEs to perform their work while on missions;
- Provide suitable venues for the meetings and training sessions that will be held under the project;
- Availability of staff that will be involved during the twinning project implementation;
- Full coordination and transparency is expected among all key players involved.

ANNEXES TO PROJECT FICHE

1. Simplified Logical Framework matrix

Annex 1 Simplified Logical Framework

	Description	Indicators (with relevant baseline and target data)	Sources of verification	Risks	Assumptions (external to project)
Overall Objective	To strengthen human capital in Azerbaijan by enhancing the quality of vocational education and training and by creating flexible learning pathways.	Share of VET students in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) (%) increased by 10% by 2022 Baseline 2018: 14.5 % Participation in short-term courses and continuous vocational education increased by 15% by 2022 Baseline 2019: 0	• Monitoring reports of SAVE and EQAA • National statistics • Annual reporting of MOE		
Specific (Project) Objective(s)	To improve the capacities of the State Agency on Vocational Education to develop, introduce and consistently apply the quality assurance framework and the credit transfer system in VET.	• At least 80% of the relevant staff trained in QA in VET • Relevant procedures in place • Quality of the processes improved Baseline values 2020: 0	• Project documentation (training reports, technical documents) • Annual reporting of SAVE • Self-assessment reports • Annual reporting of MOE	Resistance among providers to the introduction of new QA systems	Strong support and commitment from SAVE, and other education and training subsystems Strong support from the twinning partner(s) Relevant personnel assigned to the processes of QA and credit transfer.

	Mandatory Result 1/ Component 1: Quality assurance mechanisms in VET strengthened			
Mandatory results/outputs by components	Sub-result 1.1: Quality assurance framework for VET system and VET providers developed	• Familiarisation with European practices and elements of the quality assurance systems in VET; • A policy paper o quality assurance framework for VET; • A roadmap for implementation of the framework prepared and agreed among stakeholders; • Proposals for necessary amendments of regulatory framework drafted and submitted for approval. Baseline values 2020: 0	• Policy document • Roadmap document • List of regulatory amendments • Mission reports		Commitment of SAVE and involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the process Availability of relevant personnel Relevant documentation and information made available

	Sub-result 1.2: Operational capacities of the personnel of the State Agency on Vocational Education (SAVE), and the practitioners in VET institutions strengthened	• Manuals of internal and external QA procedures for the relevant departments of SAVE developed • 2 year operational plan including personnel requirements developed; • Training Needs Analysis report; • Training programme on QA methodologies, procedures and processes delivered to 80% of the involved staff of SAVE for minimum 50% of the VET institutions; • Guidelines for VET institutions on the QA system and procedures developed and disseminated. • Concept on integration of online VET Database system as part of overall QA in education and training • Guidelines on collecting and analyzing relevant information for VET through the Database; Baseline values 2020: 0	• Manuals of procedures operational plan • Training program, attendance lists and reports • Guidelines for VET institutions • Mission reports		Commitment of SAVE and involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the process Availability of relevant personnel for training Strong support from the Twinning partner(s)

	Sub-result 1.3: The culture of continuous quality improvement through self-assessment is introduced to VET institutions	• A handbook on self-assessment process for VET institutions in place; • A training plan for VET providers with training materials elaborated; • Training workshops on self-assessment for minimum 50% of VET providers delivered; • A minimum of 10 self-assessments reports in place. Baseline values 2020: 0	• Handbook, guidelines • Training plan and report, training evaluation sheets • Self-assessment reports	Resistance among providers to the introduction of new QA systems	Commitment of SAVE and the staff of VET institutions Availability of relevant personnel for training Strong support from the Twinning partner(s)

Mandatory Result 2/ Component 2: Credit system in VET introduced

	Sub-result 2.1: Technical framework for credit system in VET developed and conditions for its implementation determined	• Technical framework for accumulation, recognition and transfer of individuals' learning outcomes developed; • Report identifying barriers to implementation of the credit system developed and discussed among stakeholders; • A detailed list of recommendations for necessary regulatory changes elaborated. Baseline values 2020: 0	• Technical framework document • Agenda and notes from the stakeholders' meetings, report on the barriers to implementation of the credit system • Report with a list of recommended regulatory changes		The Government maintains the lifelong learning a priority Partners from college, higher education and adult education sectors participate in the dialog and are committed to the implementation of the credit transfer system and flexible learning Strong support from the Twinning partner(s)

| Sub-result 2.2: Training offer for flexible learning pathways in 2 priority sectors developed covering levels 2-6 of the AzQF | • A working group on flexible training pathways established;
• Occupational mapping for 2 priority sectors;
• Development/review of existing qualification/education standards and mapping of the units of learning outcomes which can be subject to mobility for minimum of 12 occupations covering levels 2-6 of AzQF;
• At least one workshop for the stakeholders from VET, HE, college and adult education on unitisation of learning outcomes and equivalency took place;
• Guidelines on credit transfer for providers of IVET, adult education, colleges and higher education institutions developed;
• Guidelines and recommendations on how the progression between different levels of study can best work with and without the credit system.
• Baseline values: 0 | • Reports from the working group meetings and workshops
• Occupational maps
• Reviewed qualification standards for minimum 12 occupations
• Mission reports
• Guidelines documents for the training providers | Competing ministerial agendas delay progress in adoption of credit system elements | Commitment and involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the process

Availability of relevant personnel

Relevant documentation and information made available

Strong support from the twinning partner(s) |