

# REPORT ON THE WORK AND OPERATIONS OF THE SLOVENIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN 2021



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Nacionalna agencija Republike Slovenije  
za kakovost v visokem šolstvu

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Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency  
for Higher Education

**REPORT ON THE WORK AND OPERATIONS OF  
THE SLOVENIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE  
AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN 2021**

## Introduction

Besides preparing the work report for 2021, a year that continued to be strongly marked by the COVID-19 epidemic, the Agency completed most of the tasks from the action or work plan. Compared to 2020, when COVID-19 significantly changed the working conditions and the Government suspended all accreditation and evaluation procedures, the Agency did not face any serious obstacles in carrying out its activities.

In 2021, the Agency started implementing a new Agency Development Strategy for the Period 2021-2025, which follows the key priority areas of the Agency, especially the desire to adopt an act on quality in higher and higher vocational education, improve assessments by quality standards and accreditation and evaluation procedures, carry out in-depth analytic work, establish of up-to-date databases on selected activity, comply with the guidelines of sustainable development, and engage in active international cooperation and proactive communication.

It has begun to intensify its activities for the adoption of the Act on Quality in Higher and Higher Vocational Education, with which the Agency wants to systematically regulate the quality assessment system of higher education institutions and vocational colleges. The commission of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, which included representatives of the Agency and various higher education stakeholders, started working. The working group drafted extensive substantive baselines and set good foundations for further procedures of adoption of the Act. With the aim of developing and operating a support system for quality assessment, the Agency also adopted amendments to other important legal regulations, including *Minimum Standards for Appointment to Titles of Higher Education Teachers, Scientific Staff and Higher Education Staff at Higher Education Institutions*.

In 2021, the Agency carried out several procedures of accreditation and external evaluation of higher education institutions, study programmes and higher vocational colleges. Despite being understaffed, the Agency can boast quality personnel and solid work organisation. The conduct of procedures of accreditation and external evaluation of higher education institutions, study programmes and higher vocational colleges was prompt and accountable, which is evident from the results of survey conducted among higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges. The improved system of assessment according to quality standards and procedures for accreditations and evaluations, as well as in-depth analytical work at the Agency certainly contributed to this. The Agency can boast the creation of an online guide to assessments in accreditation and evaluation procedures, which in the past provided experts and staff good guidelines for the assessment of individual quality standards. It also continued to deepen its cooperation with various stakeholders, organised various trainings for experts and employees, and consultations for other interested stakeholders in higher education.

A considerable part of activities was devoted to the establishment of up-to-date databases on selected activities at higher education institutions. Despite many challenges in collecting data and records, including the protection of personal data, the Agency is pleased with the progress. It established a record of research data and basic data on employability and libraries. The upgraded and very well-functioning internal information system iNakvis also made a significant contribution to the establishment of up-to-date databases and internal records of the Agency.

Despite the limitations associated with the epidemic, the Agency's assessment of the well-established and sustainable way of distance work is positive. It is content with the organisation and implementation of distance site visits, which are carried out smoothly. With the aim of improving distance visits, the Agency prepared the *Guidelines for Distance Site Visits*, which were included in the work and programme of the *Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA)*.

In the context of international cooperation, the Agency estimates that it has successfully deepened international contacts and expanded its ability to operate at the international level. As part of CEENQA's leadership, it organised the annual assembly of the association, encouraged closer cooperation between agencies and coordinated thematic seminars every two months. The Agency believes that this has contributed to the visibility of individual

agencies in Central and Eastern Europe and exchange of good practices as well as challenges in the field of work of quality assurance agencies in higher education.

In the field of communication with internal and external stakeholders, the visibility and recognition of the Agency's work continued to strengthen. It continued making presentation films of higher education institutions. It upgraded the internal and external information system, including the updating of online content; last but not least, it consistently informed interested stakeholders about its regular activities via the monthly e-newsletter.

After ten years of operation of the Agency on Slovenska cesta, 2021 was marked by the move to new premises, which are still in the centre of Ljubljana. An important event in the past year was the Court of Auditors' audit of the Agency's operations. The guidelines and findings of the Court of Auditors will help the Agency carry out its work even more accurately and responsibly in the future. In the context of the implementation of individual budget items, the Agency is very satisfied with the financial planning and especially with the utilisation of financial resources.

Although being aware of the challenges related to striving to gain the trust of the widest possible circle of various higher education stakeholders, the Agency will continue to pursue the 2021-2025 strategic goals with a high degree of transparency and responsibility and continue to strive for quality higher education in Slovenia.

Franci Demšar, Ph.D.

Director

Ljubljana, February 2022

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## I ABOUT THE AGENCY

The Republic of Slovenia established the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter: the Agency) in 2010 as a public body for quality assurance in higher education and for development and advisory work. The Agency is a direct non-governmental budget user. Acting under public authority, it issues general acts for the exercise of public authorities and individual administrative acts. In carrying out its work, the Agency is independent and autonomous and committed to the principles of professionalism, impartiality, legality and political neutrality. The Agency is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ENQA, the European Register of Agencies – EQAR, the ECA Accreditation Consortium – ECA, Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education – CEENQA, and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education – INQAAHE. Its membership in international associations for quality assurance in higher education proves the compliance of its operation with European standards and guidelines.

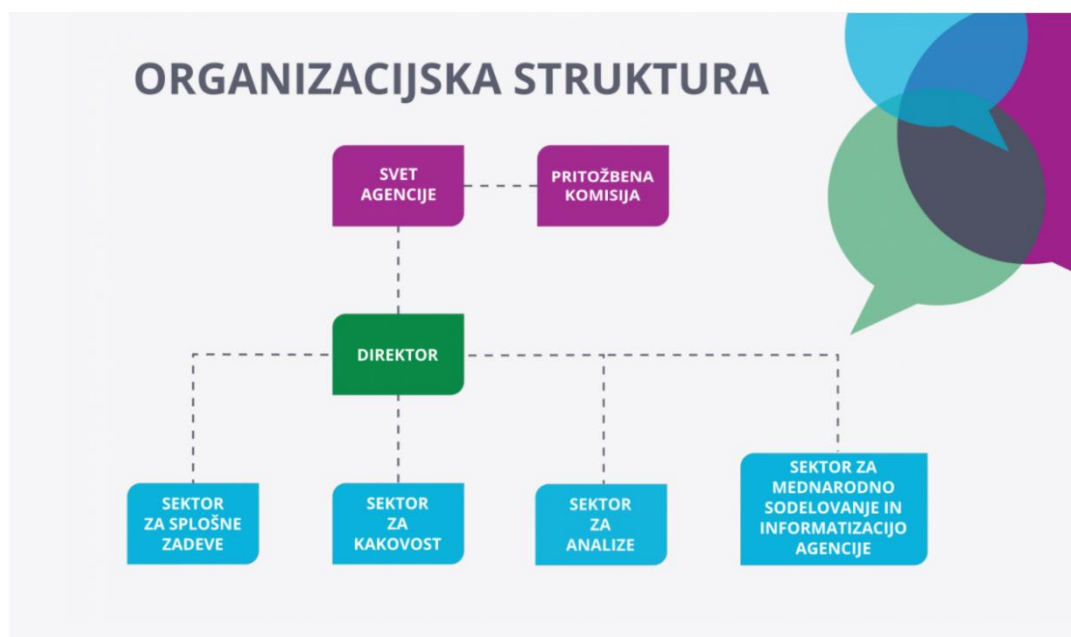
### Mission

The Agency provides for development and operation of the quality assurance system in the Slovenian higher education area. It operates with substantive and formal responsibility and provides counselling for all stakeholders and participants in tertiary education in accordance with the European and global development orientations.

### Vision

The Agency shall, with its system of quality assurance development, contribute to 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.

## I.1 INTERNAL ORGANISATION OF THE AGENCY



The bodies of the Agency are the following: the Agency Council, the Director and the Appeal Committee. Under the law, Agency Council is the highest decision-making body of the Agency. The Appeal Committee is a second-instance body deciding on appeals against decisions adopted by the Agency Council in the procedures for accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes. The Director manages and acts on behalf of the

Agency and organises and directs its work and operations. Tatjana Debevec was authorised to act as the Director's alternate in 2021.

In 2021, the work of the Agency was organised within four departments, the **Quality Assurance Department, International Cooperation and Information Technology Department, Analytics Department** and **the General Affairs Department**. Each department has its own head. The tasks of the departments are intertwined in terms of content, and are often performed by employees from different departments. The Agency's core activity, accreditation and evaluation procedures, is managed by employees from the Quality Assurance Department, the Analytics Department and the International Cooperation and Information Technology Department.

### Basic fields of work and tasks by department:

<b>QUALITY ASSURANCE DEPARTMENT</b>	
<b>Basic work areas and tasks of the department:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— criteria and other provisions from the field of quality assurance;</li> <li>— accreditations and evaluations;</li> <li>— modifications of study programmes;</li> <li>— cooperation with stakeholders (institutions/colleges, experts);</li> <li>— keeping and updating records (on accreditations, evaluations, modifications, transnational higher education – VTI ...);</li> <li>— archiving applications and other documents.</li> </ul>	
<b>Head: Jožica Kramar, alternate Zala Sečnik</b>	
<b>Staff: Gregor Rebernik, Anita Kajtazović, Martina Mravlja</b>	
<b>Task</b>	<b>Contents</b>
<b>1. Criteria and other provisions from the field of quality assurance</b>	
<b>2. Accreditations and evaluations</b>	
Assignment of roles and monitoring of work of employees	Oversight of the work of staff and weekly reporting on the situation.
Preparation of NAKVIS Council meetings	Preparation of the agenda, preparation and sending of invitations, preparation of materials for Council members and for review, writing minutes and overseeing the implementation of decisions.
Conducting procedures	Review of the completeness of the applications in terms of form and contents; communication between applicants and NAKVIS; work with groups of experts; preparation of groups for a visit to an institution/college, active participation in the preparation of reports and their review; coordination of schedules and lists of participants in assessments; managing and overseeing the legality of procedures; preparing cases for consideration by the Agency Council and in the event of any complaints from applicants; participation in Agency Council meetings; preparation of files for the archives ...
Coordination of work	Regular coordination of the work of staff, striving for uniform management of procedures and uniform content emphases or guidelines, interpretation of criteria; solving problems and more complex matters ...

Register of experts	Monitoring and updating the register of experts, preparation of materials for the work of the commission for the selection of experts, calls for candidates, reviewing applications of candidates, communication with experts and composition of groups of experts for individual procedures.
<b>3. Modifications of study programmes</b>	
Prompt examination of modifications of study programmes	Examination of all received modifications, determination of legality and compliance with quality standards; submission to the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, coordination with the applicant.
Preparation of draft measures in case of any inappropriate modifications	Proposals on the possible introduction of an extraordinary evaluation of a study programme, forwarding materials to the Council, participation in the Council, cooperation with the commission for extraordinary evaluations, preparation of materials, clarifications and inquiries on individual cases.
<b>4. Cooperation with stakeholders (institutions/colleges, experts)</b>	
Preparation of written replies to questions	Interpretation of criteria and other regulations, procedures, information on applications, study programmes, institutions/colleges.
Preparation of certificates	Certificates on accreditation of institutes/colleges, state approval of study programmes for foreign graduates, institutions, certificates on participation of experts in assessment groups ...
Ongoing contacts and joint resolution of issues with external stakeholders	Permanent contacts with ministries (regulated professions), SORS (collection and processing of statistical data), Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (Slovenian framework for qualifications), universities, associations of independent institutes/colleges and other legal and natural persons; monitoring legislation in individual areas.
<b>5. Keeping and updating records (on accreditations, evaluations, modifications, etc.)</b>	
Online organiser	Regular updating of information on the status of applications in the process of consideration: regular accreditations and evaluations of study programmes, institutions/colleges; extraordinary evaluations of institutions/colleges and study programmes; evaluations of a sample of study programmes, transformations of higher education institutions, transnational contracts.
Records on applications	Records on accreditations and evaluations of study programmes, institutes/colleges, transnational contracts, notifications.
Records on accreditation and evaluation decisions	Records of issued and final decisions, publication of reports of groups of experts, decisions and opinions, regular review and updating, transmission of data to eVŠ, MIZŠ (opinions for colleges), SORS and Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training ...
Records on modifications of study programmes	Regular review and updating of records on modifications, transmission to eVŠ.
<b>6. Archiving applications and other documents.</b>	



Management of the Agency archives	Review of files, preparation of material on issues in the field of publicly available information related to accreditation and evaluation applications, selection and submission to the Archives of Slovenia, education in the field, coordination of the case classification plan ...
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## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT

### Basic work areas and tasks of the department:

- international activities;
- organisation of annual international conference;
- eNakvis and links with databases (SICRIS, IZUM ...)
- iNakvis (automation of internal processes, management and keeping of records, support for the work of the Council ...)
- keeping and updating records (on accreditations, evaluations, modifications, transnational higher education – VTI ...);
- communication.

**Head: Klemen Šubic, alternate Maja Milas (Nataša Kramar as of 15 May 2021)**

**Staff: Andrej Krček and Tilen Heco**

Task	Contents
<b>1. International activities</b>	
Participation in international associations: ECA, CEENQA, ENQA, EQAR, INQAAHE	Cooperation, linking, participation at meetings, conferences, events, active participation of employees in working groups of international associations and administrative committees. Representation of NAKVIS in international environment, networking ...
Cooperation with foreign quality assurance agencies (bilateral, multilateral) and establishing conditions for the Agency's operation abroad	Carrying out external evaluations abroad, exchange of good practices, networking, exchange of experts ...
Participation in international meetings, conferences, workshops	Participation and cooperation in international meetings in quality assurance in higher education. Preparation of annual calendar of important events.
Participation in various European or international projects as partners or responsible institutions	Projects in the Agency's field of work, e.g.: accreditations and evaluations, implementation of European standards, external and internal quality assurance systems.
<b>2. Organisation of annual international conference</b>	
Planning and organisation of annual international conference.	Determining the topic, organisation, preparation and collection of contributions related to international practices in tertiary education or quality assurance.
<b>3. eNakvis and links with databases (SICRIS, IZUM, etc.)</b>	
Maintenance and upgrading of the existing eNakvis functionalities	Establishment of a module for data analysis and processing; establishment of a module for the implementation of self-evaluation procedures; establishing functions for the Agency's experts and the register of experts; consolidation of common data between different information systems and databases; integration of the system into external services SICRIS, COBISS, eVŠ and DEQAR.
Implementation and maintenance of new eNakvis functionalities	With further development, the system should enable: – easier and more transparent work of experts and Agency Council members (preparation for visiting an institution/college, writing reports, making and submitting comments, reviewing materials ...);

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- preparation and development of a self-evaluation system in eNakvis – integration of self-evaluation questionnaires,</li> <li>- various analyses,</li> <li>- easier assistance and counselling to users,</li> <li>- custody of contracts and overseeing the implementation of contracts.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Keeping and updating records (on accreditations, evaluations, modifications, VTI, etc.)</b>	
Keeping and updating records.	Collection of material and recording of applications and documentation on accreditations, evaluations, modifications of study programmes and transformations of higher education institutions and VTI.
Establishment and implementation of the iNakvis online application.	Regular updating of data on the status of applications in the consideration process, monitoring the implementation of the action plan, managing various databases and recording online meetings.
<b>5. Communication</b>	
Daily monitoring of publications	Monitoring clipping, stakeholder responses, opinion polls, satisfaction with the Agency's work.
Communication with media and stakeholders	Preparation and publication of press releases, newsletters etc.
Care of social networks	Twitter, publication of newsletters, press releases etc.
Agency website	Editing websites, adding and publishing content, preparing texts for an English website, adapting for improved accessibility, overseeing the overall visual identity of the website, updating information and content.
<b>ANALYTICS DEPARTMENT</b>	
<b>Basic work areas and tasks of the department:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— plans and reports (annual work and financial plan and report on the work and operation of the Agency, strategy);</li> <li>— analyses, documents, publications;</li> <li>— self-evaluation of the Agency;</li> <li>— manuals, guides;</li> <li>— organisation and cooperation in different events (conferences, consultations, training courses, workshops);</li> <li>— establishment of databases;</li> <li>— translation.</li> </ul>	
<b>Head: Tatjana Debevec, alternate Jernej Širok, M.Sc. (Maja Milas as of 15 May 2021)</b> <b>Staff: Matjaž Štuhec, Ph.D., Jernej Širok, M.Sc. and Tatjana Horvat</b>	
<b>Task</b>	<b>Contents</b>
<b>1. Plans and reports (annual work and financial plan and report on the work and operation of the Agency, strategy)</b>	
Preparation of the annual work and financial plan	Presentation of the Agency, self-evaluation findings and reports and preparation of a current AWP. Examination of sources.
Preparation of work and operation report	Overview of internal organisation of the Agency and basic work areas and tasks by department. Overview of the performance of first- and second-instance decision-making bodies. Overview of accreditations and evaluations. Overview of priorities and overview of implementation of the current action plan.

Strategic planning	Overview of implementation of past strategic goals. Drafting new strategic goals and coordination with stakeholders.
<b>2. Analyses, documents, publications</b>	
Analysis of reports of groups of experts, self-evaluation reports of institutions/colleges and opinions of stakeholders	Periodic thematic and systemic analyses for further development of the Agency (collection, processing and analysis of data, preparation of substantive analyses). Preparation of methodology for analyses.
<b>3. Self-evaluation of the Agency</b>	
Collecting and analysing evaluation questionnaires	Analysing the replies or opinions of stakeholders and preparing findings with proposals for improving the Agency's work.
<b>4. Manuals, guides</b>	
Development of manuals, guides and guidelines to support external quality assessments and help stakeholders to understand quality in higher education and its effects.	Characteristics of external assessments, special features of degrees and types of study, its disciplinary integration and institutional arrangement. Special features of assessment and assessed matters – substantive highlights for assessments and specific topics (e.g. libraries, distance learning...). Addressing problems and errors in external assessments.
<b>5. Conferences, consultations, training courses, workshops</b>	
Preparation of the annual publication of the Agency	Overview of Agency's annual work and analyses.
Planning and preparation of events	Designing or determining the content of events or participating lecturers; invitations to participate, etc. Organisation of events.
Implementation and participation in conferences, symposia, consultations and workshops in the field of quality assurance and tertiary education.	Consideration and presentation of the results of analyses, databases and possibilities for their use, characteristics of evaluation practices and special characteristics of tertiary education.
Training candidates for experts or Agency experts	Preparation of a candidate for group work, monitoring and evaluation of their work, checking the knowledge of regulations in the field, cooperation with chairs of groups of experts in preparing the final evaluation. Periodic trainings of already appointed experts (e.g. on changes in criteria and other regulations).
<b>6. Establishment of databases</b>	
Collection and analysis of data on graduate employability and scientific and research productivity of higher education teachers	Collection and analysis of data on graduate employability and scientific and research productivity of higher education teachers, establishment and prompt refreshing of corresponding databases.
<b>7. Translation</b>	
Translation of the Agency's texts	Translation of regulations, guidelines, reports, online contents and other important documents. Reviewing and editing translations.

### **GENERAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT**

**Basic work areas and tasks of the department:**

- **legislation, preparation of internal Agency acts;**
- **assistance in the implementation of activities from the field of quality assurance;**
- **work for the Appeal Committee;**
- **financial and human resource affairs;**
- **access to public information;**
- **business and administrative tasks;**
- **keeping and updating human resource and other records within its powers.**

**Head: Barbara Zupančič Kočar; alternate Mateja Bajuk Malešič**  
**Staff: Snežana Mačar, Slađana Tomić, Prudencija Perat,**  
**student**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Contents</b>
<b>1. Legislation and preparation of internal Agency acts</b>	
Preparation of the draft Agency Act	Preparation of legal provisions and coordination with the Agency Council and external stakeholders.
<b>2. Assistance in the implementation of activities from the field of quality assurance</b>	
Legal support to the Agency Council	Participation in Agency Council meetings and overseeing the legality of decisions of the Agency Council, review of minutes and draft decisions. Participation in the preparation of criteria and other implementing regulations of the Agency Council. Assistance in interpreting provisions.
Accreditation and evaluation procedures	Participation in the preparation of criteria for accreditations and evaluations; legal assistance to staff in conducting procedures (General Administrative Procedure Act – ZUP).
<b>3. Work for the Appeal Committee</b>	
Legal support to the Appeal Committee	Preparation of materials, participation in meetings, preparation of minutes and draft decisions.
<b>4. Financial and human resource affairs</b>	
Regular human resource affairs	Entering data on salaries, notices of leave, increased workload, checking the conditions for promotion, etc.
Copyright contracts for experts	Preparation of copyright contracts and annexes in accreditation and evaluation procedures.
Settlement of invoices, expert claims, travel orders	Preparation of orders for the payment of invoices, claims under copyright contracts, FEP forms, payment of travel orders of employees.
Implementation of the budget	Allocation between and within budget headings, coordination of the development programme plan (DPP).
Liquidity plans	Preparation of liquidity plans, monitoring the realisation of plans, preparation of proposals for changes.
Draft budget and annual financial statement	Participation in the preparation of draft budget and annual financial statement, financial field.
Regular financial affairs	Cooperation with the Budget Directorate, preparation of statistical data, preparation of reports, information, keeping financial documentation.
<b>5. Access to public information</b>	
Managing procedures related to the request for access to public information	Managing procedures related to received requests for access to public information (examination of the request, possible exceptions to access, preparation of documentation, writing decisions).
Catalogue of public information	Regular updating of the catalogue.
<b>6. Business and administrative tasks</b>	
Preparation and review of contracts with external contractors	Preparation or review of contracts with external contractors (translation, rental of equipment, provision of services – mail, cleaning, telephony, etc.).
Receiving and sending mail, recording documents	Receiving and sending mail in physical and electronic form; recording, scanning documents, managing documentary material, assisting employees in tracking and searching for documents.
Provision of general information from the Agency field of activities	Provision of general information and data from the Agency field of activities.

Organisation and coordination of business contacts	Organisation and coordination of business contacts, sending invitations to meetings.
Drafting and completing documents	Referrals for medical examinations, purchase orders for goods and services, etc.
Inventory of fixed assets	Appointment of a working group, inventory of fixed assets of the Agency, preparation of documents and communication of data to the Ministry of Finance.
Health and safety at work	Cooperation with an external contractor for the implementation of occupational safety and health and fire protection activities.
Promotion of health	Analysis of needs and care for healthy working environment.
Integrity plan	Preparation and monitoring of the integrity plan implementation.
Organising employee training with external contractors	Monitoring needs and organising training and seminars for employees.
<b>7. Keeping and updating the Agency records</b>	
Records of personal data processing	Establishment and updating of records of personal data processing.
Keeping financial documentation	Records of concluded contracts, records of travel orders, copyright contracts, business partners, fixed assets, use of business telephones, records of payments, etc.
Human resource records, records on Council and Appeal Committee members	Employee attendance records, medical examination records, managing employee data in Mferac and personnel files; preparation of letters and invitations regarding the status of members of the Agency Council and the Appeal Committee, keeping records of membership and its termination.

## **I.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE AGENCY WORK IN THE PRESENT SELF-EVALUATION PERIOD**

### **(FROM THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT OF THE AGENCY FOR 2018 and 2019 (SER 2018–2019))**

Based on the results of the SER 2018-2019, the current challenges since 2020 are related to the following:

1. assessment of the fulfilment of the Agency's strategic goals by 2020 and the preparation of a new medium-term strategy until 2025;
2. implementation of procedures of reaccreditation of universities and independent higher education institutions;
3. definition of samples of study programmes, which will enable the system-wide monitoring of the quality of their development (e.g. study programmes in the same field, etc.);
4. development of good practice and method of approach to the implementation of evaluations of a sample of study programmes so that the evaluations achieve their advisory purpose;
5. review of the protocol of visits for sample evaluations, possible corrections and presentation of the latest version to employees and the Agency Council;

6. in-depth preparation of the content of consultations, including by ensuring participation of various stakeholders, such as representatives of quality assurance commissions;
7. organisation of several consultations with stakeholders on specific recommendations from the survey among the stakeholders (increasing the applicability of the content of study programmes, enhancing cooperation with foreign agencies, more user-friendly application forms, etc.);
8. several thematic and coordination meetings for experts;
9. improvement of the Agency's visibility for the purpose of increasing the number of domestic and foreign experts and student experts, especially by publishing a call for experts on the ENQA website, forwarding the call to foreign agencies and directly to foreign higher education institutions, and presentation of the Agency's activities to students at higher education institutions;
10. improvement of the information flow between individual departments and a clear division of tasks between employees (both directors and managers), and introduction of annual interviews;
11. finding ways to increase the inclusion of employees in the Agency's policy-making and taking their views into account in the adoption of strategic decisions;
12. reasoned changes to criteria and forms with prior coordination of possible change with stakeholders (e.g. informal meetings of the Director and the president of the Council with stakeholders); in doing so, the following should be taken into consideration:
  - some accreditation and evaluation procedures are already underway,
  - changes to the criteria lead to adaptation of electronic forms and other documents (e.g. proposals, guidelines, etc.), which takes time,
  - 
  - a method to test the proposals for modifications in practice should be found;
13. completion of the preparation of an autonomous Agency Act or the amendment to and/or modification of the ZViS in the part relating to the Agency, and the adoption of such act;
14. establishment of cooperation with the relevant ministries regarding regulated professions in order to formulate clear and published criteria for issuing consent to study programmes;
15. continuation of a successful implementation of the eNakvis information system, especially through the development of tools for system and thematic analyses and self-evaluation, and improvement of tools for informing stakeholders and connecting with the IZUM information system;
16. continuation of activities to improve communication between the Agency and stakeholders;
17. publication of the most frequently asked questions of experts and corresponding answers on the website.

In 2021, the challenges or tasks related to the recommendations in SER 2018-2019:

- were fully completed in points 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 14;
- were initiated and are being implemented according to the plan in points 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 14, 15, 16 and 17;
- were initiated as permanent challenges, or are yet not implemented, in points 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

### **I.3 PRESENTATION OF COMPLETED TASKS IN 2021**

The Agency Council granted consent to the AWP at its 159th meeting on 18 February 2021.

The Report first shows the implementation of tasks related to the recommendations from SER 2018-2019 and AWP 2021 briefly through the overview of the work of the Agency Council as the first-instance decision-making body and of the Appeal Committee as the second-instance decision-making body. A special chapter focuses on the accreditation and evaluation of higher education institutions, study programmes and higher vocational colleges. A chapter on financial operations and human resources is added.

## **II. OVERVIEW OF THE WORK OF FIRST- AND SECOND-INSTANCE DECISION-MAKING BODIES OF THE AGENCY**

### **II.1 AGENCY COUNCIL**

In 2021, the Agency Council met in thirteen meetings: eleven were regular and two were extraordinary. A correspondence meeting was held in July to decide on the appointment of groups of experts in evaluation and accreditation procedures and on guidelines for groups of experts for the second visit in the procedures for reaccreditation of higher education institutions. The correspondence meeting had to be convened to enable smooth implementation of procedures.

The decisions of the Council on accreditations and external evaluations of higher education institutions, study programmes and vocational colleges are presented in Chapter III – Accreditations and Evaluations in Higher and Higher Vocational Education on page 20. 2021 was, namely, the year when external evaluations of most Slovenian universities took place. In addition, the Council focused on preparing a draft Act on Quality in Higher and Higher Vocational Education, and amending and interpreting the Minimum Standards for Appointment to Titles of Higher Education Teachers, Scientific Staff and Higher Education Staff at Higher Education Institutions. A particular emphasis was placed on the protection of stakeholders' rights and the issue of pressures or attempts at influencing experts. Regular sessions also included thematic discussions, which are presented in more detail below.

#### **General on the Council**

The Council membership has not changed this year.

During this time, the Council was adapting to interventional changes in legislation related to external evaluations of higher education institutions. When the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Slovenia suspended the procedures for reaccreditation and extraordinary evaluations of higher education institutions, the Agency postponed part of the site visits in agreement with the applicants. After the repeal of the amendment to the Higher Education Act (Anti-Corona Package 6) in the part relating to the verification of fulfillment of conditions for the establishment of a higher education institution under paragraphs one and two of Article 14 of the ZVIS on the second reaccreditation of a higher education institution, the initiated institutional evaluations continued smoothly. Apart from the previously mentioned exceptions regarding the suspension of deadlines in the procedures for reaccreditation and extraordinary evaluations of higher education institutions, the procedures and deadlines in administrative and other public administration matters went smoothly in 2021.

In the field of legislation, the Agency Council worked since the beginning of 2021 to participate in the preparation of the Scientific Research and Innovation Activities Act. The draft Act was then discussed at the 159th meeting on 18 February 2021. In the area of funding, it expressed support for equal treatment of universities and independent higher education institutions. As will be mentioned in the summary of thematic discussions, the Council repeatedly discussed the preparation of a draft Act on Quality in Higher and Higher Vocational Education and advocated transparent communication with the public regarding the preparation of the draft act.

At the end of September 2021, the Agency moved to new premises on Miklošičeva cesta in Ljubljana. The work of the Council was smooth during the period of more intensive preparations from May to September, while the September meeting was postponed to the end of the month due to the relocation.



In 2021, the Court of Audit of the Republic of Slovenia conducted an audit of the regularity of the Agency's operations in 2020. The Council was acquainted with the opinion and summary of the audit report on 16 December 2021 at its 170th meeting. At this meeting, it appointed the Deputy President of the Council to the Agency's self-evaluation group for the next self-evaluation period.

The Council was regularly briefed on the renewal of the National Higher Education Programme (NPVŠ), which focuses on quality and digitalisation. The response to the prepared draft NPVŠ was prepared by the Agency in September 2021. The Council president participated in the working group for the preparation of NPVŠ.

The Council was regularly briefed on the activities of international organisations ENQA, EQAR and, in particular, CEENQA. An important topic in the field of the Agency's international activities was the internationalisation of distance evaluation guidelines.

The Council devoted particular attention to the provision of information to and protection of rights of stakeholders. On its website, the Agency publishes contents that inform students about higher education institutions and vocational colleges, offering support in enrolment. The Agency popularises these contents among different stakeholders. The Agency also issued a press release on the issue of protecting the rights of stakeholders, and the Council officially expressed zero tolerance for any pressure or attempts to influence the Agency experts.

Council members' activities included active participation in other activities of the Agency. Some Council members attended an online international conference on distance quality assurance organised by the Agency on 28 October 2021.

## **Agency documents**

The Agency Council discussed, gave its consent to or adopted the following documents on the work and operations of the Agency:

- Report on Work and Operations of the Agency in 2020 (18 February 2021, 159th Council meeting);
- Work and Financial Plan of the Agency for 2021 (18 February 2021, 159th Council meeting);
- Amendment to the Rules of Procedure on the Work of the Council of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (17 June 2021, 165th meeting);
- Confirmation of the amendment to the Quality Manual of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (17 June 2021, 165th meeting);
- Confirmation of the sample of study programmes for evaluation in 2022 (17 June 2021, 165th meeting, 30 September 2021, 167th meeting);
- Confirmation of the plan of external evaluations of higher vocational colleges in 2022 (17 June 2021, 165th meeting);
- Guide to external assessments of NAKVIS (18 March 2021, 162nd Council meeting; 21 October 2021, 168th Council meeting);
- Publication Guidelines for distance evaluations. NAKVIS Annual Report 2020. Collection of discussions;
- Press release on the issue of protection of stakeholders' rights (18 February 2021, 159th meeting).

## **Adoption and amendments to criteria and other regulations, consideration of proposals**

The Agency Council adopted the following criteria:

- Act Amending the Criteria for the Accreditation and External Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes – technical harmonisation of the form for accreditation of the study programme with eVŠ: breakdowns, programme fields, entry of researcher codes were added, the record of conditions for advancement and transitions between study

programmes was corrected and other minor corrections were added (18 March 2021, 162nd meeting);

- Act amending the Minimum Standards for Appointment to Titles of Higher Education Teachers, Researchers and Faculty Assistants at Higher Education Institutions – the change referred to the provision of quality research standards for appointments to titles, some technical changes were added, differences between disciplines and fields were taken into account (Scopus database is more representative of social sciences and humanities than WoS database) as well as care for Slovenian scientific language and international recognition of Slovenian scientific journals, quality and international recognition of research and living abroad during the SARS-Cov-2 epidemic. The Act will enter into force on 1 January 2025, except for individual provisions that already apply to candidates who have applied or will apply for appointment to the title in 2021 and 2022 (30 September 2021, 167th meeting).

At its 161st extraordinary meeting, on 2 March 2021, the Council took note of the interpretation of Article 35 of the Higher Education Act issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. At its 163rd meeting on 15 April 2021, it issued the interpretation of the Minimum Standards for Appointment to Titles of Higher Education Teachers, Researchers and Faculty Assistants at Higher Education Institutions. In all cases that are not directly related to the COVID-19 epidemic, the condition of uninterrupted activity abroad for the minimum period of 3 months must be met for the appointment to a title under Articles 28 and 34 of the regulation. The interpretation was published on the Agency website.

## **Self-evaluation of the Agency**

In June 2021, the Agency Quality Manual was amended, mainly due to the harmonisation of the text of the Manual with the reorganisation of the Agency into four departments and the change of self-evaluation procedures. The amendment stipulates that the self-evaluation report is prepared only before the external assessment by ENQA or EQAR, and an annual progress report is prepared which assesses compliance with the recommendations of the external assessment on compliance with ESG standards. The self-evaluation group therefore prepared a draft progress report for 2021 in December 2021, which was submitted to employees for comments. In early 2022, the report will be considered by the Agency Council.

In accordance with the amended Quality Manual, a new self-evaluation group will be appointed for the next self-evaluation period 2020-2022, to which the Agency Council has already appointed a member at its December meeting. An employee survey was conducted in December to identify potential factors that increase risk in relation to integrity principles, as well as employees' interests and expectations regarding professional development, work organisation and satisfaction.

## **Thematic discussions**

The Council also discussed the following:

- report on the analysis of the employability of graduates of Slovenian higher education institutions made on the basis of data provided by the Employment Service of Slovenia (18 February 2021, 159th meeting);
- draft Scientific Research and Innovation Activities Act (18 February 2021, 159th meeting);
- proposal for the Agency's actions in relation to undue pressures on experts. The proposal systematically raises the awareness of experts about their duties of impartial judgment, avoiding conflicts of interest and dealing with attempts to exert pressure. An important task in finding solutions will be performed by the Council's commission for assessing the suitability of candidates for entry in the register of experts. The staff will systematically remind experts of the need to assess the potential conflict of interest of those invited. In addition to the above-mentioned Commission, the legal service of the Agency will help resolve any substantive and legal dilemmas regarding the existence of a conflict of interest. The issue of attempts at influencing and impartiality will also be covered in the guide to external audits (18 March 2021, 162nd meeting);
- bases for assessment of second-cycle interdisciplinary study programmes. These specify the field, scope and complexity of elective courses, and enrolment conditions. At least part of the study literature must be interdisciplinary and related to the primary field of study.

Appropriate links between the various branches of knowledge at the level of basic courses must be ensured. It is important to clearly define the problem field where different disciplines meet, and the relevance of scientific and research achievements at the intersection of disciplines of a study programme (15 April 2021, 163rd meeting);

- a proposal of the protocol of conduct of the Agency in case of unauthorised pressures or attempts to influence experts and a statement of zero tolerance for pressure on Council members, employees and experts. According to the Protocol, an expert first reports the pressure to a staff member, and then the matter is discussed by the Integrity Commission (20 May 2021, 164th meeting);
- draft Act on Quality in Higher and Higher Vocational Education, which was accepted for consideration by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. The Act is one of the strategic goals of the Agency. The Council emphasised the importance of involving stakeholders and openly informing the public about the progress of the draft Act. One of the topics for which consent is crucial is the degree to which accreditations and evaluations are linked to the General Administrative Procedure Act. The Act is also envisaged to regulate the quality of higher vocational education and be explicitly linked to ESG standards. To increase their independence, the regional commissions are expected to elect presidents from among their members. Accreditation would be automatically terminated for study programmes after ten years of non-implementation (21 October 2021, 168th meeting; 18 November 2021, 169th meeting);
- Audit Report of the Court of Audit of the Republic of Slovenia on the regularity of the Agency's operations in 2020. The auditors issued a qualified opinion to the Agency (16 December 2021, 170th meeting).

## **Conflict of interest**

The members of the Council discussed issues related to conflict of interest in assessments at several meetings. In 2021, the Agency Council discussed three such cases. In the first case, it took note of the resignation of a foreign expert. In the second case, it found that the experts had done their job impartially, professionally and critically despite the applicant's view that the experts had not relied their assessment on verifiable facts. The Agency Council also took note of an applicant's request to exclude the chairman of the group of experts on the grounds of a bias in the assessment, which the Council also rejected.

On 30 September 2021, at its 167th meeting, the Council discussed a letter from an anonymous group of experts of the Agency and a draft response to it. The President of the Council gave several interviews to the *Dnevnik* paper. The Council expressed the view that the Agency was professional in the conduct of accreditation and evaluation procedures and the appointment of groups of experts, and that it complies with regulations.

## **Entry of Experts in the Register**

In 2021, the Agency Council entered 17 candidates who have successfully completed the training in the register of experts and extended the entry in the register of 29 experts. It confirmed a public call for applications to candidates for entry in the register of experts on its 162nd meeting on 18 March 2021. There were 42 applicants – candidates from shortage fields, candidates for the assessment of vocational colleges and student candidates. The training of candidates for experts took place on 21 April 2021.

## **Actions and complaints**

In 2021, the Council or Council President addressed complaints related to the following:

- requests for the exclusion of experts, Council members or staff members from accreditation and evaluation procedures (21 January 2021, 158th meeting);
- request to suspend an accreditation procedure pending the final decision of the competent authority on the preliminary issue (15 April 2021, 163rd meeting);
- rejection of application in accreditation procedure (15 April 2021, 163rd meeting);
- status of applicant in accreditation procedure (21 October 2021, 168th meeting).

In all cases, the Council submitted the complaints to the Appeal Committee for decision-making. On 21 January 2021, at its 158th meeting, it took note of the action for the rejection of the application for accreditation of a study programme.



## II.2 APPEAL COMMITTEE

In accordance with the ZviS provisions, the Appeal Committee consists of three members, each of whom has an alternate. The Appeal Committee was appointed in its current composition at the 141st meeting of the Council, on 20 June 2019. Three members and an alternate were appointed, and another alternate was appointed in April 2020. In 2020 and 2021, no suitable candidate answered the public calls for an alternate member of the Appeal Committee. The deadline for candidates to apply for the last public call for the missing alternate member of the Appeal Committee, adopted by the Council at the end of 2021, is 24 February 2022.

The Appeal Committee had no cases pending at the end of 2021, either. In 2021, it had twice as many meetings as in 2020, i.e. six – in January, March, May, July, October and November 2021.

In 2021, most of the complaints were filed by a higher education institution; as in 2020, two members of the Appeal Committee were excluded from their consideration due to a conflict of interest. In 2021, the Appeal Committee decided in five (out of six) meetings with one member and two alternates of excluded members.

At its January meeting, the Appeal Committee adopted the text of the response to the action filed by a higher education institution that initiated an administrative dispute at the Administrative Court of the Republic of Slovenia over the Agency Council's final rejection decision in the procedure of accreditation of a study programme in 2020.

At its meetings in March and May, the Appeal Committee considered three cases in which it decided on rejecting the complainant's requests to exclude the person conducting the procedure, members of groups of experts appointed in accreditation and evaluation procedures under the ZViS and members of the Agency Council. The complainant based its requests on the alleged existence of a conflict of interest or the existence of impartiality in participation in the procedure. In March, the Appeal Committee upheld the appeal in the case of the request to exclude two members of the group of experts and the person conducting the procedure from the procedure of accreditation of a study programme, and annulled the contested decision rejecting the appeal against the decision rejecting the request for exclusion and remanded the case to the first instance body for reconsideration. It instructed the Agency Council to examine, in the reopened procedure, within its jurisdiction whether the complaint was admissible and timely and whether it had been lodged by an entitled person, and then, if the conditions were met, to send it to the Appeal Committee for decision.

In the second case, the Appeal Committee found that the decision of the President of the Council rejecting the complainant's request to exclude two members of the Council from all current and future procedures related to the evaluation and accreditation of the complainant, its members and their study programmes was null and void. It found that the contested decision decided on the general (non) exclusion of two Council members from decision-making in all current and future procedures related to the complainant and its members, and that such a decision was not a decision in a specific administrative case nor a decision for which any other act envisaged decision-making in accordance with the provisions of the ZUP, nor is the issuance of an administrative decision in an administrative procedure in the described case prescribed by law, nor is it another matter of public law. Therefore the Appeal Committee concluded that the body cannot decide on such a request in administrative procedure and is not competent to issue an administrative decision in this regard.

At its May meeting, the Appeal Committee decided on the case in a repeated procedure based on its decision from the March meeting. The Agency Council rejected the complainant's request for the exclusion of the person conducting the procedure and two members of the group of experts. The Appeal Committee partially upheld the appeal against the Agency Council's decision and dismissed the challenged decision in the part referring to the complainant's request to exclude the person conducting the procedure (Agency staff member), but rejected the remainder of the appeal since it assessed that the complainant's subjective assessment of the conduct of experts is not sufficiently concrete to allow for an

objective assessment and judgment whether circumstances exist that cast doubt on their impartiality and professionalism. The Appeal Committee, finding that it was competent to decide on the complainant's request to exclude an Agency staff member, decided on it and rejected the request. It found that the purpose of the exclusion procedure was not to express disagreement with the decisions of the official and the manner of conducting the procedure, as this was the intention of appeal against the decision, and that other alleged procedural violations were unfounded as well.

At its July meeting, the Appeal Committee decided on two cases. In the first, it decided on a complaint against the Agency Council's decision rejecting the application for accreditation of the transformation of a higher education institution from a vocational college to a faculty. The Appeal Committee upheld the complaint and remanded the case to the Agency Council for reconsideration, finding that the contested decision was vague and unsubstantiated because it did not indicate which standards of the Accreditation Criteria the complainant did not comply with, which means that the decision cannot be reviewed. In the second case, the Appeal Committee decided on the complaint against the decision to suspend the accreditation procedure, by which the Agency Council found that the procedure could not continue until the resolution of the preliminary issue, which will be clarified once the court proceedings are completed. The Appeal Committee upheld the appeal, annulled the challenged decision on the suspension of procedure and remanded the case for further consideration. It found that there were no conditions for the suspension of the procedure and that the Agency Council had to decide whether the prescribed material conditions for the implementation of the study programme were met.

Another request for the exclusion of Council members was decided on by the Appeal Committee at its October meeting. The president of the Agency Council rejected an applicant's request to exclude two Council members from the process of reaccreditation of a higher education institution. The Appeal Committee upheld the complaint against the decision of the President of the Agency Council in the part concerning one Council member, annulled the challenged decision in this part and remanded it to the first-instance body for reconsideration. It instructed the first-instance body to take a position in the repeated procedure on all the circumstances alleged by the complainant as grounds for exclusion, and to assess and explain the applicant's specific objections. It will be necessary to assess whether certain conduct may, in the eyes of a reasonable person, raise serious concerns about the appearance of impartial decision-making by the Council.

With regard to the complaint in the part concerning the other Council member, the Appeal Committee found that the President of the Agency Council had correctly assessed all the allegations in the request for exclusion, and therefore rejected the complaint in this part.

At its November meeting, the Appeal Committee decided on three complaints in the procedure of reaccreditation of a higher education institution. The Agency Council rejected the applications for the reaccreditation of higher education institutions by contested decisions. The Appeal Committee upheld all three complaints and remanded the cases for reconsideration. It instructed the Agency Council that it would have to clearly identify who is a party to the proceedings in the repeated procedure and then determine whether the person acting as a party could be a party to the proceedings. The Appeal Committee also instructed the Agency Council to take into account the decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Slovenia, which was pointed out in the complaints, and to assess whether it has sufficient information and an appropriate and clear legal basis for the final decision.

### III ACCREDITATIONS AND EVALUATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND HIGHER VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

#### Accreditation decisions in higher education

In 2021, the Agency Council:

- granted accreditation to 17 study programmes,
- reaccredited 5 higher education institutions,
- granted one accreditation to a higher education institution,
- adopted 9 transformations of higher education institutions,
- completed 27 procedures of evaluation of samples of study programmes,
- stayed the procedure on the grounds of withdrawal of 5 applications for accreditation of a study programme,
- rejected one application for the notification of a study programme and one application for the accreditation of a study programme.

#### External evaluations of higher vocational colleges

The Agency Council adopted six opinions on the fact that colleges meet the quality standards prescribed by law and criteria, two qualified opinions and one opinion in which it found inconsistencies or major deficiencies in the operation of the college.

Detailed data is provided in tables and explanatory notes.

Table 1:

CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED BEFORE 2021				
Type of procedure	Type of accreditation	Number of decisions	Council	Decision
Higher education institution	Reaccreditation	4		Positive
Higher education institution	Reaccreditation	1		Positive, for a shorter period
Higher education institution	Transformation of institution	2		Positive
Higher education institution	Initial accreditation	1		Positive
Higher vocational college	External evaluation	3		Positive opinion
Study programme	Accreditation	12		Positive
Study programme	Accreditation	5		Withdrawal of application
Study programme	Evaluation of a sample	8		<i>Detailed analysis under Table 2.</i>
Study programme	Notification of study programme	1		Application rejected
Study programme	Reaccreditation	1 (An administrative dispute has been initiated, which will be decided by the Administrative Court of the Republic of Slovenia)		

EXPLANATORY NOTE:

The table shows the number of accreditation and evaluation decisions in 2021 concerning applications submitted before that year.

The Agency Council adopted 4 positive decisions in procedures of reaccreditation of higher education institutions. Due to inadequately developed educational, scientific, professional and research activities in the fields and disciplines for which it is accredited, it reaccredited one higher education institution for a shorter period and set a deadline for eliminating the identified deficiencies. The Agency Council decided on 3 transformations of higher education institutions, including the transformation of a higher vocational college into a faculty, the merger by acquisition of a higher education institution and the accreditation of a change of location. In 2021, the Agency Council adopted 12 positive decisions on the accreditation of study programmes and 3 positive opinions in the procedures of external evaluations of higher vocational colleges. 5 applications were withdrawn in the process of accreditation of study programmes, and one application was rejected in the notification of a study programme. Pending at the Administrative Court is an administrative dispute against two negative decisions on accreditation and reaccreditation of a study programme.

Table 2:

<b>CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED IN 2021 (from 1 January to 31 December 2021)</b>					
<b>Type of procedure</b>	<b>Type of accreditation</b>	<b>Anticipated number of applications</b>	<b>Number of applications received</b>	<b>Number of Council decisions</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Higher education institution	Reaccreditation	6	6	0	The deadline for the submission of applications was 30 September 2021.
Higher education institution	Extraordinary evaluation	0	1	0	
Higher education institution	Transformation of institution	1	1	0	
Higher education institution	Accreditation of location	2	8	7	
Higher vocational college	External evaluation	12	11	6	According to the plan, 3 applications were submitted in the second half of the year.
Study programme	Accreditation	20	15	6	1 application was rejected
Study programme	Extraordinary evaluation	0	1	0	
Study programme	Evaluation of a sample	20	20	19	One of the applications for a sample in 2021 was submitted in 2020. One of the applications for a sample in 2022 was submitted in 2021.

**EXPLANATORY NOTE:**

In 2021, the Agency anticipated 62 applications for accreditations and evaluations – 20 of them for evaluations of samples of study programmes – and received 59 applications.



The purpose of evaluations of a sample of study programmes is to advise higher education institutions in improving the quality of implementation, updating or modification and self-evaluation of study programmes. An evaluation procedure does not conclude with a decision but with recommendations to a higher education institution for improving the quality.

In 2021, study programmes in the field of teacher education were assessed through the evaluation of a sample. Major deficiencies or inconsistencies were established in two programmes for the following reasons:

- non-compliance of enrolment conditions with Article 38 of the Higher Education Act;
- inconsistencies and deficiencies because of the lack of an enrolment call for the assessed study programme for the last three years. The programme has not been evaluated or updated ever since the accreditation, so the quality loop is not closed. Furthermore, the experts could not assess the quality of implementation of the study programme.

In these cases, the Council imposed a deadline on the applicant to eliminate and report on the identified inconsistencies or deficiencies. The shortest deadline has been set for the beginning of enrolment in the 2021/22 academic year. For the study programme that is no longer implemented, the Council called on the applicant to request the termination of accreditation from the Agency if it no longer intends to implement the study programme.

By the end of 2021, the Agency Council has decided for 18 study programmes included in the evaluation of a sample for 2021 and for 7 study programmes included in the evaluation of a sample for 2020 that the applicant should consider the written opportunities for improvement in the self-evaluation of the study programme, which should also be evident from the self-evaluation reports, and notify the Council in writing within one or two years.

The Council took note of the progress report in procedures of evaluation of a sample from 2020 17 times. The sample included study programmes that have never been reaccredited, joint study programmes and programmes implemented through contracts for the implementation of transnational higher education. In the case of study programmes from higher education institutions that are in the reaccreditation procedure, the Council decided that progress reports should be forwarded to groups of experts in institutional assessments. In the case of one joint study programme, the higher education institution was instructed to demonstrate the following:

- the publication of self-evaluation reports on its website;
- that a joint self-evaluation of a study programme is being prepared at the study programme level;
- how external stakeholders are notified of the summary of self-evaluation of a study programme;
- suitability of the current consortium structure;
- the procedure of collection of modifications of study programme in all partners.

The mentioned study programme will be again included in an evaluation of sample in two years.

In 2021, the Council discussed 8 initiatives for the extraordinary evaluation of a study programme, higher vocational college or higher education institution. In all cases, before making a decision on the initiation of the procedure of extraordinary evaluation, initiatives or the reported suspicion of major violations were forwarded to the management of the relevant higher education institutions or higher vocational colleges for response.

In two cases, the Council has not yet decided on the introduction of an extraordinary evaluation, and in four cases it has not initiated the procedure because:

- the factual situation has already been established, and the higher vocational college is eliminating the identified deficiencies. The elimination of deficiencies will be assessed on regular external evaluation;
- the procedure of reaccreditation of the higher education institution or higher vocational college is already in progress;
- the study programme will be assessed in the framework of evaluation of sample.

In the case of one study programme and one higher education institution, the Council introduced an extraordinary evaluation at its 165th meeting on 17 June 2021. In the first case, the higher education institution failed to demonstrate the elimination of the identified inconsistencies or major deficiencies in the organisation, implementation and modification of

the study programme. In the second case, the response of the higher education institution did not offer adequate and clear explanations on the suspicion of major violations in the field of meeting the habilitation criteria.

The plan of external evaluations of higher vocational colleges included 12 external evaluation procedures of higher vocational colleges; 11 colleges submitted applications and the Council adopted 6 decisions or opinions on meeting quality standards set by the Criteria for External Evaluation of Higher Vocational Colleges.

The Council established that three higher vocational colleges meet the quality standards prescribed by law and Criteria.

In two colleges, the Agency Council adopted a qualified opinion, as it identified inconsistencies that the colleges had to rectify within one year, namely:

- inadequate staff structure; the implementation of some courses involved instructors although these are not envisaged in the study programme (knowledge catalogue),
- the internal quality system is not properly formalised, the content of the self-evaluation report is too scarce, without detailed analyses and an action plan, including the quality loop that is not closed.

In one college, the Agency Council issued an opinion that it did not meet quality standards due to an insufficiently regulated system of practical training and self-evaluation (more in the explanatory note of Table 3).

Table 3:

<b>NEGATIVE DECISIONS OF THE COUNCIL IN 2021 (from 1 January to 31 December 2021)</b>			
<b>Type of procedure</b>	<b>Type of accreditation</b>	<b>Number of decisions</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Higher education institution	Initial accreditation	1	The decision was repealed at the next Council meeting. The application is still being resolved.
Higher education institution	Transformation of institution	1	The decision was repealed at the next Council meeting. The application is still being resolved.
Study programme	Accreditation	1	The application was withdrawn before the decision was issued.
Higher vocational college	External evaluation	1	

#### EXPLANATORY NOTE:

The Agency Council did not grant accreditation to one study programme and two higher education institutions (one case concerned transformation) because they did not comply with the conditions laid down by the ZViS and the quality standards according to the Accreditation Criteria.

The principal substantive reasons for negative Council decisions were the following:

- inappropriate structure and content of a study programme;
- inadequate status of a higher education institution which, as a higher vocational college, cannot implement doctoral studies;
- inappropriate human resource structure. Instructors should be excluded from the study process at a higher vocational college because they are not envisaged by the study programme;
- inappropriate level of formalisation of the internal quality assurance system. The self-evaluation report should be accompanied by an analysis of the results, identified deficiencies and an action plan, and the measures taken should be monitored to ensure that the quality loop is closed;
- inappropriate development and provision of educational, scientific, professional and research activities in the fields and disciplines for which the higher education institution

- is accredited or from which it provides accredited study programmes, and insufficient choice of elective study contents;
- insufficient stock of the materials listed in the curricula at the higher education library;
  - too generally defined general and specific competencies and anticipated study outcomes in the curricula; inconsistency of curricula and final syllabus, lack of methodological content; inadequate assessment arrangements; lack of plan for the implementation of the study programme due to several locations; lack of information on higher education teachers and faculty assistants and non-educational staff at the branch; lack of development plan for the library activities at the branch; inappropriately defined enrolment conditions;
  - insufficient and inadequate regulation of practical training and self-evaluation of insufficient content and scope.

Table 4:

<b>NUMBER OF UNRESOLVED APPLICATIONS ON 31 DECEMBER 2021</b>			
<b>Type of procedure</b>	<b>Type of accreditation</b>	<b>Number of unresolved applications</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Higher education institution	Reaccreditation	16	The deadline for the submission of 6 applications was 30 September 2021; the applications refer to highly complex procedures at universities.
Higher education institution	Transformation of institution	3	
Higher education institution	Accreditation of location	1	The application was submitted at the end of December 2021.
Higher education institution	Extraordinary evaluation of an institution	1	
Study programme	Accreditation	11	6 applications were submitted in the second half of the year.
Study programme	Reaccreditation	1	Administrative dispute pending before the Administrative Court of the Republic of Slovenia.
Study programme	Evaluation of a sample	4	The application for a sample for 2022 was submitted in 2021.
Study programme	Extraordinary evaluation of a programme	1	
Higher vocational college	External evaluation	5	According to the plan, 3 applications were submitted in the second half of the year.

**EXPLANATORY NOTE:**

The reasons for a higher number of unresolved applications in the procedures for accreditation of study programmes are the following:

- a) 6 applications were submitted between June and December 2021, so the procedures in accordance with the law and the Accreditation Criteria could not be completed yet and will continue in 2022;
- b) one procedure was extended because of the joinder of several complex procedures;

- c) two procedures were extended because it took a long time for the applicants to supplement their applications;
- d) an action was filed in two procedures, which must be decided by the Administrative Court of the Republic of Slovenia.

The reasons for a higher number of unresolved applications in the procedures for reaccreditation of a higher education institution are the following:

- a) the deadline for the submission of 6 applications was 30 September 2021, which means that the mentioned procedures have only just begun;
- b) The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Slovenia suspended the procedures of reaccreditation of higher education institutions under Article 51.r of the ZViS because of the review of the constitutionality of Article 52 of the Act Determining the Intervention Measures to Mitigate the Consequences of the Second Wave of COVID-19 Epidemic (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 175/20) in conjunction with Article 38 of the Act Amending the Higher Education Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 76/16); as a result, the deadlines for procedural acts in a certain period in 2020 were suspended. This extended the duration of procedures of reaccreditation of higher education institutions initiated in 2020;
- c) According to the law and the Accreditation Criteria, the procedures for reaccreditation of higher education institutions are longer and more complex. The procedure envisages two site visits and a wider group of (international) experts, especially in the procedures of reaccreditation of universities;
- d) Due to the absence of various stakeholder groups (students, graduates, teachers, employers' representatives, etc.), it is generally not possible to carry out site visits during study holidays, which slightly extends the duration of the procedures.

## Comparison with 2020

Compared to 2020, the number of positive decisions adopted by the Agency Council in accreditation and evaluation procedures was higher, namely:

### Higher education

- accreditations of study programmes: 13 in 2020, 17 in 2021;
- initial accreditations of higher education institutions: 0 in 2020, 1 in 2021;
- reaccreditations of higher education institutions: 7 in 2020, 5 in 2021;
- transformations of higher education institutions: 2 in 2020, 9 in 2021;
- evaluations of samples of study programmes: 18 in 2020, 27 in 2021.

Total: 40 positive decisions in 2020, 59 positive decisions in 2021.

In 2021, 30 visits took place in procedures of reaccreditation of higher education institutions, transformations of higher education institutions, accreditation of study programmes and evaluation of samples of study programmes (37 in 2020). 5 visits took place at universities and lasted for a full week.

The Agency examined and recorded 612 modifications of study programmes (400 in 2020).

### Higher vocational education

- site visits: 4 in 2020, 10 in 2021;
- opinions on the compliance with standards prescribed by the law: 8 in 2020, 3 in 2021;
- qualified opinions: 0 in 2020, 2 in 2021;
- opinions identifying major deficiencies or inconsistencies in compliance with the standards prescribed by law: 0 in 2020 and 1 in 2021.

A comparison between the two years shows that the total number of positive decisions in accreditation and evaluation procedures is higher in 2021. In 2020, the course of the procedures was marked by the declaration of the COVID-19 epidemic and a transitional period until the establishment of distance site visits. These procedures were mostly completed in 2021.

Table 5:

Average duration of procedures for applications decided on in 2020 and 2021				
Type of procedure	Type of accreditation	of	Year	Average duration in months
Higher education institution	Accreditation	of	2020	2.1
Higher education institution	Accreditation	of	2021	2.2
Higher education institution	Reaccreditation		2020	13.1
Higher education institution	Reaccreditation		2021	15.9
Higher education institution	Transformation	of	2020	9.5
Higher education institution	Transformation	of	2021	9.6
Higher education institution	Initial accreditation		2020	5.8
Higher education institution	Initial accreditation		2021	5.8
Higher vocational college	External evaluation		2020	7.2

<b>Average duration of procedures for applications decided on in 2020 and 2021</b>			
<b>Type of procedure</b>	<b>Type of accreditation</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Average duration in months</b>
Higher vocational college	External evaluation	2021	7.4
Study programme	Accreditation	2020	10.3
Study programme	Accreditation	2021	9.3
Study programme	Evaluation of a sample	2020	10.5
Study programme	Evaluation of a sample	2021	9.4

**NOTES:**

\* The time from the submission of the application until the final decision is taken into account. All decisions of the Council (positive, negative, rejection of the application, withdrawal of the application) are taken into account.

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

The table shows that the duration of the procedures was mostly extended compared to 2020, but they were nevertheless completed within the statutory deadlines.

The duration of procedures for accreditation of location did not change significantly compared to 2020, as well as the duration of procedures for the transformation of an institution and the evaluation of higher vocational colleges. Compared to 2020, the the procedures of evaluation of samples were shorter in 2021.

Compared to 2020, the duration of procedures of initial accreditation of higher education institutions was considerably shorter. The long average duration of procedures in 2020 can be attributed to the duration of appeal procedures in one procedure, which were, however, completed in 2021.

Procedures for reaccreditation of higher education institutions were longer, mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which, also in accordance with the Intervention Act, led to the cancellation of all site visits in early spring 2020, which continued in 2021. Reaccreditation procedures were also lengthier because they involved four universities, where extensive multi-day visits with a wide group of (international) experts were envisaged, which required additional coordination in terms of time and organisation.

Procedures of accreditation of study programmes, which, as a rule, do not include site visits, were shortened compared to 2020. In the case of regulated professions, the Agency, namely, managed to accelerate the process of obtaining consents of the ministries responsible for regulated professions, which was time-consuming in 2019 and 2020, usually lasting several months.

*Table 6:*

<b>NUMBER OF ACCREDITED STUDY PROGRAMMES ACCORDING TO KLASIUS-P-16 – COMPARISON BETWEEN 2020 AND 2021</b>				
<b>Klasius-P-16</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of accredited programmes</b>	<b>Number of all accredited programmes in the year</b>	<b>Percentage of accredited programmes</b>
(01) Education	2020	2	13	15.4
(01) Education	2021	1	17	5.9
(02) Arts and humanities	2020	1	13	7.7

**NUMBER OF ACCREDITED STUDY PROGRAMMES ACCORDING TO KLASIUS-P-16 – COMPARISON BETWEEN 2020 AND 2021**

<b>Klasius-P-16</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of accredited programmes</b>	<b>Number of all accredited programmes in the year</b>	<b>Percentage of accredited programmes</b>
(02) Arts and humanities	2021	2	17	11.8
(03) Social sciences, journalism and information	2020	2	13	15.4
(03) Social sciences, journalism and information	2021	1	17	5.9
(04) Business, administration and law	2020	1	13	7.7
(04) Business, administration and law	2021	4	17	23.5
(05) Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	2020	2	13	15.4
(05) Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	2021	3	17	17.6
(06) Information and communication technologies (ICTs)	2020	2	13	15.4
(06) Information and communication technologies (ICTs)	2021	1	17	5.9
(07) Engineering, manufacturing and construction	2020	1	13	7.7
(07) Engineering, manufacturing and construction	2021	1	17	5.9
(08) Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	2020	0	13	0
(08) Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	2021	0	17	0
(09) Health and welfare	2020	3	13	23.1
(09) Health and welfare	2021	2	17	11.8
(10) Services	2020	0	13	0
(10) Services	2021	2	17	11.8

**NOTE:**

*KLASIUS-P-16 is the implementation of classification ISCED-F 2013 that replaced ISCED 1997 and entered into force by the amended Decree on the introduction and use of the education and training classification system (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [Uradni list RS], No 8/17). Klasius-P-16 is intended for national and international statistical data collection and reporting.*

## IV THE AGENCY'S PRIORITIES (IMPORTANT TASKS) IN 2021

The chapter outlines the Agency's work it carries out in addition to managing accreditation and evaluation procedures and other tasks necessary for its operation, such as human resources and finance. These are the priorities the Agency has planned and set for 2021.

### IV.1 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2021 ACTION PLAN

The tasks in the action plan are defined or set taking into account:

A) The **Agency's strategic objectives** from 2021 to 2025:

- a) Adoption of the Act on Quality in Higher and Higher Vocational Education (R)
- b) Improving assessment according to quality standards and accreditation and evaluation procedures (S)
- c) In-depth analytical work in selected areas (S)
- d) Establishing up-to-date databases on selected activities in higher education institutions (T)
- e) Pursuing sustainable development goals (R)
- f) Enhanced international cooperation (S)
- g) Proactive communication (T)

B) **Areas of assessment** according to the Quality Manual:

- a) accreditations and external evaluations
- b) internal quality assurance system of the Agency
- c) external quality assurance system of the Agency
- d) criteria and other provisions of the Agency
- e) information system and provision of information

C) The **Agency's values**:

- a) professionalism
- b) transparency
- c) development

The last three columns of the Action Plan show how each task relates to the objectives, assessment areas and values with the use of a letter before each group: capital letters A for strategic objectives, B for assessment areas and C for values; and lower case letters to indicate the specific objective, area or value. This will provide a clear overview of the Agency's achievement of its strategic goals and objectives, according to the areas of assessment set out in the Quality Manual, in line with the values it has set itself.

In particular, the Agency's values, but also the areas of assessment and the strategic objectives, are closely interlinked in many of the tasks, or several or all of them could be labelled; therefore, those that can be judged to be predominant are labelled as such.



**I. QUALITY ASSURANCE DEPARTMENT**

Head of the department: Jožica Kramar

Alternate: Zala Sečnik

Staff: Anita Kajtezovič, Martina Mravlja, Gregor Rebernik

Key areas of work of the department: criteria and other regulations regarding quality, accreditation and evaluation, monitoring and reviewing modifications of study programmes, cooperation with stakeholders (institutions/colleges, experts), record keeping (accreditation, evaluation, changes, VTI, etc.), archiving of applications and other documents

TASK	CONTENTS	REALISATION	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES A	AREA OF ASSESSMENT B	VALUES C
<b>1. Criteria and other provisions from the field of quality assurance</b>			<b>b)</b>	<b>a)</b>	<b>a)</b>
Minimum Standards for Appointment to Titles of Higher Education Teachers, Scientific Staff and Higher Education Staff at Higher Education Institutions	Updating standards/as needed; more emphasis on quality and visibility of publications, teaching competences.	YES			
<b>2. Accreditations and evaluations</b>			<b>b)</b>	<b>c)</b>	<b>a)</b>
Public call for applications for entry in the Register of Experts – shortage areas	Preparation of a list of shortage areas. Preparation of material for the candidate selection panel.	YES			
Register of experts	Updating the register and the composition of the expert groups: agreement on the tasks of the Quality Assurance Department.	YES			
Setting the model evaluation proposal for 2022	Selection of the study programmes to be included in the 2022 sample and communication to stakeholders.	YES			
Preparation of the external evaluation plan for higher vocational colleges for 2022	The plan is drawn up on the basis of the 5-year external evaluation plan already in place.	YES			
<b>3. Archiving applications and other documents</b>				<b>b)</b>	<b>b)</b>
Submission of material to the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia	Submission of material and inspection of leftover documentation.	YES			

Organising the ongoing archive	Cleaning and organising current material.	YES			
Preparation of internal rules (from receipt to archiving of the document)	The rules will be drawn up in accordance with the law governing this area.	NO			

## **EXPLANATORY NOTES TO THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTED TASKS:**

### **1. Criteria and other provisions from the field of quality assurance**

The adopted *Act amending the Minimum Standards for Appointment to Titles of Higher Education Teachers, Researchers and Faculty Assistants at Higher Education Institutions* refers to the provision of high-quality research standards for appointment to titles. The purpose of the amendment is to ensure research standards that will contribute to improving the quality of research at higher education institutions in the Republic of Slovenia. In developing the amendments to the Minimum Standards, the Agency took into account global trends and developments in higher education and those in specific fields and disciplines. Some technical amendments have also been added. The proposed amendments to the regulation are focused on the following key areas: quality over quantity, taking into account differences between disciplines and fields (the Scopus database is significantly more representative for the social sciences and humanities than the WoS database), care for the Slovenian scientific language and the international recognition of Slovenian scientific journals, the quality and international visibility of research, and living abroad in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Act will enter into force on 1 January 2025, except for certain provisions already applicable to candidates who have applied or will apply for appointment to a title in 2021 and 2022 (30 September 2021, 167th meeting of the Agency's Council).

### **2. Accreditations and evaluations**

#### **Public call for applications for entry in the Register of Experts**

A review of the Register of Experts identified the following shortage areas: educational sciences, music, dance, history, philosophy, psychology, sociology and the study of cultures, law, physics, geosciences, biology, environmental sciences, architecture, spatial planning and construction, agriculture, dentistry, medicine, therapy and rehabilitation, pharmacy, nursing and midwifery, social work and counselling. On 19 March 2021, a public call for applications was launched, inviting individuals from shortage areas, in particular assistant professor candidates, full and associate professors, lecturers from higher vocational colleges, students and employers' representatives. By the closing date, 43 applications were received. They were examined by the Expert Registration Committee and the list of candidates was confirmed, as all of them met the requirements of the public call. There are still not enough experts in areas where there is a significant shortage, such as law, philosophy, psychology and dentistry. Candidates for entry in the Register of Experts were required to attend a mandatory distance learning course organised by the Agency on 21 April 2021. The first part of the training was attended by all registered candidates, while the second part of the training, participation in site visits to higher education institutions, is still ongoing. By the end of the year, 17 experts, 8 of them students, had completed their training and were entered in the register. For the experts already registered, the data were continuously updated.

#### **Setting the model evaluation proposal for 2022**

At its June meeting, the Agency's Council discussed and proposed a sample of study programmes for external evaluation in 2022, which contains third-cycle study programmes. All higher education institutions were informed of the proposed sample. At its September meeting, the Council approved the sample and informed the higher education institutions included in the sample. Higher education institutions had until the end of January 2022 to submit their applications for the evaluation of study programmes.

At its June meeting, the Council also approved a timetable for the evaluation of the higher vocational colleges, in line with the adopted roadmap to 2025.

### 3. Archiving applications and other documents

In 2021, the Agency transferred the archival material created between 1994 and 2010 to the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia (the competent archive) for permanent preservation, as planned. The Agency has thus kept only the documentary material created during its operation, i.e. from 1 March 2010 to the present day. The archival material was prepared in accordance with the instructions of the archives responsible, with whom the Agency worked closely throughout the process.

The Agency manages and organises its current documentary material in accordance with the instructions of the competent archives. The relocation to the new premises has meant that special attention has been paid to the organisation of the documentation. Immediately after the move, an exceptional weather event occurred which caused some minor seepage in the new archive premises. After the event, the Agency worked intensively to clean the material and to ensure that no similar events occur in the future.

The internal rules for documents (from receipt to archiving of the document) were not prepared. Due to the relocation, which represented a major activity for the Agency, the task was postponed until 2022.

<b>II. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT</b>					
Head of the department: Klemen Šubic Alternate: Maja Milas Staff: Andrej Krček and Tilen Heco					
Key areas of work of the department: international activities, organisation of annual international conferences, record keeping (accreditations, evaluations, changes, VTI, etc.), eNakvis and integration with databases (SICRIS, IZUM), communication.					
<b>TASK</b>	<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>REALISATION</b>	<b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES A</b>	<b>AREA OF ASSESSMENT B</b>	<b>VALUES C</b>
<b>1. International activities</b>			<b>f)</b>	<b>c)</b>	<b>a)</b>
Organisation of the annual international consultation	International consultation on the organisation and implementation of distance evaluations. The consultation will present the findings of the CEENQA task force and set out guidelines on the topic.	YES			
Participation in the CEENQA working group	Sharing good practices related to distance evaluations.	YES			
Upgrading the international analysis in terms of strengthening the independence of the agencies for quality assurance in	Analysing 13 additional quality assurance agencies, incorporating the findings into the analysis and preparing one paper on the subject.	YES			

higher education					
Participation in the CEENQA project on staff mobility exchange	Organisation and implementation of two staff mobilities, one inbound and one outbound, with the partner agency ARACIS.	YES			
<b>2. Computerisation of the Agency</b>			<b>d)</b>	<b>e)</b>	<b>b)</b>
<b>eNakvis:</b> eNakvis optimisation and updating	Landing page, new Shakespeare, inclusion of experts, unique identifier, support for Council meetings, new HEI change form, etc.	YES			
<b>eNakvis:</b> Optimisation of web services	Packet data transfer, continued improvements to the data structure, publication of public records, etc.	YES			
<b>eNakvis:</b> Strengthening the analytical area	Support for self-evaluation processes, development of an analysis module, etc.	YES			
<b>eNakvis:</b> Choosing an eNakvis maintenance provider	Preparation of technical specifications, execution of the contract under the Public Procurement Act, signing of the contract with the successful contractor, etc.	YES			
<b>iNakvis:</b> Implementation of the procedural framework	Implementation of the procedural framework in the task management system.	YES			
<b>iNakvis:</b> Establishment of the Register of Experts	Establishment of the Register of Experts in the iNakvis system.	YES			
<b>iNakvis:</b> Self-evaluation module	Self-evaluation module (data model, development, testing).	YES			
<b>3. Communication and promotion</b>			<b>g)</b>	<b>e)</b>	<b>b)</b>
Promotion of the website	Activities related to the promotion of the website (cooperation with	YES			

	external stakeholders).				
Internal communication	Strengthening the flow of information between the Agency employees and in connection with the development of iNakvis.	YES			
Communicating with external stakeholders	Press releases for the media and external stakeholders, news and texts for e-newsletters and websites of international agency associations, presentations at national and international events.	YES			

## **EXPLANATORY NOTES TO THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTED TASKS:**

### **International conference: Distance Quality Assurance**

The international conference was organised as an online event in October 2021. The focus was on carrying out distance evaluations. The event took place in two parts. In the first part, six speakers presented their experiences with distance quality assessment and discussed the challenges, possible solutions and transferable practices in this context. The second part of the conference was devoted to a discussion, where participants could express their views and experiences and highlight certain dilemmas. More than 100 people attended the event.

### **Participation in the CEENQA working group**

The Agency participated in a working group to develop guidelines for distance evaluations. The document was drafted under the guidance of a member of the board, and the Agency prepared a survey for the foreign agencies that are members of the CEENQA network, as well as draft guidelines, which were updated on the basis of the results of the survey and coordinated within the network. The whole process of drafting and coordinating the document took about half a year and the guidelines were adopted as an official document of the CEENQA network at the General Assembly on 13 October 2021. The guidelines focus only on site visits as a common part of the quality assessment process of all agencies, so that they can be used by any quality assurance agency in higher education. The purpose of this document is to suggest possible solutions and offer advice where necessary.

Participation in the working group is also closely intertwined with regular participation in the CEENQA network. In 2021, CEENQA continued to hold regular agency working meetings to promote inter-agency networking, which was again marked by the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Upgrading the international analysis in terms of strengthening the independence of the agencies**

In the past year, the Agency continued its international analysis of the independence of agencies for quality assurance in higher education, which was extended with a substantial sample of agencies, including both ENQA and non-ENQA member agencies. In total, the Agency analysed questionnaires from 27 different agencies and upgraded the methodology for determining the independence of agencies according to the independence indicators. The methodology provides a comparative overview of different aspects of the responsibilities of

different stakeholders at different levels and, more broadly, an understanding of the roles of agencies in different national and European contexts. The Agency presented its analysis of independence and the different phases of analytical work both in several thematic meetings and through web content.

### **Participation in the CEENQA project on staff mobility exchange**

The Agency participated in a staff exchange with ARACIS, the Romanian quality assurance agency, in the framework of the CEENQA network. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the exchange was carried out remotely. In May 2021, the Agency concluded an agreement with the Romanian agency on the exchange of experts. This took place in November. In the framework of the exchange, three staff members from the Romanian agency participated in an evaluation visit to a university in Slovenia in the procedure of its reaccreditation, while three staff members from the Slovenian agency monitored the evaluation of doctoral programmes in Romania. The main purpose of such mobility is to exchange good practices and suggestions for improving work, while at the same time familiarising the employees with foreign quality assurance systems and their specificities. Another important aspect of mobility is strengthening international links and raising the profile of the European area.

### **Participation in ECA**

The Agency has been actively involved in the ECA since 2009, when it was accepted as a member. Two employees are currently involved in the activities of the ECA, one as a member of the ECA Council. The ECA, which was based on genuine and personal contacts with its members, has faced a number of challenges in the last year, including the resignation of its President and Secretary-General, and new elections had to be secured for the members of the Council and the ECA's President, as well as for the Secretariat of the ECA. At the same time, the ECA Council decided to slightly restructure its internal workings and set priorities for the coming year in order to improve the responsiveness and engagement of its members. Priority activities will focus on continuing education and training events on internationalisation and the European approach, organising webinars and debates, and providing support for the projects of the ECA's members.

### **Other international cooperation**

In 2021, in addition to its participation in the CEENQA network, the Agency actively participated in the *Bologna Follow-Up Group* (BUFG) in the area of quality assurance, which aims to monitor the implementation of key commitments of the Bologna Process.

At the beginning of June, it also joined the ENQA working group for drafting guidelines on academic integrity for both higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies. In particular, with the shift to emergency and hybrid education and the availability of various technological solutions, it sees an increase in the risks to ensuring academic integrity in Europe and beyond. By participating in the ENQA group, the Agency has the opportunity to follow the latest good and bad practices and to take an active approach to solving challenges also in the Slovenian higher education area.

A working group of the *International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)*, which aims to foster internationalisation, innovation, flexibility and the unification of higher education standards globally, was launched in November 2021.

The Agency continued to strengthen international contacts and organise both distance and live thematic meetings. In December 2021, it hosted representatives of the federal quality assurance agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Agency for the Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance, HEA*), where it confirmed its existing cooperation and outlined possibilities for further cooperation.

## **eNakvis**

In 2021, a new change notification form for higher education institutions was made available in eNakvis. The form for the accreditation of study programmes, and international joint study programmes was updated. The redesign of the forms allowed the data structure of the form to be aligned with the data in the harmonised XML. Another important milestone was the installation of the new version of eNakvis in the Slovenian Ministry of Public Administration test environment. The Agency was able to synchronise all the systems and requirements of the Ministry of Public Administration with eNakvis. Due to the constant coordination of the different external systems on which eNakvis depends, it has not yet been possible to transfer the new version of eNakvis to the production environment. Before that, the next challenging task is to integrate all systems and subsystems (both external and internal) with eNakvis in a working way. All efforts are focused on launching the new version of eNakvis at the beginning of 2022. Progress has been made in the development of the web service. Packet data transfer is enabled, and a data exchange protocol between the university systems and eNakvis is being finalised (to complete this protocol, we need a new version of eNakvis in the school environment, which allows the visibility and validation of the extracted data for the larger users – universities). The first steps have also been taken to integrate iNakvis with eNakvis, so that eNakvis will become primarily an entry point for data input, while iNakvis will be a tool for processing and analysing the data generated. All available funds were spent on eNakvis. We assess that the project is progressing well.

## **iNakvis**

In 2020, the Agency piloted the iNakvis internal IT system for Agency staff. The internal system quickly proved to be a necessary and useful tool for improving the management and control of activities, records, automating certain processes and facilitating communication between employees. Data on accreditation and evaluation processes is kept in iNakvis. All meetings, evaluation visits, educational and other events attended by staff are planned in a shared calendar. The action plan monitors and updates activities by sector and by individual employee.

In 2021, the Register of Experts was set up within the app. The register makes it easier for NACVIS professional associates to find candidates for expert groups, according to their field of expertise, education, employment and other relevant information.

The management of the registers of study programmes and higher education institutions has also been streamlined. Based on the data currently managed within the IT system, the Agency will be able to develop tools for supporting analytics (e.g. generating data for performance or self-evaluation reports).

## **Communication**

Since the Agency's last external evaluation (in 2018), it has devoted a lot of time and attention to active, clear, accurate and timely communication, both with internal and external stakeholders. To this end, the Agency uses its website as a key communication tool to inform the public. Accompanying tools are social networks (Twitter and YouTube) and electronic communication (e-newsletter). The Agency keeps up-to-date and communicates all events, news and important announcements and updates on its website and social media. This year, it continued its promotional activities and provided an additional 11 promotional films of higher education institutions, which are published on the NAKVIS YouTube channel and promoted on the website.

Internal communication involves improving the flow of relevant information between the Agency's employees and Agency Council members. An important tool for this is the iNakvis internal information system.

### **III. ANALYTICS DEPARTMENT**

Head of the department: Tatjana Debevec

Alternate: Jernej Širok

Staff: Matjaž Štuhec, Tatjana Horvat and Nataša Kramar

Key areas of work of the department: strategy, annual work plans, activity reports, analyses, documents, publications, agency self-evaluation, manuals, guides, organisation and participation in various events (conferences, consultations, workshops, etc.)

TASK	CONTENTS	REALISATION	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE S A	AREA OF ASSESSMENT B	VALUES C
<b>1. Plans and reports</b>				b)	a), c)
The Agency's work and business plan for 2021	Estimated number of accreditations and evaluations, Agency action plan with tasks and deadlines and explanations of tasks, link to new strategic objectives; planning of human and financial resources.	YES			
Report on the work and operation of the Agency in 2020	An inventory of the work of the Agency's Council and its departments, an overview of accreditations and evaluations in 2020, the implementation of the tasks set out in the 2020 action plan with explanatory notes, an overview of the use of financial resources, etc.	YES			
<b>2. Analyses, documents, publications</b>			c)	b)	a), c)
Annual publication of the Agency	Presentation of the Agency and changes in values, strategy, brief overview of work in 2020, outline of the new strategy, etc.	YES			
Analyses of expert reports	Analyses of reports on the renewal of accreditation of universities and other HEIs, reports on the transformation of HEIs.	YES			
Research work of higher education teachers	Databases on scientific research, professional and artistic activities by institution; updating.	YES			
Student employability	Databases on employability by HEI and study programme.	YES			



Higher education libraries	Preparation of guidelines for quality assessment of higher education libraries, taking into account the rules of the competent authority.	IN PART			
English translation plan for 2021	Plan of the documents to be translated and who will be in charge of the translation.	YES			
<b>3. Manuals, guides</b>			<b>b)</b>	<b>a)</b>	<b>a), c)</b>
Online version of the main part of the Assessment Guide	Supplementing the version presented at the consultations with a more detailed explanation of the content.	YES			
Collecting comments on the guide from experts and other stakeholders, updating the online version of the guide	Analysing comments, discussing them at joint thematic meetings, agreed solutions and updating the guide.	YES			
Other chapters of the Assessment Guide	Specificities in the procedures (e.g. distance learning).	YES			
<b>4. Organisation and cooperation in different events (conferences, consultations, training courses, workshops)</b>			<b>b)</b>	<b>a), c)</b>	<b>a)</b>
Workshops on quality standard assessments	Workshops with Agency employees, experts (presidents, experts in specific fields of study or scientific research disciplines, etc.).	YES			
Training of candidates to become experts	Training of candidates in shortage areas, student candidates (familiarisation with quality standards and their assessment, international training, criteria for experts).	YES			
Annual consultation with the Agency's experts	Discussion of outstanding issues on accreditation, evaluation or assessments, exchange of good practices; discussion of the assessment guide.	YES			
Annual consultation with representatives of higher education	Discussion of outstanding issues on accreditation, evaluation or	YES			

institutions and colleges	assessments, exchange of good practices; discussion of the assessment guide.				
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## **EXPLANATORY NOTES TO THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTED TASKS:**

### **Plans and reports**

In January and February 2021, the Agency's Work and Financial Plan for 2021 and the Report on the Agency's Work and Operations in 2020 were prepared and edited in cooperation with the Agency's management and adopted by the Agency's Council at its 159th meeting on 18 February 2021. The Agency's annual work planning and the analysis of the work carried out in these documents have also been helpful in evaluating the Agency's achievement of its strategic objectives for the current year. Building on the Agency's strategy and strategic objectives for 2021-2025, work continued to further develop the quality of content-based assessments of higher education institutions, study programmes and higher vocational colleges, including through the analysis of expert group reports.

### **Analyses, documents, publications**

At the beginning of the year, a report on the analysis of the employability of graduates of Slovenian higher education institutions, based on data from the Slovenian Employment Service, was prepared and discussed. It was considered by the Agency's Council at its meeting on 18 February 2021. Particular attention was paid to the changing social and labour market situation, the perception of the employability of graduates from different disciplines, which is very much discussed in a simplistic way in the public sphere, and this analysis has shown that such assumptions are often wrong. The analysis also highlights long-term unemployment of graduates as a particular problem. The public release of the records is envisaged for 2022.

In the spring, a detailed substantive review of expert group reports on the quality standards to be met by universities and other higher education institutions for the reaccreditation was launched. The resulting in-depth analysis highlighted inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the assessments and was of valuable help in completing and improving the assessment guide. In the second half of the year, an analysis of evaluations of samples of study programmes with an international dimension was produced. The programmes are grouped into three thematic sets: international joint study programmes, study programmes in the framework of transnational higher education and those implemented by Slovenian higher education institutions in their branches abroad. An analysis of the expert reports on the evaluations of samples of study programmes by thematic set will be published in 2022.

In autumn 2021, the Agency's annual publication was published, which – in addition to the Agency's annual activity report and a collection of discussions, mainly on quality assessment and work in epidemic situations – aimed to present the Agency's strategic development from 2021 to 2025 and guidelines for distance evaluation visits. These were presented to the wider public in a joint CEENQA document. It is published in both the Slovenian and English language. The English version of the publication also includes a brief snapshot of the Agency's 10-year work.

The department has continuously ensured that the Agency's key documents and publications are accessible to the international public and that those of other actors in the European higher education area are accessible to the Slovenian public, by ensuring that the documents are translated into English and Slovenian respectively. Particular attention has been paid to the terminological consistency of terms in the field of quality assurance in higher education, which contributes to the standardisation of key concepts in this professional field in both languages.

The analysis of the scientific, research, professional and artistic work of the holders of courses in the programmes being accredited continued. Useful databases on this have been created, which are compiled on an ongoing basis for each accreditation or evaluation process and shared with experts to help them in their professional assessment.

## **Manuals, guides**

In March 2021, the Agency published a draft of the introductory and main parts of the assessment guide and started collecting comments on it. The document discusses the structural features of external assessments and the discrepancies or deviations that occur in assessments. It contains legal guidelines and criteria for external assessments. It details the specificities and important inadequacies of external assessments according to each quality standard and type of procedure, and provides guidelines for the assessment of scientific research, professional or artistic work, teaching, practical education, the content and delivery of studies, with specificities relating to higher education teaching, the levels and types of study, its disciplinary embeddedness and some institutional specificities, in the context of the different quality concepts, with a view to making the external assessments more in-depth, substantive, multifaceted and rigorous. The guide was updated throughout the year, taking into account comments from the Agency's professional associates, experts, higher education teachers, and new chapters were added on the assessment of higher vocational colleges and the roles of the different actors involved in the procedures.

A baseline for the assessment of second-cycle interdisciplinary study programmes was also developed, which specifies the field, scope and complexity of the courses, as well as the enrolment requirements. The starting points were presented to and adopted by the Agency's Council at its meeting in March 2021. The starting points for the assessment of interdisciplinary second cycle programmes are included in the chapters of the assessment guide.

The preparation of guidelines for the quality assessment of higher education libraries, taking into account the rules of the competent ministry, has been postponed until 2022 due to the lack of a reference regulation. However, the provisions of the draft regulation have been taken into account in the guidelines for the assessment of libraries in the field of the material conditions of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges and have been included in the guide. A comprehensive database of higher education libraries has also been launched.

## **Organisation and participation in events**

Most of the events were related to the discussion of the draft guide after the assessments. Intense cooperation with representatives of higher education institutions and experts made it necessary to coordinate comments in formal meetings. The most important was held at the end of May 2021, where, after reviewing and assessing in particular the guidelines for the evaluation of scientific, research, artistic and teaching work, many solutions for improving the guide were agreed or coordinated.

The comments and agreements were taken into account in the guide. In parallel with the development of the chapter on the evaluation of higher vocational colleges, five training events were held specifically for their representatives: two in June, two in October and two at the end of November. In addition to presenting the external and internal features of assessments and the inconsistencies in determining whether colleges meet the quality standards for external evaluation, these training events also focused on the in-depth self-evaluation of their activities. In April 2021, the department participated in a training event for candidates for the Agency's experts, which covered the criteria for accreditation and evaluation, the specificities of the assessments by type of accreditation and evaluation with the related quality standards and provisions for their assessment, and the criteria for the Agency's experts. The training is compulsory, followed by the practical training of candidates – participation in the procedure of accreditation or evaluation of a specific institution, college or study programme.

In October 2022, the department, in cooperation with the Agency's International Cooperation and Information Technology Department, organised an international consultation on distance quality assurance. The event was accompanied by the publication of the proceedings of the meeting, which includes a presentation of the Agency's annual report on its work.

**IV. GENERAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT**

Head Barbara Zupančič Kočar

Alternate: Mateja Bajuk Malešič

Staff: Snežana Mačar, Slađana Tomić, Prudencija Perat, student

Key areas of work: legislation, drafting the Agency's internal legal acts, assisting in the implementation of quality assurance activities, working for the Appeal Committee, financial and human resources matters, access to public information, business and administrative tasks, maintaining and updating records.

TASK	CONTENTS	REALISATION	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES A	AREA OF ASSESSMENT B	VALUES C
<b>1. Legislation and preparation of internal Agency acts</b>			a)	c)	c)
Explanatory notes to individual articles of the draft Act	Drafting explanatory notes to individual articles of the Agency Act.	IN PART			
The draft Agency Act has been submitted to the legislative procedure.	The record on the status of the Agency, the consolidation of its independence; competence, the tasks of the Agency and the accreditation and evaluation procedures will be laid down in the new Agency Act, they will no longer be part of the Higher Education Act (ZViS).	YES			
Adaptation of the management of personal data to the provisions of the Slovenian Personal Data Protection Act (ZVOP-2) envisaged for adoption in 2021.	Organising the Agency's records, data and documents in line with the new legislation.	In the light of the provisions of the ZVOP-2  NO			
<b>2. Assistance in the implementation of activities from the field of quality assurance</b>				b)	b)
Harmonisation of the Agency's public records	Harmonisation of public records kept by the Agency in accordance with Article 51v of the ZViS (on accreditations of HEIs, SPs; evaluations of HEIs, SPs; concluded VTI contracts; accreditations of changes to HEIs).	IN PART			
<b>3. Work for the Appeal Committee</b>				b)	a)
Procedures relating to the appointment of the deputy member of the Appeal Committee	Ensuring that applications are complete, participating in the selection panel, preparing documents, arranging financial information.	YES			

4. Financial and human resource affairs				B)	a)
Court of Auditors audit	Report on the work and operation of the Agency in 2020	YES			
Monitoring the implementation of measures (Family Friendly Enterprise)	Ensuring that the measures taken to achieve full Family Friendly Enterprise certification are implemented, project group meetings.	YES			
Act governing internal organisation and classification of posts in the Agency	Drafting of the clean text and amendments to the Act.	YES			
Annual accounts of the Agency	Financial part and explanation of the achievement of each objective according to the indicators prescribed.	YES			
4. Business and administrative tasks				b)	a)
New business premises of the Agency	Finding new premises for the Agency, concluding and cancelling contracts, organising the move, preparations, cleaning the premises, etc.	YES			

## **EXPLANATORY NOTES TO THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTED TASKS:**

### **Legislation and preparation of internal Agency acts**

In April, the Agency submitted a draft Act on Quality in Higher and Higher Vocational Education to the Slovenian Ministry of Education and Science, which would comprehensively and systematically regulate the Agency's activities. The act would replace the provisions of the memorandum of association, the chapter in the Higher Education Act (ZViS) regulating the work of the Agency, and include some of the content of the Agency Council's criteria. It would also regulate the status of the Agency. At the proposal of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Agency sent it a shortened version of the draft act in May. Among other things, it regulates accreditation and evaluation procedures, transposes quality standards from the Agency Council's criteria into legal provisions, amends the appeal procedure, introduces special sectoral committees to assist the Agency Council, allows for the meaningful application of the act governing the general administrative procedure instead of a complementary one, and expands the Agency's competences when operating abroad. In October, the Ministry of Education and Science appointed a working group to prepare a draft Act on Quality in Higher and Higher Vocational Education. The group met twice in 2021. The documents before the Agency (examination of and replies to comments, harmonisation of the text of the Act) were prepared intensively by the Agency. In December, it started drafting the explanatory memorandum to the articles of the Act, and the reduction of the legal material also made it necessary to revise the explanatory memorandum with the objectives and reasons for the adoption of the Act. It is expected to be submitted for procedure at the beginning of next year. Unfortunately, the abridged version of the Act does not regulate the unclear status of the Agency, which should also be properly regulated in the light of the Court of Auditors' warning.

The task of adapting the management of personal data to the provisions of the Personal Data Protection Act (ZVOP-2) could not be carried out in 2021, as the Act was not adopted in 2021 either. Although the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has been directly applicable for EU Member States since 2018, it still provides for certain adjustments or harmonisations with the legislation of each Member State. In March 2021, the Data Protection Officer provided training to the Agency's employees on this subject. During the year, the legal basis for obtaining data on the Slovenian Research Agency's Higher Education Provider Codes and for obtaining data for the employability analysis was reviewed.

### **Assistance in the implementation of activities from the field of quality assurance**

The task of harmonising the public records kept by the Agency in accordance with Article 51v of the ZViS on accreditation and evaluation of HEIs and study programmes, on concluded VTI contracts and on accreditation of changes to HEIs was largely completed in 2021. In order to fully align public records with the requirements of the ZViS, the data from the Agency's internal information system (iNakvis) was exported in 2021, in line with which the table for the public publication of the required data on the Agency's website was harmonised. In 2022, the records will need to be supplemented with additional data, which will be obtained after coordination with the higher education institutions.

### **Work for the Appeal Committee**

The Appeal Committee is composed of three members and two alternates in 2020 and 2021. As the full composition is still one alternate short, new calls for candidates for the position of deputy have been launched in 2021, as in 2020. As there were no suitable applications, the procedures for the last appointment of an alternate will have to be continued in 2022. An Agency employee from the General Affairs Department was responsible for the procedures relating to the appointment of the members of the Appeal Committee (preparation of public notices, examination of applications, calls for supporting documents for applications, preparation of the materials for the meetings of the selection panel appointed by the Agency Council, reporting at the Council meetings and preparation of the materials).

### **Financial and human resource affairs**

In 2021, the Court of Auditors carried out an audit of the regularity of the Agency's operations for 2020. The audit was very extensive, covering a full review of the management of the Slovenian budget on all budget items (PP 9885 – Salaries, PP 9886 – Material costs, PP 9887 – Investments, PP 9888 – Quality of higher education). On 15 November 2021, we received an audit report on the regularity of the Agency's operations, in which it issued a qualified opinion because it found that in some cases the Agency had not complied with the rules. There are 15 points, only one of which requires a response report – a corrective action that has already been implemented. In 14 cases, the Court of Auditors considered the Agency's explanations to be adequate, as it did not include the alleged non-compliance in the statement of corrective actions in the response report due by the Agency by mid-February 2022, but recommended that the Agency strengthen internal controls to ensure that all commitments are implemented correctly and on time. The Court of Auditors went on to state that, apart from the impact of the irregularities identified on the regularity of operations in 2020, it considers that the Agency complied in all material respects with the rules.

In 2020, the Agency obtained the basic Family-Friendly Enterprise certificate awarded by the non-governmental organisation Ekvilib InSTITUTE. The Agency's team that monitors the implementation of the measures taken in the context of the certificate met three times in 2021. It also prepared a questionnaire to check staff satisfaction with the implementation of the measures. In April 2021, the first annual report on the implementation of the actions taken was prepared, followed by the annual visit of the certifier's assessor in May, who praised the good practice of working from home and invited the Agency to present it at the annual meeting of the certificate holders. A member of the Agency's staff, who is the Agency's representative for the certificate, attended the conference in September 2021 and presented the combined home- and agency-based working method to the participants.

In line with the action plan, a revision of the job classification system was adopted in April, removing all vacant posts from the Act governing internal organisation and classification of posts in the Agency and making some other minor changes. A clean copy of the Act has also been prepared and adopted. Outside the 2021 Action Plan, another major revision of the job classification system was prepared and adopted in December, which changed the organisational structure of the Agency and reinstated the creation of three sectors (Quality and International Cooperation, Analytics and Information Technology, and General Affairs), up from four before 2019. The revised job classification system also required new contracts to be drawn up for all employees by the end of the year, with the majority of employees being reassigned to new positions, and the contracts also taking into account the change of address of the Agency's premises.

In accordance with Articles 96 and 97 of the Public Finance Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No 11/11 – Official consolidated text, 14/13 – corr., 101/13, 55/15 – ZFisP, 96/15 – ZIPRS1617, 13/18 and 195/20 – Const. Court Decision) and the Slovenian Government's roadmap, the 2020 annual accounts were prepared, detailing a report on the objectives achieved and the results of the Agency's work. In the explanatory notes to the annual accounts, the Agency also explained in more detail how it used the allocated budgetary resources and for what purposes.

### **Business and administrative tasks**

Due to the expiry of the lease in September, new suitable premises had to be found. After considering and viewing potential premises earlier this year, the Agency decided to rent office space in Miklošičeva cesta in Ljubljana. This was followed by the coordination of the lease agreement and arrangements for adjustments to the premises prior to the relocation. The contract was signed in June and work on the premises (adaptation of the meeting room, kitchenette, toilets, whitewashing, electrical work, etc.) started. The relocation took place in September and was logistically complex (e.g. moving documentation, equipment, computer infrastructure and coordinating with both the new and the previous owners, who had already offered the premises for which the lease was expiring to the new tenants). The change of premises required the cancellation of a number of contractual relationships linked to the previous location (telecommunications, utilities, building management, heating, etc.), the notification of all contractual partners of the change of business address, the arrangement of post delivery, etc. Several procedures had to be carried out for the selection of service providers (e.g. cleaning services, telecommunications services) linked to the new premises.

The change of business address had to be approved by the Agency Council, and the procedure for registering the change in the Court Register had to be carried out.



## V. RESOURCES

### FINANCIAL RESOURCES

2021PP Outturn of the Agency's state budget	Policy / Main programme / Sub- programme / Budget heading	Adopted budget 2021 (in EUR) - before the REVISION	Valid budget 2021 (in EUR)	Budget outturn 2021 (in EUR)	Share of budget outturn in the adopted budget
1	2	3	4	5	6 = 5 / 4
	02 – Higher education, science, technology and information society				
	0201 – Higher education				
	020101 – Higher education				
9885	Salaries	764,862.83	775,830.05	775,830.05	100%
9886	Material costs	250,166.81	219,724.43	219,724.43	100%
9887	Investments	82,261.00	82,134.82	82,134.82	100%
9888	Quality of higher education	408,230.00	427,831.34	427,820.60	100%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	1,505,520.64	1,505,520.64	1,505,509.90	100%

The **budget's implementation rate as a percentage of the adopted budget** (salaries, material costs, investments, quality of higher education) was **100%** in 2021.

The use of the allocated funds in 2021 is the same as in 2020, i.e. 100%. Within the available budget, transfers were made during the year according to the urgency of the commitments.

## Comparison of resources spent at the Agency from 2015 to 2021

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>INTEGRAL RESOURCES</b>							
Salaries	385,307	569,367	575,233	625,920	692,304	740,968	775,830.05
Material costs	145,745	215,715	208,000	269,996	275,863	243,289	219,724.43
Investments	111	30,947	49,013	45,497	99,125	82,321	82,134.82
Remuneration for the work of the members of the Council and the Appeal Committee	26,607	30,472	32,565	36,979	31,849	35,997.08	38,299.73
Accreditations costs	0	363,460	251,192	121,234	169,939	218,997	328,119.63
Material costs – visibility					54,479	41,580	61,401.24
OS – compensation funds				3,961		-	
1+2+3+4+5+6	557,770	1,209,959	1,116,003	1,103,587	1,323,558	1,363,152	1,505,509.90
<b>ESF funds</b>							
Salaries	259,408		-	-	-		
Accreditations costs	401,631		-	-	-		
Investments	87,228		-	-	-		
6+7+8	748,267		-	-	-		
EIQAS	4,715	33,263	4,247		-		
<b>TOTAL CONSUMPTION</b>							
1+2+3+4+	1,310,752	1,243,222	1,120,250	1,103,587	1,323,558	1,363,152	1,505,509.90
5+6+7+8+9+10							

## **VI. HUMAN RESOURCES**

The number of employees remained unchanged in 2021. According to the adopted human resource plan, the Agency had 20 employees: a Director, 5 employees in the Analytics Department, 5 employees in the Quality Assurance Department, 4 employees in the International Cooperation and Information Technology Department, and 5 employees in the General Affairs Department.

For some years now, we have seen an increase in the volume of work in the finance and quality assurance departments, especially in relation to the accreditation procedures run by the Agency. The Agency also urgently needs an English translator-interpreter, given the need for its further internationalisation, the legal obligation to involve foreign experts in accreditation and external evaluation procedures, the increasing need for translations of applications, supporting documents for accreditation or evaluation, and the Agency's various voluminous documents and regulations. In consideration of the above, the number of employees would need to be increased by at least 1 position each year (to 21 in 2022 and 22 in 2023).

In accordance with the Decree on the promotion of public employees to salary grades, annual procedures were carried out to assess and verify eligibility for promotion to higher grades.

At the end of 2021, all new employment contracts were prepared in view of the extensive change to the staffing structure in December, when the Agency was reorganised from four sectors to three, and the relocation of the Agency from the premises in Slovenska cesta to the premises in Miklošičeva cesta in Ljubljana.

The staff training plan for 2021 has been fully implemented. In addition to short, thematic training courses for all employees, the Agency decided to fund doctoral studies for three employees. It will use their newly acquired knowledge to upgrade and improve the Agency's areas of work.