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"Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan" twinning project was launched at a conference organized by the Ministry of Education on September 25.

The conference aimed to increase awareness of higher education institutions, other interested parties and public of the essence and expected results of the two-year project funded by the European Union.

Participants in the event included Minister of Education Jeyhun Bayramov, ambassadors of European countries to Azerbaijan, heads of higher education institutions and experts involved in the project.

Opening the conference, Minister of Education Jeyhun Bayramov said that taking into account global education trends and challenges, Azerbaijan attaches special importance to properly assessing the role of education in developing human capital and to taking continuous measures in this regard.

"From this point of view, the "State Program for the Development of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan", which was approved by President Ilham Aliyev in 2013, aims to build a technology-based education system that will feature highly-qualified educators and be one of the bests in the world in terms of quality. This conceptual document defines priorities of our national education and key activity areas in the field of education. It provides for the creation of equal and quality education opportunities for everyone."

The minister said that great strides have been made recently, which included introduction of a new approach and methodologies in developing highly-qualified specialists, expansion of autonomy of higher education institutions, improvement of student admission rules, creation of a competitive scholarship system, establishment of quality assurance centers at universities, increasing effectiveness of graduate career centers and improvement of academic results at higher education institutions.

Deputy chief of staff of the Ministry of Education Yagub Piriyei said the project was launched this April: "Several events have already been held and missions consisting of experts from three partner countries have been organized under the first component of the project. Broad discussions were held at the Ministry of Education and higher education institutions, workshops on relevant topics were organized as part of the visits of the experts to Baku."

Acting Head of Cooperation of the European Union Delegation Alexandra Nerisani, Lithuanian Ambassador to Azerbaijan Valdas Lastauskas, Latvian Ambassador to Azerbaijan Juris Maklakovs, the project leader on behalf of the European Union Bruno Curvale hailed cooperation and highlighted the project's contribution to higher education.

The project leader on behalf of Azerbaijan, deputy head of the Department of Science, Higher and Vocational Education of the Ministry of Education Shahin Bayramov, the project leader on behalf of Lithuania Giedrius Viliunas, the project leader on behalf of Latvia Baiba Ramina, Resident Twinning Coordinator Liza Baydanova provided an insight into what has been and will be done under the project.

Implemented by a consortium consisting of the Ministry of Education, France, Lithuania and Latvia, the project is a follow-up to "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" twinning project (2015-2017).

The project aims to further develop Azerbaijan's higher education system through aligning it with a competence-based education approach, a student-centered system and learning outcomes approach.