

# **WORK AND FINANCIAL PLAN FOR 2013**

## Introduction

Like the Annual Work and Financial Plan for 2012, the adoption of the 2013 plan has been delayed until September 2013. The Director of Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter the Agency) assumed his duties on 2 April 2013, after having been approved by the Agency Council in March 2013. The first international evaluation of the Agency was performed between 22 and 24 April 2013, while the intense work on the accreditations and external evaluations of the higher education institutions, study programmes and higher vocational colleges was underway. The Agency's operation was assessed by ECA (European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education) and ESU (European Students Union) according to ENQA European Standards and Guidelines ESG, Chapters 2 and 3. Before that, the agency had to prepare a comprehensive self-evaluation report and gather a series of documents on its operation. The comprehensive and excellent work was carried out under the management of the Acting Director Tatjana Debevec, assisted by all Agency's staff and the Agency Council. The group of auditors submitted a written report on the Agency's operation in July; however, the oral presentation of the findings sufficed to prepare the 2013 work plan, which will in turn be the basis for drafting the action plan on the Agency's further work. At the end of the year or in the spring of 2014, the Agency intends to file the application to become a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ENQA and to be entered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education – EQAR. The present work plan for 2013 is a response to the recommendations for the improvement in the Self-Evaluation Report of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education for 2010-2012.

Even though many stakeholders believe that the Agency's primary role is providing control and inspection in the Slovenian higher education and higher vocational education area, the Agency's purpose is to make its evaluations contribute to the improvement of the internal and external quality system. Notably, it must promote the development of quality culture among the stakeholders. At the same time, it must see to the fulfilment of its own internal acts and stakeholders, such as the criteria, the rules of procedure, the auditors, the Agency Council. The Agency intends to be proactively involved in the announced amendment of the Higher Education Act. In performing its duties, it will observe the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area – ESG and all good European practices. Together with its stakeholders, it will strive to fulfil its mission and observe the set values.

Education in general and high-quality higher education and higher vocational education in particular are of extreme importance if the two-million Slovenian nation is to subsist. At the same time, high-quality and transparent operation of the Agency, which sets a mirror to the Slovenian universities, higher education institutions and higher vocational education institutions, is needed to ensure that the following generations will receive good high education.

I hope that the work plan in the next years will be adopted in the beginning of the year and will include the action plan resulting from the self-evaluation report on the work in the previous year.

Ivan Leban

Ljubljana, September 2013

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## **ABOUT THE SLOVENIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **Organisation**

The Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter: the Agency) was founded on the basis of the Act Amending the Higher Education Act – ZViS-G (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No 86/2009); the Higher Education Act (official consolidated version) ZViS-UPB7 (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No 32/2012); while its bodies, competences and tasks are determined in the Act and Resolution on the Founding of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No 114/2009).

The basis for the establishment and operation of the Agency is Article 51e of ZViS-UPB7 (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No 32/2012). The Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education is a public body established by the Republic of Slovenia to assure quality in higher education and to carry out development and consulting activities in the field for which it was founded.

Subject to statutory provisions, the Agency has the following purpose and objectives:

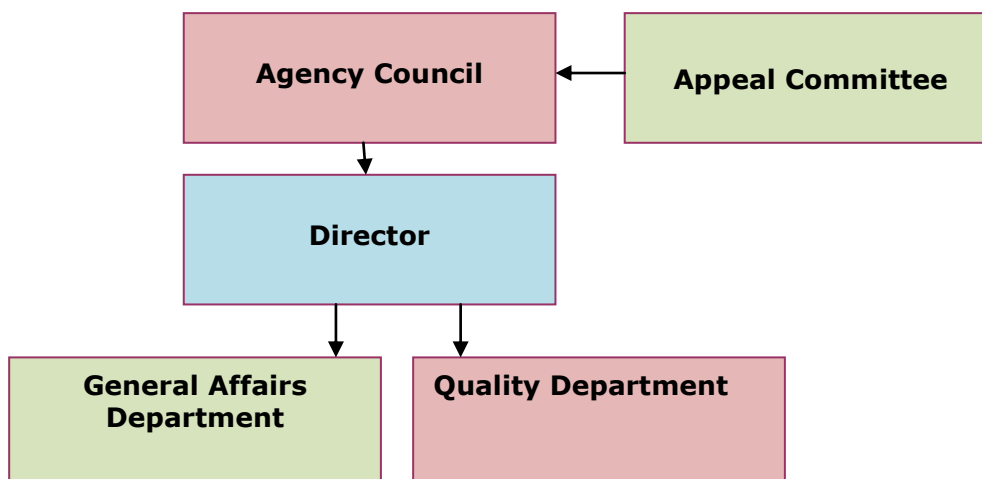
- quality assurance and improvement in higher education;
- professionalization of quality assessment;
- obtaining public trust into the quality assessment system;
- operating in line with the relevant European standards.

The Agency encourages higher education institutions to:

- assume the responsibility for quality creation and implementation of study programmes;
- provide constant development and establishment of the culture of quality;
- perform the regular annual self-evaluations and periodic external evaluations on the grounds of clear and consistent criteria and professional assessment.

The Agency is composed of the Council as the first-level decision-making body, the Appeal Committee as the second-level decision-making body and Specialist Service of the Agency led by the Director.

## Organisation chart of the Agency



## From the Agency Development Strategy for the Period 2011-2016

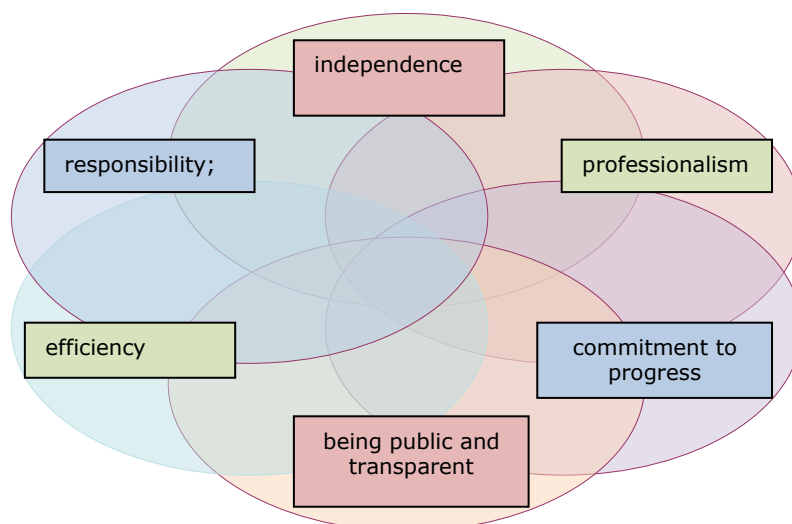
### ***Mission***

The Agency provides for the development and functioning of the system of quality assurance in higher education in Slovenia. It operates responsibly in terms of form and contents and counsels all stakeholders and participants in tertiary education in line with the European and global directions of development.

### ***Vision***

The Agency shall, with its system of quality assurance development, contribute to the higher education in Slovenia being of high quality in terms of education and research, internationally recognisable, competitive and equally integrated in the global higher education area.

## **Values**



## **Strategic objectives**

1. admission of the Agency to international associations (ENQA and EQAR)
2. development and operation of the quality assurance system
3. monitoring progress and strengthening quality culture in higher education
4. presenting the role, importance and quality of operation of the Agency in public for better visibility
5. co-creating and developing higher education policy in the field of quality
6. promoting the quality of transnational education
7. providing high quality counselling services of the Agency by suitable personnel.

## Activities of the Agency in 2012

(summarised from the concluding section of the Report on Work and Operation of the Agency in 2012, T. Debevec)

2012 was, in addition to activities the Agency had to perform by the law and other acts of the Agency, devoted in particular to creating better and more encouraging working environment and reorganisation of work, in order to complete numerous and demanding tasks according to the deadlines set in the work plan. The Agency was rather successful in their fulfilment, despite the unforeseen events such as the replacement of the Agency's management and three public calls for the selection of the Director, months long negotiations due to the amendment of ZViS, efforts to increase budgetary funds and the ESF funds, the audit performed by the Court of Audit and personnel cuts. The planned number of accreditations and external evaluations was highly exceeded, from 175 to 219. The re-accreditation procedures for all four universities were initiated, despite the plan of doing it progressively and completing them by 2015. Although the re-accreditation of universities is among the most demanding and lengthy procedures, the Agency re-accredited (thereby completing the procedure) the University of Ljubljana and the University of Primorska (2013), while the re-accreditation of the University of Nova Gorica and the University of Maribor will be decided upon in 2013.

Compared to 2011, a great progress was made in almost all areas of the Agency's operation. The following must be emphasised:

**1. international cooperation;** it saw a great increase in 2012. While the Agency was only present at few meetings or conferences abroad in 2011, it fruitfully and equally cooperated as one of the partners in steering and working groups of diverse projects, and also as the project coordinator, in 2012. The success of the Agency is evident; in 2013, external evaluation by ECA was carried out due to the membership in MULTRA, Mutual Recognition of Accreditation Results regarding Joint Programmes. The most important achievement of international cooperation is the acknowledgement of Agency's work abroad.

Compared to 2011, when mainly Croatian experts participated in the groups of experts in accreditation procedures (participation of a foreign expert in each group in set out by law), the cooperation spread out to experts coming from numerous European countries (Austria, Germany, Spain, Netherlands, Great Britain, France, Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria, etc.), and the contract with the agency ASIIN (member of ENQA and CEENQA) was signed in order to exchange experts;

**2. the Agency's self-evaluation and preparation for the membership in ENQA and entry in EQAR;** in 2012, all of the most important tasks related to



the self-evaluation of the Agency, being a prerequisite for becoming a member of ENQA and EQAR, were carried out, although the self-evaluation had been planned for 2011. They were carried out in deadlines set out in the action plan, despite the fact that the majority of tasks had to be performed in the second half of 2012 due to difficulties in managing the Agency and replacement of its management in April of that year. The Agency did not merely systematically assess all areas of its operation; on the basis of these results, it also managed to fundamentally revise the Manual for Experts as well as accreditation and evaluation procedures, which are the foundation for its operation, and to compile a self-evaluation report in which all European Standards and Guidelines were complied with or in which the compliance was being checked. This vast and comprehensive report is a cornerstone upon which the European associations (ENQA and EQAR) will be assessing whether the Agency complies with the membership conditions. One of the fundamental conditions for the achievement of the most important objective, i.e. submission of application for membership in ENQA and entry in EQAR, was complied with.

Two external evaluations of the Agency are planned for 2013; ECA Consortium for Accreditation has already performed its evaluation due to participation in the MULTRA project and entry in EQAR. At the end of 2013, the 2013 self-evaluation is planned, and probably in the spring of 2014, the submission of the application for the assessment of ESG and membership in ENQA.

The other unaccomplished tasks from the previous years, as for example designing of the website in Slovenian and English ([www.nakvis.si](http://www.nakvis.si)), simplification of the accreditation and evaluation procedures, preparation of the Agency's presentation brochure in Slovenian and English, were also carried out. In the beginning of 2013, the Manual for Experts was printed.

The Agency devoted a great deal of time to the amendment of ZViS and to the improvement of accreditation criteria (it prepared several versions of draft criteria and application forms as the integral part of the criteria) and obtained additional budgetary resources and the ESF funds to carry out the tasks planned.

The Agency gained more trust from higher education and higher vocational education stakeholders and general public, and strengthened its visibility in Slovenian area. The Agency continuously strived for the improvement of its own quality, which is the foundation for an efficient, with all stakeholders agreed upon and generally acknowledged external quality assurance system in higher education and higher vocational education. This is the area where the Agency made the biggest progress.

Nevertheless, the Agency failed to establish an efficient information system allowing for faster and improved operation in 2012.

## **WORK PLAN FOR 2013**

The tasks in the work plan have been defined with regard to the strategic objectives of the Agency and activities for reaching these objectives by 2013 (adapted from the Agency Development Strategy for the Period 2011-2016, adopted at the Agency Council session in November 2011), and the operation of the Agency is directed towards the following:

1. establishment and development of the quality assurance system of the Agency;
2. transformation of the quality assurance system in higher education and higher vocational education; and
3. participation in the development of higher education in Slovenia.

The stated strategic focuses are related to the concern for quality work of the Agency by means of regular annual self-evaluations and external evaluations of the Agency, cooperation with external stakeholders and establishment of an efficient and mutually agreed upon system of external quality assurance and cooperation with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) subject to European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (hereinafter ESG).

Concrete tasks in 2013 will be shown together with the findings and recommendations from the Self-Evaluation Report of the Agency for 210-2012 and will reflect the action plan made on the basis of the Report. The action plan is presented at the end of the annual work plan. It also includes some of the recommendations from the report compiled by international experts who performed the external evaluation of the Agency in line with the ESG criteria in April 2013.

Individual tasks of the Agency in 2013 will be elaborated and presented so as to facilitate subsequent drafting of the annual report on the work of the Agency in 2013.

Attention is also devoted to unrealised tasks from 2011/2012, i.e. the setting up of the information system, which is essential for the smooth operation of the Agency and the preparation of various analyses. In 2013, the Agency will strive to gain more trust from stakeholders in its operation and to strengthen its advisory role in the Slovenian higher education area.

**A) ACCREDITATIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND STUDY PROGRAMMES, AND EVALUATION OF HIGHER VOCATIONAL COLLEGES (AS OF 1 JANUARY 2013)**

| <b>1. EXECUTIVE OBJECTIVE: DEALING WITH THE APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED BEFORE 2012</b>            |  |  |  |              |
|---|--|--|--|--------------|
| <b>1. Activity: accreditations in higher education</b>  |  |  |  |              |
| <b>Task</b>   | <b>Implementation and accountability</b> | <b>No of applications until 31 December 2012</b> |  | <b>Notes</b> |
| Initial accreditation of study programmes   | Quality Department/ Agency Council       | 162  |  |              |
| Re-accreditation of study programmes  |  | 68   |  |              |
| Initial accreditation of higher education institutions  |  | 14   |  |              |
| Re-accreditation of higher education institutions   |  | 2  |  |              |
| Transformation of higher education institutions   |  | 6  |  |              |
| <b>2. Activity: external evaluation of higher vocational colleges</b>                         |  |  |  |              |
| <b>Task</b>   | <b>Implementation and accountability</b> | <b>No of applications</b>                        |  | <b>Notes</b> |
| External evaluation of higher vocational colleges   | Quality Department/ Agency Council       | 5  |  |              |
| <b>2. EXECUTIVE OBJECTIVE: DEALING WITH THE APPLICATIONS EXPECTED TO BE SUBMITTED IN 2013</b> |  |  |  |              |
| <b>1. Activity: accreditations in higher education</b>  |  |  |  |              |
| <b>Task</b>   | <b>Implementation and accountability</b> | <b>Anticipated no of applications</b>            |  | <b>Notes</b> |
| Initial accreditation of study programmes   | Quality                                  | 31   |  |              |
| Re-accreditation of study programmes  | Department/                              | 90   |  |              |



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|   |  |                                   |                                    |                              |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Initial accreditation of higher education institutions                | Agency Council                           | 5                                 |                                    |                              |
| Re-accreditation of higher education institutions                     |  | 10                                |                                    |                              |
| Transformation of higher education institutions                       |  | 3                                 |                                    | /                            |
| <b>2. Activity: external evaluation of higher vocational colleges</b> |  |                                   |                                    |                              |
| <b>Task</b>   | <b>Implementation and accountability</b> | <b>Planned no of applications</b> | <b>No of received applications</b> | <b>No of opinions/ notes</b> |
| External evaluation of higher vocational colleges                     | Quality Department/<br>Agency Council    | 15                                |                                    |                              |

Note: The applications to change study programmes are not considered in the table. According to the Fiscal Balance Act (ZUJF, Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No 40/2012), a private higher education institution may change the compulsory components of study programmes according to the same procedure under which they have been adopted. A university changes the compulsory components of study programmes on its own. The university informs the Agency on the modified compulsory components of study programmes within 30 days of their adoption. The Agency considers the modifications when re-accrediting study programmes.

Explanations:

The list of publicly available records of the accredited higher education institutions and study programmes is published on the Agency's website [www.nakvis.si](http://www.nakvis.si) under three links

- [Public records on the accreditations of study programmes from 2004 to 2010](#)
- [Public records on the accreditations of study programmes accredited after 1 March 2010](#)
- [Plan for re-accreitations and public records on the accreditations of higher education institutions](#)



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The more precise data on the accreditations of higher education institutions and study programmes or external evaluations of higher education institutions, study programmes and higher vocational colleges are indicated in the appendices.

## **B) ESTABLISHMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION SYSTEM OF THE AGENCY (also included in the 2013 Action Plan)**

| <b>Activity: Establishment of a comprehensive information system</b> |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <b>Task</b>  | <b>Implementation and accountability</b> | <b>Period of performance</b>   | <b>Expected result</b>  |
| Preparation of tender documentation                                  | Staff/<br>Director                       | September 2013   | Comprehensive information system for the Agency, the applicants for accreditation or evaluation and other stakeholders  |
| Publication of the tender, and selection of the contractor           | Staff/<br>Director                       | Publication in July and selection in August 2013                         |   |
| Participation in forming and applying the support information system | Staff/<br>Director                       | until the establishment of the system, expected in the beginning of 2014 | More efficient and rational work of higher quality, and simplification and improvement of accreditation and evaluation procedures and other work processes at the Agency. |
| Connection with the e-VŠ system                                      | Staff/<br>Director                       | until the establishment of the system, expected in the beginning of 2014 | Reduction of administrative burden of the staff, applicants and other stakeholders.   |



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### C) REVISION OF THE TRAINING FOR EXPERTS (included in the 2013 Action Plan)

| <b>Activity 1: training of experts</b>   |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Task</b>  | <b>Implementation and accountability</b>                         | <b>Period of performance</b>                      | <b>Expected result</b>  |
| Surveying experts, applicants, students and other stakeholders; the analysis of surveys              | Quality Department/<br>Agency Self-Evaluation Group/<br>Director | Submission of survey questionnaires, October 2013 | Acquisition of information from different stakeholders on the work done by the Agency and, on the basis of the results, adoption of measures to improve its work, and monitoring the achievement of these measures and designation of responsible persons.  |
| Surveying of the staff on the quality of the visit (external evaluation) and the analysis of surveys |  |   |   |
| Analysis of reports of groups of experts   | Quality Department/<br>Director                                  | December 2013                                     | Preparation of relevant instructions for experts on preparing reports and proposals to supplement the Manual for Experts.<br>Constant monitoring and improvement of the system of external evaluation and accreditation: calibration of the work of groups of experts, providing comparability and objectivity. |
| Revision of the training programme for experts   | Staff/Director   | September 2013                                    | Higher qualifications of experts, better and more unified work of groups of experts (professionalism, efficiency and success).  |



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|   |                |               |   |
|---|----------------|---------------|---|
|   |                |               | Meeting the expectations of stakeholders.   |
| Supplementation of the protocol for the site visit protocol |                |               | Clearer instructions and guidelines for both the experts and other stakeholders regarding the preparation of a visit to an institution or college, the visit schedule, and the actual visit (clearly defined competences, responsibilities, rights and duties of all stakeholders). |
| Collecting amendments to the Manual for Experts.            |                |               | Revised Manual for Experts.   |
| Preparation of the code of ethics for experts.              | Staff/Director | December 2013 | Adoption of the code of ethics for experts entered in registry of the Agency.   |

#### D) TWO NEW POSITIONS financed by the ESF funds

| Activity 1: Employment of new employees financed with the ESF funds                        |                                   |                       |                 |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Task   | Implementation and accountability | Period of performance | Expected result |
| Publication of call for applicants to fill a new vacancy in the General Affairs Department | General Affairs Department        | September 2013        | Archivist       |
| Publication of call for applicants to fill a new vacancy in the Quality Department         |                                   |                       | Translator      |

## **E. PARTICIPATING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SLOVENIA**

The mission of the Agency is constant cooperation with the ministries and other organisations in drafting and specifying national legislation and regulations from the area of higher education and higher vocational education by means of active participation in working groups and at different meetings, and by drafting proposals for laws and other acts. Deadlines for these tasks depend on external stakeholders – typically, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport.

The anticipated amendments of the Higher Education Act (ZViS UPB7, 40/2012-ZUJF, 57/2012-ZPCP-2D, 109/2012) are in accordance with the National Higher Education Programme 2011-2020. The amendments refer mainly to the following: definition of terms (branch, place of implementation, head office, eVŠ), transition to institutional evaluation and only initial accreditation of new study programmes, reduced duration of accreditation validity from 7 to 5 years, further consideration regarding the founding of new universities, faculties and higher education institutions, consideration on using the general administrative procedure in evaluation and accreditation procedures, transnational education, Appeal Committee with the Agency, etc.

### **1. EXECUTIVE OBJECTIVE: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME 2011–2020 IN THE FIELD OF QUALITY AND INTERNATIONALISATION, AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT RENEWAL**

#### **Activity: participation in drafting the new Higher Education Act**

| <b>Task</b>  | <b>Implementation and accountability</b> | <b>Period of performance</b>                               | <b>Expected result</b>   |
|--|--|--|--|
| Drafting proposals for the amendment of the Higher Education Act | Staff/Director, Agency Council           | June 2013 or in line with the plan of responsible ministry | Active participation and submission of constructive proposals for ZViS amendments. |





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## 2. EXECUTIVE OBJECTIVE: FORMING AND IMPLEMENTING UNIFORM CRITERIA AND STANDARDS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INTERNATIONALISATION

### Activity: preparation of the Criteria for Transnational Higher Education

| Task   | Implementation and accountability                      | Period of performance | Expected result  |
|--|--|-----------------------|--|
| Preparation of the Criteria for Transnational Higher Education in cooperation with stakeholders from higher education Organisation and realization of a workshop with the stakeholders               | Staff; Agency Council Working Group/<br>Agency Council | October 2013          |  |
| Analysis of conditions for the implementation of transnational higher education in other countries, monitoring the development of this education, i.e. education according to joint study programmes | Staff/Director   | Permanent task        | Identification of accreditation procedures for TNHE abroad and of good practice examples (procedures, legislation, etc.) Updating the TNHE-related procedures. |

## 3. EXECUTIVE OBJECTIVE: PARTICIPATION IN FORMING THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

### Activity: participation in forming the national qualifications framework

| Task   | Implementation and accountability | Period of performance                                   | Expected result  |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Participation at work meetings and conferences of the working group for forming the national qualifications framework. | Quality Department/<br>Director   | <b>in accordance with the dynamics of the Institute</b> | Identification of the role and importance of the Agency in forming the national qualifications framework; successful cooperation and adoption of |



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|  |  | <b>of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI)</b> | Agency's proposals.<br><br>National qualifications framework.       |
| <b>4. EXECUTIVE OBJECTIVE: DEVELOPMENT AND CONCERN FOR INTRODUCING UNIFORM CRITERIA AND STANDARDS IN STUDY PROGRAMMES</b>  |  |  |   |
| <b>Activity: Constant cooperation with the stakeholders in higher education and higher vocational education and experts of the Agency in exchanging experiences, examples of good practice and needs</b> |  |  |   |
| <b>Task</b>  | <b>Implementation and accountability</b> | <b>Period of performance</b>   | <b>Expected result</b>  |
| Organising visits of the Director to higher education institutions   | Agency Council/<br>Director              | November 2013<br>December 2013   | Individual visits of the Agency's Director and collecting responses |

## RESOURCES

### Financial resources

In 2013, the audit report by the Court of Audit of the Republic of Slovenia is expected.

The Agency's activities are funded by integral and project budgetary funds:

- the former originate directly in the national budget;
- the latter come from the European Structural Funds (hereinafter the ESF funds) for the project "Establishment of a National Quality Assurance System in Higher Education 2010-2014". These are also budgetary resources. These funds are used to cover:
  - the salaries of persons employed on the project,
  - the costs incurred by accreditations of higher education institutions and study programmes and external evaluations of higher education institutions, study programmes and higher vocational colleges (site visits of the groups of experts),
  - business trip expenses,
  - information and communication expenses,
  - costs of publications,
  - promotional material,
  - costs of conferences, seminars and workshops,
  - computer services,
  - representation expenses,
  - partial purchase of computer and office equipment,
  - indirect costs.

It must be noted that the ESF funds are mostly used to finance the basic activity of the Agency and that both the staff employed on the project and the resources are essential for the normal operation of the Agency. The project terminates in 2014, with a possibility for renewal by 2015.

In 2013, the draft revised budget again reduced the resources for the funding of the Agency's operation; however, it will be possible to financially realize 2013 thanks to the ESF funds, which were also decreased.

In 2012, the Agency as a direct non-governmental budget user received funds in the total amount of **EUR 1,295,447** distributed as follows:

**Integral resources** (for 8 employees employed for an indefinite period + Acting Director)

|            |             |
|------------|-------------|
| Salaries   | EUR 343,976 |
| Mat. costs | EUR 174,151 |

Investments EUR 12,525  
High. edu. quality EUR 75,300  
(Council meeting fees)

Material costs mainly cover the cost of rent and operational costs. They are also partly covered by the ESF funds.

**ESF funds** (project lasting until 31 October 2015) (for the salaries of 14 employees employed for a limited period and cumulative costs for the Agency's operation and all accreditations)

Salaries EUR 253,379  
Mat. costs EUR 432,369  
Investments EUR 3,749

The problem will ensue if the ESF funds expire in 2015. The Agency's operation will be strongly impeded or completely disabled.

The National Higher Education Programme 2011-2020 imposes on the Agency a high number of duties, while stating in the action no. 20: "SQAA shall develop and constantly update the external quality assurance system, including all higher education stakeholders, with the explanations

- Explanation: SQAA will create and update the external quality assurance system in full compliance with European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.
- Financing of the action: From 2015, when (co)funding of SQAA from the European Structural Fund expires, **approximately EUR 6 million of budgetary funds** annually shall be earmarked for SQAA, increasing in line with the extent of work and complexity of operation." - end of quote.

The Agency currently finances all of its activities (salaries, accreditations, material costs, external experts, Agency Council, Appeal Committee) with approximately EUR 1.3 million annually. If the Agency received only a third (2 million) of the announced EUR 6 million in 2015 (when the ESF funds expire), this would enable it to continue with good work, otherwise a black scenario awaits.

Financial situation as of 1 August 2013 is presented in more detail below. The budget may be revised and changed.

**INTEGRAL RESOURCES (in EUR) - employees employed for an unlimited period**

| Budget heading | Plan for 2013 | Draft revised budget 2013* | Reduction by |
|----------------|---------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| Salaries       | 337,511.00    | 298,000.00                 | 39,511.00    |



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|                             |                   |                   |                  |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Material costs              | 132,213.57        | 133,041.32        | -827.75          |
| Investments                 | 2,000.00          | 1827.68           | 172.32           |
| Quality of higher education | 47,233.43         | 50,000.00         | -2,766.57        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                | <b>518,958.00</b> | <b>482,869.00</b> | <b>36,089.00</b> |

### **ESF FUNDS (in EUR)**

| <b>Budget heading</b>               | <b>Plan for 2013</b> | <b>Revised budget 2013*</b> | <b>(Reduction) by</b> | <b>After the changed project</b> |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| ESF – EU (85%)                      | 2,142,467.50         | 1,399,888.00                | (742,579.50)          | 808,350.00                       |
| ESF - Slovenian participation (15%) | 378,082.50           | 243,636.00                  | (134,446.50)          | 142,650.00                       |
| <b>Total ESF</b>                    | <b>2,520,550.00</b>  | <b>1,643,524.00</b>         | <b>(877,026.00)</b>   | <b>951,000.00</b>                |

### **TOTAL RESOURCES of the Agency - REVISED BUDGET 2013 (in EUR)**

| <b>Budget heading</b>          | <b>Plan for 2013</b> | <b>Revised budget 2013*</b> | <b>Reduction by</b> |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Total integ. res. + ESF</b> | <b>3,039,508.00</b>  | <b>2,126,393.00</b>         | <b>913,115.00</b>   |

\* According to the proposal of the Ministry of Finance of 2 July 2013.

#### a) Salaries

The salary heading can still be covered from integral resources in 2013. In April 2013, the Agency was appointed the Director. The employee performing as Acting Director returned to her position. Salaries for nine employees employed for an indefinite period and the Director's salary are currently covered from the integral part. Major difficulties arise when covering material costs.

#### b) Material costs

Due to the movement to larger business premises (901.12 m<sup>2</sup>) in October 2011, extremely high overheads are planned for 2013, incomparable with those from 2011 (business premises with an area of 261.48 m<sup>2</sup>). These costs amount to around EUR 175,000 and cannot be fully covered by the integral resources.

In accordance with the general financial situation in the Republic of Slovenia, the Agency adopted measures to reduce the use of integral resources in the beginning of 2012 (payment of the essential monthly overheads only, no additional contracts

were concluded, e.g. for security, insurance of furniture, computer and other equipment, for the backup of data at another location).

In addition to the essential monthly expenses (rent and other operational costs: electricity, heating, internet, computer network maintenance, municipal services ...), funds for the following are necessary:

- the external audit regarding the efficient use of resources for the successful achievement of the Agency's planned objectives in accordance with Article 31 of the Resolution on the Founding of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. The provider of the audit had been selected, but the procedure had to be stopped due to the lack of resources; the Court of Audit of the Republic of Slovenia carried out the audit in the meantime;
- the tasks related to the membership in international associations in the field of quality assurance in higher education, such as ENQA and EQAR, which is in line with the Resolution on the National Programme for Higher Education in the Republic of Slovenia for the period 2011-2020. In order to achieve this aim, increased international activity will be needed, leading to additional costs.

#### c) Investments

There are practically no funds for investments.

#### d) Quality

This heading includes meeting fees and compensation for the Council members, the Appeal Committee and payment to experts according to the accreditation criteria.

When 'negotiating' with the Ministry to increase the funds, it is always emphasised that the Agency Council meets at least once monthly, deciding on accreditations and evaluations of higher education institutions and study programmes and on issues regarding the external evaluation of higher vocational colleges, and that the Council members are also active in individual working groups. Smooth operation of the Council is thus essential for the Agency to perform its basic activity. Apart from the funds for meeting fees and contract work agreements for experts according to the accreditation criteria, additional resources are needed to enable the Council members to attend international conferences. The Ministry informed us several times that the application for the increase of integral resources was being examined and that they were aware of the issues and would try to solve them.

**If no additional integral resources are obtained despite constant efforts, the following measures are planned:**

- the 15% lump sum from the ESF funds would be used: certain material costs associated with the implementation of the project can be paid from the ESF funds. Considering the current use of resources, the estimated



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amount is EUR 50,000. The amount of these funds depends on the expenditure for specific types of costs, such as salaries, external experts, travel expenses, information etc. The use of the funds must be in orderly ratio with the integral resources, i.e. 50% : 50%;

- we should find a way to terminate the lease contract for the business premises and move to smaller premises.
- there will be a problem in 2015, if funding from the ESF funds according to the 2011-2015 contract is terminated, because the Agency's operation will be put into question, lacking in funds even to cover the full rent of its premises.

#### **ESF FUNDS (in EUR)**

| <b>Budget heading</b>               | <b>Plan for 2013</b> | <b>Revised budget 2013</b> | <b>After the changed project</b> |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ESF – EU (85%)                      | 2,142,467.50         | 1,399,888.00               | 808,350.00                       |
| ESF - Slovenian participation (15%) | 378,082.50           | 243,636.00                 | 142,650.00                       |
| <b>Total ESF</b>                    | <b>2,520,550.00</b>  | <b>1,643,524.00</b>        | <b>951,000.00</b>                |

#### **Financial plan for 2013 by the type of expenses (ESF funds)**

| <b>Type of expense</b>   | <b>SQAA plan for 2013</b> |
|--|---------------------------|
| Salaries and other employees' expenses                                       | 300,000.00                |
| Student work   | 5,000.00                  |
| External experts (implementation of external evaluations and accreditations) | 350,000.00                |
| Daily allowances, accommodation and travel expenses (for the employees)      | 20,000.00                 |
| Information and communication  | 5,000.00                  |
| Publications   | 20,000.00                 |
| Promotional material   | 5,000.00                  |
| Costs for conferences/symposia/seminars/trainings                            | 20,000.00                 |
| Representation expenses  | 2,000.00                  |
| VAT  | 40,000.00                 |
| Other outsourced services  | 40,000.00                 |
| Computer services  | 30,000.00                 |
| Purchase of furniture and office equipment                                   | 2,000.00                  |
| Computer equipment - inform. system  | 10,000.00                 |
| Indirect costs - lump sum (up to 15%)  | 102,000.00                |

|                                    |                   |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Planned expenditure - total</b> | <b>951,000.00</b> |
| ESF funds (85%)                    | 808,350.00        |
| Slovenian participation (15%)      | 142,650.00        |

The difference between the budgetary resources and the planned budgetary resources for 2013 arose because the initial amount was over-estimated. The planned amount of EUR 951,000.00 for 2013 is sufficient to cover all accreditation- and external evaluation-related costs. A more detailed indicative presentation of costs is provided in the table above. The funds will also be sufficient to cover the salaries of employees employed on the project, and most likely for two new positions.

In the beginning of September 2013, the project "Establishment of a National Quality Assurance System in Higher Education 2010-2014" was extended until 31 October 2015. To a certain extent, the Agency's work has thus been facilitated, since many demanding tasks associated with the Agency's self-evaluation and external evaluation must be completed, a comprehensive information system must be established, trainings for experts must be revised, more active participation in international projects must be provided and all activities necessary first for the entry of the Agency in EQAR and then for its membership in ENQA must be carried out.

Years of experience have shown that in order to implement the planned activities in a quality manner and achieve the objectives, not all funds available by the end of the project, i.e. by 2015, are needed or will be used. The revised total amount available to the Agency according to the project is EUR 4,606,499.48, which is enough to achieve all the objectives from the project and to hire two new employees.

## Human resources

New hirings in the Agency are planned:

- in the human resources plan for those financed from the integral resources;
- and in the ESF project documentation for those financed by the ESF funds.

The Agency's human resources plan for 2012 and 2013 (submitted to the Ministry of Finance) includes 14 systematised positions; there were 12 employees in 2012, now there are 11 after one left in January 2012. Unfortunately, it was not possible to hire another employee to fill the vacant position in line with the human resources plan due to financial limitations and the adopted revised state budget, so the employment situation in 2012 is worse compared to 31 December 2011.

The situation regarding employments funded from the ESF funds is different. Twelve employees are employed in this context on a contract basis.



Compared with the end of 2011, when the Agency employed 22 members of staff, the staffing situation as of 15 June 2012 was less favourable, with two employees less (three if taking into account the termination of employment of the previous Director), so the current number is 19. The situation will improve with the planned hiring from the ESF funds; the call for applicants to fill a new vacancy (archivist) was published in August 2013. The staffing situation changed in 2013. In April 2013, a new director was appointed and the employee previously performing as Acting Director returned to her position.

**The staffing situation as of 1 August 2013** is as follows: Director of the Agency, 9 employees employed for an indefinite period (integral resources) and 12 employees employed for a definite period (ESF funds). Preferably, an archivist and a translator should be employed to reach the number of 24 or 25 employees at the Agency.

It should be noted that the Norwegian agency NOKUT employs 75 employees. Norway has a population of 4 million and a lower number of higher education institutions.

The staffing situation at the Agency will thus be highly worrying when employment contracts for 12 (out of 22) employees employed for a definite period expire. The Agency must enforce its rights granted according to ZViS and the National Higher Education Programme of the Republic of Slovenia 2011-2020.

There are not enough employees employed for an indefinite period to carry out all the tasks to be performed by the Agency. In 2013, in addition to improving the Agency's operation, the external evaluation of the Agency (ECA, MULTRA) and preparations for the external evaluation to become a member of ENQA will have to be performed. Moreover, the profile of employees is specific, as all of them have passed the exam in general administrative procedure. If these colleagues were to leave, extreme damage would be caused to quality assurance in higher education in Slovenia.

If we are to become members of ENQA, we have to comply with the ESG Standard 3.4 Resources, which reads "Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes, procedures and staff."

In 2013, the Agency wishes to obtain an assurance from the Ministry of Finance to be assigned more integral resources in the budget, which is a prerequisite to hire employees for an indefinite period. This would prevent the Agency's operation to be impeded.

The plan is as follows:

1. to introduce an information system so that not all members of the Quality Department staff will have to perform administrative tasks or tasks which hinder fast, efficient and good content-focused work when dealing with applications, drafting findings and reports, decisions, resolutions etc.
2. some employees in the Quality Department will, apart from conducting accreditation and evaluation procedures, manage self-evaluation and preparation for the external evaluation of the Agency, renewal of acts and external evaluation of higher vocational colleges, assume permanent duties in substantially completed areas; the reassignment of duties will take into account the complexity of the position, professional qualification of the employees, their commitment, interests and wishes to perform a specific type of work:
  - to attend two regular monthly meetings with the Higher Education Directorate at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport;
  - for the register of experts and all correspondence with experts until the appointment of the group of experts by the Agency Council;
  - for prompt updating of information on the Agency's website, public relations and organisation of events at the Agency;
  - for the establishment of a comprehensive information system;
  - for international cooperation and development, and monitoring of developments and good practice examples in other comparable agencies;
  - for presentation brochures, reports and other publications - translation-related;
  - for prompt updating of information on the applications and accredited higher education institutions and study programmes and external evaluations of higher vocational colleges, for proper archiving of applications, etc.;
  - for the development of internal quality assurance systems at the institutions/colleges upon the transition to institutional evaluation;
  - for PR services of the Agency;

This means that individual members of staff will have full insight into a specific area in order to realise tasks within the deadlines and to help their colleagues;

3. simplification of procedures and efficient preparation of materials for the Agency Council sessions, revision of various protocols.

Intensive dialogue concerning the critical financial and staffing issues with the relevant stakeholders must continue.

The Sloka staff Union, member of the Pergam Confederation of Trade Unions of Slovenia, is active at the Agency and endeavours to participate in resolving financial and staffing issues of the Agency, mainly through direct dialogue with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

### **Self-evaluation of the Agency for 2013 and the action plan**

In the last months of 2013, the 2013 self-evaluation of the Agency and related activities will be carried out. The self-evaluation report will serve as the basis to complete the application for the external evaluation of the Agency to obtain full membership in ENQA. A detailed overview of the 2013 action plan is provided below.



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## ACTION PLAN FOR THE 2013 SELF-EVALUATION OF THE AGENCY

| Set of activities   | Sequential number of activity | Activity  | Participants                                  | Activity coordinator | Deadline              | Reporting (weekly or monthly) | Note                                 |
|---|-------------------------------|---|---|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>I.<br/>Revision of internal acts (SQAA Quality Manual, Criteria for the Accreditation and External Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions and Higher Vocational Colleges)</b> | 1                             | Appointment of the group responsible for the revision of the SQAA Quality Manual (QM)   |   | SQAA Director        |                       |                               |                                      |
|   | 2                             | Drafting QM amendments  | Debevec, Šubic, Director                      |                      | October 2013          |                               |                                      |
|   | 3                             | Coordination of the amended QM with SQAA internal stakeholders  | /   | Director             | Beginning of October  |                               |                                      |
|   | 4                             | Analysis of comments and proposals regarding QM and preparation of draft QM   | Debevec, Šubic, Director                      |                      | After the first draft |                               |                                      |
|   | 5                             | Adoption of the amended QM  | /   | Director             | October 2013          |                               |                                      |
|   | 6                             | Drafting the amended Criteria for the Accreditation and External Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes | Braček-Lalič, Debevec, Zupančič Kočar, Kramar | Braček-Lalič         | October 2013          |                               | To be adopted before ZViS is amended |
|   | 7                             | Coordination of the draft   | /   | Director             | November              |                               |                                      |



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|                                |    | amended Criteria for the Accreditation with internal and external stakeholders   |   |                        | 2013          |  |  |
|                                | 8  | Analysis of the collected comments and proposals to the Criteria for the Accreditation and preparation of the proposal for the adoption at the SQAA Council                                    | Braček-Lalič, Debevec, Zupančič Kočar, Kramar | Braček-Lalič           | November 2013 |  |  |
|                                | 9  | Adoption of the Criteria for the Accreditation at the SQAA Council   | /   | Director               | December 2013 |  |  |
|                                | 10 | Presentation of the revised Criteria to the stakeholders (series of workshops and conferences)   |   | Director               |               |  | After the adoption of the Criteria at the Agency Council |
|                                | 11 | Drafting proposal for the amendments of the Criteria for Entry in the Register of Experts (possibility to include students directly, without previous approval by the Slovenian Student Union) | Širok, Hanc, Zupančič Kočar                   |                        |               |  |  |
| <b>II. Training of experts</b> | 12 | Appointment of the group to prepare the revision of the training for experts   |   | SQAA Director, Debevec |               |  |  |
|                                | 13 | Revision of the training   | Debevec,                                      |                        | September     |  |  |



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|---|----|--|---|----------------------------|----------------|--|---|
|   |    | system for experts   | Šubic, Širok,<br>Hanc,<br>Zupančič<br>Kočar,<br>Kajtezović,<br>Šumiga,<br>Vončina,<br>Mravlja |                            | 2013           |  |   |
|   |    | Drafting uniform report preparation forms for the groups of experts  | Mravlja   |                            | September 2013 |  |   |
|   | 14 | Drafting the time schedule for trainings to be carried out in 2013/2014 and organisation and implementation of the trainings     | Hanc,<br>Kajtezović<br>Vončina  | Director,<br>Debevec       |                |  | First training at the end of October 2013 |
|   | 15 | Analysis of candidate satisfaction and proposals to update the training contents   | Hanc,<br>Kajtezović<br>Vončina  |                            |                |  | After the training                        |
| <b>III.<br/>SQAA information system</b> | 16 | Appointment of the group to set up a new SQAA IS   | Krček, Štuhec,<br>Šubic   | SQAA<br>Director,<br>Krček |                |  |   |
|   | 17 | Establishing cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport | Krček   |                            |                |  | Established                               |



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|--|----|--|---|----------------------|------------------------|--|---|
|  | 18 | Preparation of tender documentation to select the contractor for the SQAA IS, implementation of the tender and selection of the contractor | Krčec, Štuhec, Šubic + Golob                |                      |                        |  | In the final stage  |
|  | 19 | Inventory of procedures and activities at SQAA (together with the selected provider)   |   |                      |                        |  | After the contractor has been selected                            |
|  | 20 | Setting up electronic databases for the period before the SQAA IS implementation   | Štuhec<br>Kramar                            |                      |                        |  |   |
| <b>IV.<br/>Internal quality assurance system</b> | 21 | Appointment of the working group to draft the self-evaluation report   | Šubic, Širok, Hanc Braček-Lalić, Kajtezović | SQAA Director, Šubic |                        |  |   |
|  | 22 | Plan for the implementation of SQAA self-evaluation for 2013   | Šubic                                       |                      | By the end of the year |  | The self-evaluation report will be prepared by the end of January |
|  | 23 | Calibration of the SQAA staff (and Council members) - twice monthly  | Debevec, Kramar, Zupančič Kočar             | Director             | Day-to-day duties      |  | Regular presentation at SQAA weekly meetings                      |
|  |    | Appointment of the group   | Debevec,                                    | SQAA                 |                        |  |   |



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|   | 24 | to prepare the Meta-report (2010-2013)   | Mravlja, Šumiga, Štuhec, Milas | Director             |               |  |  |
|   | 25 | Drafting the SQAA Meta-report for 2012, 2011, 2012 and 2013  | Širok, Horvat                  | Debevec              | December 2013 |  |  |
|   | 26 | Publishing the final evaluation reports of the groups of experts   |                                |                      | Immediately   |  |  |
| <b>V.<br/>External quality assurance system</b> | 27 | Appointment of the group to prepare the application and prepare for the external evaluation to become member of ENQA (and to be entered into EQAR) |                                | SQAA Director, Šubic |               |  | Submission of the application for the membership in ENQA in March 2014; the application for the entry in EQAR was submitted in August 2013 |
|   | 28 | Plan and implementation of measures for the membership in ENQA   | Širok, Horvat                  | Šubic                |               |  |  |
|   | 29 | Preparing the content analysis of the decisions and procedures of accreditations and external evaluations  |                                |                      |               |  |  |



## CONCLUSION

2013 will be, in addition to activities we have to perform by the law and other acts of the Agency, devoted to the Agency's international affirmation. Next to accreditations and external evaluations of higher education institutions and study programmes, and external evaluations of higher vocational colleges, the tasks are in particular the following:

- providing undisturbed operation of the Agency, particularly in terms of resolving the acute financial and staffing issues;
- self-evaluation of the Agency and preparation for ECA and MULTRA external evaluation, as well as the submission of application to become members of EQAR and ENQA;
- renewal of the candidate for entry into register of experts training programme, analyses of accreditation and evaluation reports by the experts and other required materials;
- active participation with the stakeholders in higher education and higher vocational education at workshops and professional consultations;
- participation in international projects related to the Agency's work;
- cooperation with foreign agencies;
- renewal of the Criteria for Accreditation and External Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes and of application form as their integral part;
- collection of data from higher education institutions, higher vocational colleges, experts and other stakeholders on Agency's work, analysis of survey questionnaires and, on the basis of survey results, adoption of measures for improvements;
- selection of and cooperation with the contractor for establishment of comprehensive information system of the Agency;
- planned participation at various conferences, consultations and workshops at home and abroad;
- translation of important materials into English, and maintaining the Agency's website in English;
- participation in changes of higher education legislation.

Gaining trust of all stakeholders and wider public into the work of the Agency and strengthening its recognition in Slovenia will be of significant importance. In September 2013, the Agency's Director will begin to regularly visit higher education institutions in Slovenia. The Agency must strive for the assurance and improvement of its own quality, being the foundation for efficient, with all stakeholders agreed upon and generally acknowledged external quality assurance system in higher education and higher vocational education. In 2013, it will be known whether the application for the entry in EQAR, European Quality Assurance Register, has been successful.

Ljubljana, 15 September 2013.