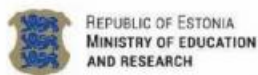


Road Map for Implementation of Institutional Assessment

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On the 15th and 16th of October 2020 a conceptual webinar “Roadmap for the Implementation of Institutional Accreditation in Latvia” (hereinafter - the seminar) was organized by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Estonia and the Estonian Higher and Vocational Education Quality Agency. The seminar took place on the Webex platform and from the Latvian side was attended by representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia (hereinafter – Ministry), the Higher Education Quality Agency and the Academic Information Center. The goal of the seminar was to present Estonia's more than 10 years of experience in implementing institutional accreditation of higher education institutions.

On the first day of the seminar, Margus Haidak, Head of the Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Estonia and leading expert Kristi Raudmäe described the Estonian higher education system and the role of the assessment of the quality of education within this system, including significant changes in Estonian higher education Law (entered into force in September 2019) on the role of the Senate and councils in the operation of higher education institutions and the reform of doctoral studies. Heli Mattisen, Director of the Estonian Agency for Quality in Higher and Vocational Education, presented the education quality assessment reform launched in Estonia in 2010, its implementation, and described the education quality assurance and institutional accreditation system for higher education institutions in 2020, emphasizing the main education quality assurance system and evaluation principles.

The second day of the webinar was particularly significant, where Maarja Murumägi, Vice-Rector of the Estonian Business School (Private University), Brita Laurfeld, Management Adviser at Tallinn University, and Tallinn Health Care College (Tallinn Health Care College) state professional higher education institution)) Kristiina Pullerits, Head of Study Quality, shared their experience on the implementation of institutional accreditation of higher education institutions. Representatives of higher education institutions described the process of institutional accreditation directly from higher education institution point of view, outlining the practical activities to be performed (process of preparation of necessary documents, team formation and management, visits, etc.), mentioning problem issues and their vision of its necessity and deepest essence.

Estonia's experience has led to the conclusion that the cyclical implementation of institutional accreditation of higher education institutions is a joint responsibility of the ministry, education quality agencies and higher education institutions, to ensure quality higher education and should be based on a mutual trust. Furthermore, the institutional accreditation process should not be seen only as a formal process - at the same time it is also an opportunity for the university to assess its culture as an organization, organizing and leading the accreditation process for at least one year, and the opportunity to answer the question "What can we learn from it?". According to the representatives of Estonian higher education institutions, such attitude towards the accreditation process can be demonstrated only by essentially mature higher education institutions.

On November 11, 2020, the 1st meeting of the Steering Committee of the project organized by the Ministry took place on the ZOOM platform, where the project manager, senior expert of the Ministry Inese Lūsēna – Ezera introduced the members of the Steering Committee to the project goals, results, tasks and planned activities. The Steering Committee has been established with the aim of ensuring high-quality project implementation, assessing progress and previously achieved results. According to the project description, the Steering Committee includes a representative from the European University Association, representatives from project partner organizations - Ministry, Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Estonia and Latvian Academic Information Center and social partners of the Ministry - Latvian Rector Council, Latvian Student Union and the Latvian Association of Young Scientists.

During the meeting, the members of the Steering Committee asked questions about the goals of the project's immediate activities as well as shared their experience and recommendations for a more successful project implementation. Despite the circumstances (Covid-19 pandemic and related travel restrictions and safety considerations, launch of the project during the summer holidays, structural changes in the operation of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education), which have led to delays in project activities, Steering Committee members expressed confidence in the successful continuation of the project. In conclusion, the time for a possible next meeting of the Steering Committee was decided – around spring of 2021.

The seminar and the meeting of the Steering Committee were organized within the project "Road Map for Implementation of Institutional Assessment" of the ERASMUS + K3 programme "Support for policy reforms" jointly implemented by the Ministry, the Latvian Academic Information Center, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Estonia and the Estonian Higher and Vocational Education Quality Agency (No. 899137 - RoadMap - EPLUS2020-EHEA09-2019). The project is particularly important for fulfilling the tasks set in the Government Action Plan "To prepare for the introduction of cyclical institutional accreditation of higher education institutions from 2024".

The goals of the project are to improve higher education quality assurance system in Latvia and to introduce cyclical accreditation of higher education institutions as the main quality assurance procedure, reducing administrative burdens and costs of evaluation processes.

Project implementation duration: 24 months (until May 31, 2022).

<https://www.izm.gov.lv/en/article/road-map-implementation-institutional-assessment>