

REPORT ON THE WORK AND OPERATIONS OF THE SLOVENIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN 2022



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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 2022**

INTRODUCTION

An overview of the Agency's work, several analyses and reports on various events, feedback from higher education stakeholders and the self-evaluation show that the Agency is achieving the strategic goals set for the strategic period until 2025.

Besides preparing the work report for 2022, the Agency completed most of the tasks from the action or work plan. It continued to conduct accreditations and external evaluations of higher education institutions, study programmes and higher vocational colleges, including university reaccreditations.

It strove to improve assessment according to quality standards and accreditation and evaluation procedures. It updated the guide to external assessments and produced a Slovenian version in book form. It organised various expert and employee trainings with a view to exchanging practical experience and working together to develop guidelines for the proper assessment of quality standards in all areas of assessment based on the Accreditation Criteria.

In 2022, the Agency's work continued to focus on efforts towards the adoption of a stand-alone Act on Quality in Higher and Higher Vocational Education, but due to a change of government, the further process of adopting the Act was put on hold. A stand-alone Act would enable the Agency to participate in foreign accreditation procedures, which is increasingly necessary, and would strengthen the professionalism of decision-making in appeal procedures, which is why we will continue our efforts towards its adoption.

The Agency's self-evaluation is another extensive task carried out in 2022. The main objective of the Agency's self-evaluation is to improve the quality of the Agency's activities and to fulfil the conditions for extending membership in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). In December 2022, we prepared a self-evaluation report, which is the basis for a third external assessment as part of the so-called targeted review by the ENQA group of experts.

A substantive analysis of reports by groups of experts based on sample evaluations, and an international analysis of quality assurance agencies for higher education were completed in the first half of 2022. We started preparing the third systemic analysis of accreditation and evaluation practices covering accreditation and evaluation reports by groups of experts and self-evaluation reports of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges from 2018 to 2022.

We continued international collaboration in the context of international working groups as well as international meetings and conferences. As part of the presidency of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA), the Agency has prepared a special publication and co-organised the annual CEENQA meeting, with a presentation of the findings of the international analysis on the independence of agencies.

The recovery from the epidemic and the digital and green transitions have accelerated change in tertiary education and stimulated debate on the future development of quality assurance systems. We will continue to deepen our cooperation with various stakeholders and strive for high-quality higher and higher vocational education in Slovenia with a high degree of responsibility.

Franci Demšar, Ph.D., Director

CONTENTS

- I. ABOUT THE AGENCY 4
- II. OVERVIEW OF THE AGENCY 'S WORK IN 2022 8
- III. OVERVIEW OF THE PERFORMANCE OF FIRST- AND SECOND-INSTANCE
DECISION-MAKING BODIES OF THE AGENCY 14
 - AGENCY COUNCIL 14
 - APPEAL COMMITTEE 17
- IV. ACCREDITATIONS AND EVALUATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND HIGHER
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION 18
- V. THE AGENCY'S PRIORITIES (IMPORTANT TASKS) IN 2022 25
 - IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2022 ACTION PLAN 25
- VI. OVERVIEW OF WORK BY DEPARTMENTS IN 2022 26
- VII. RESOURCES 34

I. ABOUT THE AGENCY

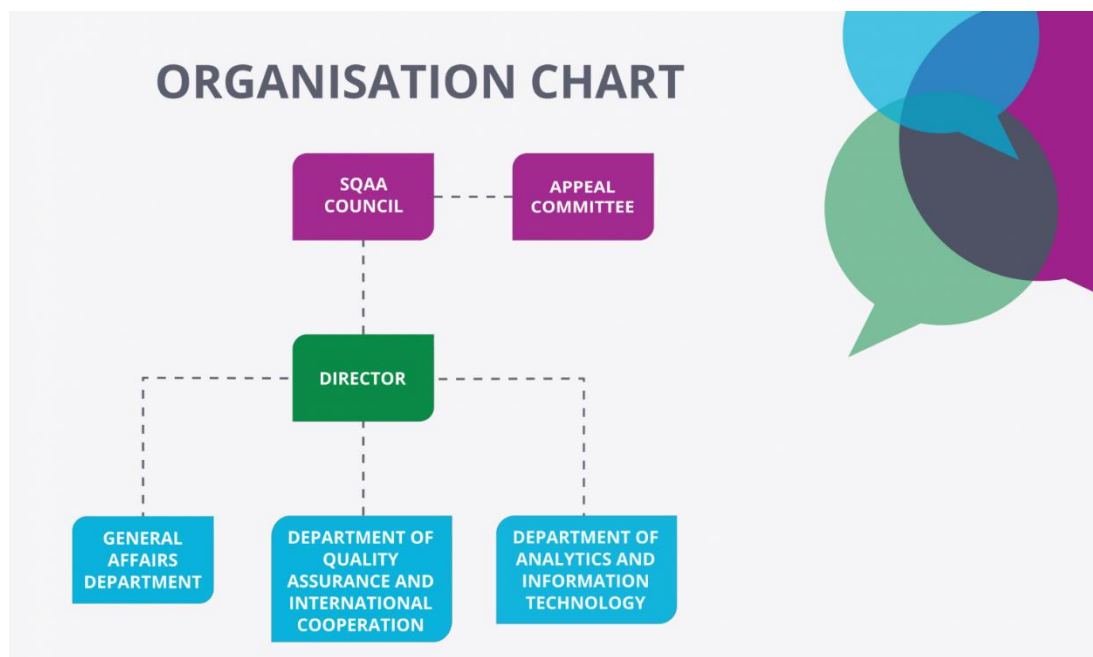
The Republic of Slovenia established the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter: the Agency) in 2010 as a public body for quality assurance in higher education and for development and advisory work. The Agency is a direct non-governmental budget user. Acting under public 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 Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), the European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA), the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA), the presidency of which it assumed in 2020, 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 comparability and international recognition of Slovenian higher education area and strives for continuous improvement of its quality. It operates with substantive and formal responsibility, in expert, professional and independent manner, and provides counselling for all stakeholders in tertiary education in accordance with the European and global development orientations.

Vision

By activities in the implementation of processes in the field of assuring and improving quality in higher education, the Agency will change the national and international higher education area.



The **AGENCY'S DEPARTMENTS** perform all tasks in the basic areas of its operation, which means that they draft criteria and other regulations, conduct accreditation and evaluation procedures, update the Agency's information system, prepare analyses and guidelines to support the systems and quality assessment, engage in international networking, oversee the transparency of work and communication with stakeholders, and prepare materials for decision-making of the Agency Council and for the Appeals Committee. One of the basic activities is constant international cooperation with related agencies and associations of agencies, as well as development and consulting work.

In order to improve its work, the Agency has undergone several organisational transformations since 2018. In 2020 and 2021, its operations were divided into four departments: Quality Assurance; Analytics; International Cooperation and Information Technology; and General Affairs. As practice has shown that it would be sensible to reorganise the four departments into three in order to ensure better cohesion of content in individual fields of work, the Agency's operations, starting from 2022, consist of: the Quality Assurance and International Cooperation Department, the Analytics and Information Technology Department and the General Affairs Department. Each department has its own head.

The tasks carried out by individual departments are intertwined or closely linked. As a result, they must often be performed by professional staff from various departments. The Agency's main activities, accreditation and evaluation procedures, are conducted by staff from both the Quality Assurance Department and the International Cooperation and the Analytics and Information Technology Department.

Detailed overview of tasks related to the external quality assessment of higher and higher vocational education by departments:

The main fields of work by department are:

Director: Franci Demšar, Ph.D, alternate Jožica Kramar
<p>Quality Assurance and International Cooperation Department</p> <p>Head of the department: Klemen Šubic, alternates: Nataša Kramar and Gregor Rebernik. Staff: Anita Kajtezović, Martina Mravlja, Zala Sečnik</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - criteria and other provisions from the field of quality; - accreditations and evaluations; - modifications of study programmes; - cooperation with stakeholders (institutions/colleges, experts); - communications and public relations; - international activities; - organisation and cooperation in different national and international events (conferences, consultations, training courses, workshops); - keeping and updating records (on accreditations, evaluations, modifications, transnational higher education – THE, etc.); - project collaborations and activities (micro-credentials, European universities, etc.); - intersectoral cooperation (integrity, promotion of health, self-evaluation, etc.); - archiving applications and other documents.
<p>Analytics and Information Technology Department:</p> <p>Head of the department: Tatjana Debevec, alternates: Maja Milas and Andrej Krček Staff: Matjaž Štuhec, Ph. D., Jernej Širok, M. Sc, Tatjana Horvat and Tilen Heco.</p>

- plans and reports (Annual Work Plan and Report on Work and Operations of the Agency, strategy);
- analyses, documents, publications;
- self-evaluation of the Agency;
- manuals, guides;
- organisation and cooperation in different events (conferences, consultations, training courses, workshops);
- translation;
- eNakvis information system and links with databases (SICRIS, IZUM, etc.);
- internal information system iNakvis;
- intersectoral cooperation (integrity, promotion of health, etc.);
- keeping and updating records (on accreditations, evaluations, modifications, THE, etc.);

General Affairs Department:

Head of the department: Barbara Zupančič Kočar, alternates: Mateja Bajuk Malešič and Snežana Mačar.

Staff: Slađana Tomić, Prudencija Perat, student Filip Draženović

- legislation, preparation of internal Agency acts;
- assistance in the implementation of activities from the field of quality assurance;
- work for the Appeal Committee;
- financial affairs (budget implementation);
- human resources affairs;
- access to public information;
- business and administrative tasks (contracts, receiving and sending mail, document records etc.);
- participation in external and internal supervision procedures;
- intersectoral cooperation (integrity, promotion of health, self-evaluation, etc.);
- keeping and updating human resource and other records within its powers.

The **AGENCY COUNCIL** is the highest decision-making body. Its composition enables decision-making independent of the politics and ensures the participation of all important stakeholders:

- 3 members are appointed by the Rectors' Conference,
- 1 member is appointed by the representative association of independent higher education institutions,
- 1 member is appointed by the representative association of higher vocational colleges,
- 2 members are appointed by the representative organisation of students in cooperation with student councils,
- 1 member is appointed by representative employers' associations by agreement,
- 1 member is appointed by representative trade unions in the field of higher education by agreement,
- 2 members are appointed by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia based on public invitation (1 is an expert in the field of higher education or its quality assurance + 1 is an expert in the field of higher education or its quality assurance who studies or works abroad).

The Agency Council:

- determines and adopts criteria for accreditation and external evaluation of higher education institutions, study programmes, higher vocational colleges and other regulations related to it; all are published on the Agency's website;
- decides on the following:

- initial accreditation of higher education institutions and their reaccreditation, which may be granted for a maximum of 5 years,
- accreditation of study programmes, including international joint study programmes, for an indefinite period of time,
- accreditation of transformations of higher education institutions,
- compliance with conditions for the entry of a transnational higher education in the public records,
- notifications of international study programmes accredited abroad;
- adopts opinions about compliance with quality standards of higher vocational colleges;
- issues recommendations to higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges to improve the quality of all their activities, and especially self-evaluation, updating and delivery of study programmes.

Table 1: Council members in 2022

Members	Institution appointing the member:
Boris Dular, Ph.D., President of the Council	Representative employer associations
Marjan Mernik, Ph.D., Agency Council Deputy President	Rectors' conference
Ivan Svetlik, Ph.D., later Goran Turk, Ph.D.	Rectors' conference
Peter Purg, Ph.D., later Klemen Širok	Rectors' conference
Sebastjan Kristovič, Ph.D.	Representative association of independent higher education institutions
Branko Škafar, Ph.D.	Representative association of higher vocational colleges
Andrej Pirjevec, later David Bohar	Representative organisation of students in cooperation with student councils
Klemen Peran, later Andrej Pirjevec	Representative organisation of students in cooperation with student councils
Bruno Završnik, Ph.D.	Representative trade unions in higher education
Mirko Pečarič, Ph.D., later Julijana Kristl, Ph.D.	Government of the Republic of Slovenia
Peter Verovšek, Ph.D.	Government of the Republic of Slovenia

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 Appeal Committee is appointed by the Agency Council on the basis of a public invitation. The Appeal Committee consists of three members, each of whom has an alternate. The members elect from among themselves a chair and deputy chair. Alternates replace members in decision-making procedures in the event of their absence or exclusion.

The Appeal Committee of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education is composed of:

Members	Term of office	Alternate
Uršula Habe Nagode, member	20 June 2019 to 20 June 2023	
Marko Novak, Ph.D., president	20 June 2019 to 20 June 2023	Andreja Rakuša
Barbara Toplak Perović, Ph.D., member	20 June 2019 to 20 June 2023	Tina Tratnik

II. OVERVIEW OF THE AGENCY 'S WORK IN 2022

In 2022, the Agency continued implementing the Development Strategy for the Period 2021-2025, which follows the key priority areas of the Agency, especially the desire to adopt the 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.

Decisions in accreditation and evaluation procedures – on granting accreditation or rejecting an application for it, reaccreditation or possible withdrawal – are decisively influenced by the compliance with quality standards by the areas of quality assessment determined by the criteria:

AREAS OF QUALITY ASSESSMENT ACCORDING TO THE TYPES OF ACCREDITATIONS OR EXTERNAL EVALUATIONS

<i>INITIAL ACCREDITATION OF A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION</i>	<i>REACCREDITATION OF A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION AND EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF A HIGHER PROFESSIONAL COLLEGE</i>
1. Operation of the higher education institution	1. Operation of the higher education institution or higher vocational college
2. Human resources	2. Human resources
3. Material conditions	3. Students
	4. Material conditions
	5. Internal quality assurance and improvement, modification, updating and delivery of study programmes
<i>ACCREDITATION OF A STUDY PROGRAMME</i>	<i>EVALUATION OF A STUDY PROGRAMME OR A SAMPLE OF STUDY PROGRAMME</i>
1. Structure and content of a study programme	1. Internal quality assurance and improvement of the quality of a study programme
2. Study programme delivery concept	2. Modification and updating of a study programme
	3. Study programme delivery

The Agency constantly strives to ensure and improve qualitative, professional and objective quality assessment in accreditation and evaluation procedures. To this end, it appoints independent groups of experts – which must include a foreign expert and a student – who carry out an in-depth assessment of compliance with quality standards in all areas of assessment. It regularly trains experts and candidates at special meetings and workshops, acquaints them with novelties in laws, Agency regulations and international standards for quality assessment, the need for impartial, in-depth substantive quality assessment, information on the characteristics of external assessments and satisfaction with them, the protocol of visits to institutions and colleges and the needs to meet other, equally important conditions for the Agency expert, such as the ability to work in a group and a respectful attitude towards interlocutors. The findings of the group of experts are evident from the accreditation and evaluation reports and are the basis for decisions on accreditations, external evaluations or important recommendations for quality improvement.

Importance of cooperation

In Slovenia, external assessment of the quality of higher and higher vocational education is inextricably linked to the active participation of students, teachers and researchers. The Agency, as well as its predecessor, the Council for Higher Education, was one of the first in Europe and beyond to start working with students at all levels: students are compulsory members of the Agency Council and all groups of experts, and their organisations participate in drafting legislation, criteria and other regulations. External quality assessment primarily addresses them, as well as teachers and researchers. The task of the Agency is to contribute to high-quality education according to state-approved study programmes. The state-approved status or validity of diplomas is, namely, guaranteed by a granted accreditation, which is within the competence of the Agency.

The tasks in the Agency's Annual Work Plan (AWP 2022) were defined by taking into account the following:

strategic objectives of the Agency from 2021 to 2025:

- adoption of the Act on Quality in Higher and Higher Vocational Education;
- improvement of assessment according to quality standards and accreditation and evaluation procedures;
- in-depth substantive analytic work in selected areas;
- establishment of up-to-date databases on selected activities at higher education institutions;
- pursuing sustainable development goals;
- in-depth international cooperation;
- proactive communication;

areas of assessment according to the Quality Manual:

- accreditations and external evaluations;
- internal quality assurance system of the Agency;
- external quality assurance system of the Agency;
- criteria and other provisions of the Agency;
- information system and provision of information;

values of the Agency:

- professionalism;
- transparency;
- development.

Legislation and other provisions from the field of quality

At its meeting in early 2022, the working group appointed by the Ministry of Education and Science to prepare the draft Act on Quality in Higher and Higher Vocational Education endorsed the draft Act for further consideration. The Agency provided explanations of the individual articles of the draft Act, a justification of the objectives and reasons for adopting the Act, and an international comparison. However, with the change of government in spring 2022, activities related to the Act have come to a standstill. In autumn 2022, the Ministry assured that activities for the adoption of the Act will continue after the amendment of the Higher Education Act is ready.

Criteria for Experts of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education were amended in spring; the amendments concern the mandatory conditions to be fulfilled by candidates for entry in the Register, the recording of the annexes to the application for entry and the recording of the content of the assessment of the candidate, the conditions for the extension of entry in the Register or for removal from the Register, and the

obligations of the professionals entered in the Register. It has also been redefined when the status of entry of experts in the Register of Experts is suspended.

In autumn, the Agency prepared the draft amendment to the Criteria for International Cooperation in Higher Education, which regulates in more detail especially the change of an international joint study programme into a study programme delivered only by a Slovenian higher education institution, and actions taken in the event of inappropriate modifications of study programmes (introduction of an extraordinary evaluation procedure). The document was discussed at several meetings and sent to stakeholders for comments. The new Professional and Academic Titles Act (ZSZUN), which entered into force in the summer of 2022, has also been taken into account in the preparation of the document. As an amendment to the ZSZUN, whose content has an impact on the wording of the Criteria, was submitted to the legislative procedure at the end of the year, the adoption of the amended Criteria was postponed until the following year.

The new ZSZUN also prompted the amendment to the Criteria for the Accreditation and External Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes. The amendment introduces the naming of artistic titles and the naming of professional, scientific and artistic titles in English. Provisions have been added regarding the conduct of a site visit or tour of the premises, and the identification of major deficiencies in Article 45 of the Criteria has been amended in relation to the modification and updating of the study programme. Article 49a on progress reporting and Article 50 on evaluation of samples of study programmes have also been amended. The forms for accreditation and evaluation procedures have also been revised accordingly. The adoption of the amended Criteria was postponed to the next year as well because the first amendment to the ZSZUN, whose content has an impact on the wording of the Criteria, was submitted to the legislative procedure at the end of the year.

Since, according to the ZViS, the components of the Diploma Supplement form are determined by the Minister responsible for higher education on the Agency's proposal, the 182nd meeting of the Agency Council also considered a proposal to amend the Rules on Diploma Supplement in order to bring it in line with the new ZSZUN.

Analyses, documents, publications

In early 2022, an analysis of evaluations of samples of study programmes with an international dimension was finished and published; the work on it began in the second half of 2021. The programmes are grouped into three thematic sets: international joint study programmes, study programmes in the framework of transnational higher education, and those delivered by Slovenian higher education institutions in their branches abroad.

We started preparing the third systemic analysis of accreditation and evaluation practices covering accreditation and evaluation reports by groups of experts and self-evaluation reports of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges from 2018 to 2022. To this end, more than 200 reports need to be analysed, most of them related to the assessment of study programmes in accreditation and evaluation procedures, for which the first results and data have been collected. The analysis of reports on the reaccreditation of institutions, college evaluations and self-evaluations continues.

In autumn 2022, the Agency's annual publication was published, which – in addition to presenting the Agency and the annual report on its work – aimed to present a guide to external assessments and guidelines for hybrid education. The publication was printed in both the Slovenian and English language, and its content was presented at national and international events.

The Agency has continuously ensured that the 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 study programmes being delivered 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. A comprehensive database of higher education libraries has also been launched.

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. The Agency has established links with CEENQA and individual European agencies to strengthen the analytics field and share good practice in the field of independence. The cooperation framework is based on the joint organisation of thematic events and publications on independence (e.g. CEENQA Annual Assembly and publication).

Manuals, guides

The Guide to External Assessments has been published in book form and, since the publication of the first draft on the Agency's website in March 2021 and a second updated draft at the end of the same year, it has been updated and improved in cooperation with representatives of higher education institutions, higher vocational colleges, the Agency's experts and other stakeholders. Numerous meetings, presentations and consultations have been organised. In 2022, the Guide was supplemented with the chapter on initial accreditation of a higher education institution and the specifics of assessing (international) joint study programmes or transnational higher education and habilitation. The result is a comprehensive publication of more than 140 pages.

For two years before publishing the final version, the assessment guide and its guidelines were tested by employees, the Agency Council and experts in accreditation and evaluation procedures, as well as by a number of institutions and colleges in self-evaluation processes. The Guide discusses the structural features of external assessments and the discrepancies or shifts that occur in assessments. It details the specifics and important inadequacies of external assessments according to each quality standard and type of procedure, and provides guidance on how to carry out a proper assessment in all the areas covered by the Criteria. Particular attention is paid to assessing the quality of scientific and research, professional or artistic work, teaching, practical training and the content and delivery of studies. The specifics of the cycles and types of study, its correspondence to the discipline and some institutional specifics are highlighted in order to make the assessment of quality more in-depth, substantive, multifaceted and rigorous.

At the end of 2022, the guide was translated into English, and the English version will be published in book form at the beginning of 2023.

Organisation and participation in events

Last year, the Agency held a number of thematic and coordination meetings for experts and other stakeholders, with the emphasis on the consideration of the Assessment Guide. In addition to presenting the external and internal properties of assessments and the inconsistencies in determining whether colleges and institutions or universities meet the

quality standards for external evaluation, they stressed the importance of in-depth self-evaluation of their activities. The Director represented the Agency at various national events; we should highlight the consultation on the future of universities organised by the Rectors' Conference of the Republic of Slovenia and the consultation on the autonomy of universities organised by the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The Agency's employees also regularly participate in various events in the Slovenian higher education area, where they are actively involved (round tables, staff exchanges, training, etc.).

In autumn 2022, the training of candidates for Agency experts also continued, covering the regulations used by experts in their work, how to work as part of a group of experts, lessons learned from assessments, and the use of the Assessment Guide. 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 December 2022, the Agency held its annual consultation for higher and higher vocational education stakeholders, presenting a report on its work in 2022, the work of the Agency's Council, the Guide to External Assessments and the self-evaluation report for the previous period.

In June 2022, the Agency organised an international conference on hybrid studies and, in cooperation with external experts and the Agency's working group, prepared *Guidelines on Hybrid Approach in Tertiary Education*.

International cooperation

In 2022, the Agency continued its regular participation in the CEENQA network based on the joint organisation of thematic events, the preparation of publications on various topics, etc. Within the network, we participated in regular bi-monthly distance agency working meetings, produced a thematic publication and co-organised the annual general meeting, at which an Agency staff member presented the findings of an international analysis of the independence of agencies. At the same time, the Agency Director was re-elected as the network's president.

We continued study visits to foreign agencies such as AKKV, HCERES, QAA, AZVO, ACQAHE, which are primarily aimed at strengthening cooperation in the European area, identifying common problems of agencies, proposing appropriate solutions and exchanging examples of good practice.

The Agency has been actively involved in the ECA since 2009, when it was accepted as a member. Two employees currently cooperate with the ECA, one as a member of the ECA Council. Priority activities of the ECA 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. This year, two staff members took part in the training on quality assurance of joint study programmes.

At the beginning of June, the Agency 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. Participation in the ENQA group provides opportunities to follow the latest good and bad practices and to solve challenges also in the Slovenian higher education area.

In 2022, in addition to its participation in the CEENQA, ECA and ENQA networks, the Agency continued to participate in the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BUFG).

The Agency continued to strengthen international contacts and organise both distance and live thematic meetings. 2022 ended with a visit by representatives of the Serbian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (Nacionalno telo za akreditaciju i obezbeđenje kvaliteta u visokom obrazovanju), as part of the EU REdiS project (EU support for education reform in Serbia).

Information system of the Agency (eNakvis and iNakvis)

In 2022, eNakvis 2.0 was finalised. It was set up in a test and school environment. Since the summer, external stakeholders (mainly institutions) have been able to access it via the school environment and have provided feedback on the performance of the redesigned application. In the autumn, the Ministry responsible for public administration started security checks. By the end of the year, the first stage of checking had been completed, and the second stage (penetration tests) was launched at the end of the year.

In 2022, the Agency continued the development of its internal IT system iNakvis, which was first piloted in 2020. Within the system, it has developed new records of working time. Recording is now done exclusively via iNakvis. The records contain information on attendance, homeworking reports, holidays, training, business trips and other absences. iNakvis also allows data to be automatically transferred to MFERAC, saving the time needed for manual data entry and reducing the possibility of errors.

The Agency's fixed asset register has been set up to facilitate the work of the Inventory Committee in its annual inventory of assets, and is also useful for investment planning.

Finally, the Expert Report Register has been added to iNakvis, allowing the automatic upload of published expert reports to DEQAR (Database of External Quality Assurance Results) via a web service.

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 on its website and social media. As part of its promotional activities, the Agency has continued its project of making presentation films in 2022, this time focusing on higher vocational colleges. The project will close in 2023.

The Agency's main activity, associated with quality assurance and accreditation and evaluation procedures, continues to be the main line of development and operation of the entire Agency. More than half of the employees conduct accreditation and evaluation procedures. In September and October, the Agency held several focus group meetings with representatives of higher education institutions evaluated in the last two years to obtain feedback on the implementation of the procedures. The focus was on distance site visits, with a generally very positive response from institutions to both the work of the Agency staff and the work of the experts. The Agency generally holds regular meetings with all relevant stakeholders, while in 2022, the Agency Director completed the project of visiting all higher education institutions in Slovenia. These visits were also aimed at gathering feedback on the Agency's activities. Every year since 2019, it organises the International Conference on Quality in Higher Education, which focuses on a variety of topical issues in higher education.

III. OVERVIEW OF THE PERFORMANCE OF FIRST- AND SECOND-INSTANCE DECISION-MAKING BODIES OF THE AGENCY

AGENCY COUNCIL

In 2022, the Agency Council met in fourteen meetings – eleven regular and three correspondence ones – where it decided on the appointment of groups of experts in the evaluation and accreditation procedures and the extension of the deadline for an applicant to respond to the call of the Agency Council, and approved the Agency's self-evaluation report. The correspondence meetings had to be convened to enable smooth implementation of procedures and approve the Agency's self-evaluation report.

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. In 2022, accreditation of study programmes, external evaluations of higher education institutions, evaluations of samples of study programmes and monitoring of progress based on the recommendations of groups of experts took place.

The Council adopted the draft public call for application to candidates for entry in the Register of Experts, the Act amending the Criteria for Experts of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, proposed amendment to the Accreditation Criteria due to the harmonisation with the amended Professional and Academic Titles Act in the field of artistic titles, and the Act amending the Rules of Procedure of the Agency Council. It discussed the proposal to amend and supplement the Criteria for International Cooperation concerning the accreditation of an international joint study programme, its termination, withdrawal from participation in the delivery of such a study programme or its modification, its extraordinary evaluation and the THE contract.

Regular sessions also included thematic discussions, which are presented in more detail below.

Agency documents

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

- Report on Work and Operations of the Agency in 2021 (17 February 2022, 172nd Council meeting);
- Work and Financial Plan of the Agency for 2022 (17 February 2022, 172nd Council meeting);
- Progress Report of the Agency for 2021 (17 February 2022, 172nd Council meeting);
- Confirmation of the sample of study programmes for evaluation in 2023 (15 September 2022, 179th meeting);
- Confirmation of the plan of external evaluations of higher vocational colleges in 2023 (16 June 2022, 177th meeting);
- Guidelines for determining the appropriate secondary school programmes for enrolment to university degree programmes (Art 38 of the Higher Education Act) (15 September 2022, 179th meeting);
- Self-evaluation report of the Agency 2020-2022 (20 October 2022, 181st meeting, 15 December 2022, 183rd meeting, 22 December 2022, 184th correspondence meeting);
- Act amending the Rules of Procedure of the Agency Council (20 October 2022, 181st meeting).

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

At its 179th meeting on 15 September 2022, the Agency Council adopted the Act amending the Criteria for Experts of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

The Agency Council adopted several interpretations of the Minimum Standards for Appointment to Titles of Higher Education Teachers, Researchers and Faculty Assistants at Higher Education Institutions:

- at its 179th meeting, on 15 September 2022, it again adopted an interpretation regarding exceptions from uninterrupted activity abroad for the minimum period of three months. In all cases that are not directly related to the COVID-19 epidemic, the condition of uninterrupted activity abroad for the minimum period of three months must be met for the appointment to a title under Articles 28 and 34 of the regulation; it cannot be met in parts;
- at its 181st meeting, on 20 October 2022, it adopted the interpretation on the transition from the title of senior researcher to that of full professor, on the order of appointment or change of field of appointment, and on the observance of the stricter conditions for appointment to the title laid down by the criteria of the higher education institution.

All interpretations of the Council are published on the Agency's website.

Thematic discussions

At its 172nd meeting, the Council gave its consent to the report on the Agency's work in 2021 and the Work Plan for 2022. It took note of the Agency's progress report for 2021, which, following the third and second sets of ESG standards, discusses the Agency's progress in the light of the findings and recommendations of the ENQA expert group that carried out the external review of the Agency. At its 173rd meeting, it took note of the thematic analysis of the experts' reports in the external evaluation procedures for study programmes delivered as THE, in branches abroad or as joint study programmes. The analysis points to a consideration of the rationale for reckless or self-evident promotion of the internationalisation of studies if a clear connection between the quality of studies and its internationalisation is not recognised. The Council noted that many joint study programmes are not being delivered.

At its 181st meeting, it considered the draft Agency Self-Evaluation Report, which is also the basis for the Agency's external review. The document covering the period since 2020 looks at the quality of the Agency's work, progress since the last external review and proposes improvements. It was developed by the self-evaluation team in collaboration with representatives of external stakeholders. The Report provides an overview of the Agency and the Slovenian higher education system, including information on accreditations and evaluations, as well as the internal quality assurance system. It continues by considering the target areas under Part 2 and Part 3 of the ESG standards. It expresses a view on the implementation of the recommendations of the previous external review of the Agency and presents both the SWOT analysis and the current challenges for the next self-evaluation period. The findings in the Report are supported by the results of a stakeholder opinion survey, an employee satisfaction survey, a survey on the effectiveness of distance site visits and meetings with stakeholders. They are also based on the Annual Report of the Agency and its databases. One of the key assessments in the Report is that the Agency operates in line with ESG standards and meets the conditions for renewal of its membership of ENQA and EQAR.

At its 182nd meeting, the Council took note of the papers on independence in the public sector and the independence of quality assurance agencies in higher education, which were also presented at the CEENQA General Assembly. Independence is linked to the extent to which the state interferes in the institutions in which it has a dominant influence through its human resource management. In the field of higher education and external quality

assessment in particular, we have relatively good arrangements in place, with the involvement of other relevant stakeholders. However, differences are notable in different parts of Europe and some agencies are less independent. At its 183rd meeting, it considered the supplemented draft Self-Evaluation Report of the Agency. It had already taken note of the Report, and the Report had been coordinated with stakeholders. The coordinator of ENQA, which will carry out an external review of the Agency in spring 2023, also commented on the draft Report, with regard to the definition of the self-evaluation period, details of the Agency's accreditation and evaluation procedures, the timetable for stakeholder involvement in the preparation of the SWOT analysis, clarification of future challenges for the Agency, the enrolment conditions for university study programmes, and the statistics for the current year.

Conflict of interest

In 2022, the Agency Council discussed two cases related to the conflict of interest in assessments. In one case, the Council replaced a member of the group of experts due to a reaction from an applicant who pointed out a conflict of interest due to a past failure to cooperate. In the second case, the Agency Council received another request to exclude the chairman of the group of experts on the grounds of a bias in the assessment. The Council rejected the request at first consideration, following which the applicant filed a complaint that was upheld by the Appeal Committee. At the second consideration, the Agency Council took note of the Appeal Committee's decision and will continue the appointment procedure in 2023.

Entry of experts in the Register

The Agency Council entered 21 candidates who have successfully completed the training in the register of experts and extended the entry of 22 experts. It confirmed a public call for applications to candidates for entry in the register of experts on its 162nd meeting on 29 March 2022. There were 38 applicants – candidates from shortage fields, candidates for the assessment of vocational colleges and student candidates. The training of candidates for experts took place on 11 and 25 November 2022.

Actions and complaints

In 2022, the Council or Council President addressed complaints related to the following:

- requests for exclusion of experts (17 February 2022, 172nd meeting; 15 September 2022, 179th meeting);
- decisions rejecting applications for reaccreditation of university members (21 April 2022, 174th meeting).

In all cases, the Council submitted the complaints to the Appeal Committee for decision-making.

Self-evaluation of the Agency

Through self-evaluation, the Agency aims to analyse the quality of its work and review strengths and opportunities for improvement. As part of the self-evaluation, it checked stakeholder opinions on external quality assessments and accreditation and evaluation procedures and their impact on quality in tertiary education.

The preparation of the Agency's Self-Evaluation Report was a priority in 2022, as the Agency will be externally reviewed by a group of ENQA experts in early 2023. The Report is the basis for a third external review as part of the so-called targeted review. The main objective of the Agency's self-evaluation is to improve the quality of the Agency's work and to fulfil the conditions for extending membership in ENQA and EQAR.

The composition of the self-evaluation group appointed in 2022 for preparing the self-evaluation report was slightly different than in previous years, especially because of a different type of review by the ENQA group of experts. The purpose of the targeted external review of the Agency is to review the Agency's target areas of activity, in particular the partial compliances identified, the significant changes in the Agency's operation since the previous review, and the current challenges in achieving ESG compliance. The focus of ENQA's targeted review is also to help the Agency strive for continuous improvement in the quality of its work.

The self-evaluation group has coordinated with ENQA the timeline for the external review of the Agency, including the submission date of the Self-Evaluation Report, the preparation for the visit and the visit of the ENQA expert panel in March 2023.

APPEAL COMMITTEE

In 2022, the Appeal Committee considered and decided on all cases referred to it. It held six meetings (in February, March, May, September, October and November) and adopted decisions on eleven cases. In 2022, most of the complaints (seven) were filed by the same higher education institution as in previous years; as in 2021, two members of the Appeal Committee were excluded from their consideration due to a conflict of interest. In 2022, the Appeal Committee decided at four meetings with one member and two alternates of excluded members, and at two meetings with two members and one alternate.

At its February meeting, the Council decided on a complaint by a higher education institution against a decision by which, as in 2021, the Agency Council President had rejected the appellant's request to exclude an Agency Council member from the procedure. It upheld the complaint and referred the case back to the first-instance body for reconsideration. At its meeting in March, the Appeal Committee considered two complaints against the Council's decision to reject the higher education institution's request to exclude the chair of the group of experts from the procedure. It upheld the appeals and referred the cases back to the Agency Council for reconsideration with a substantive reference. The cases were referred back to the Appeal Committee at its October meeting, the Council's decisions were the same as before, and the Appeal Committee took the same decision as the first time, giving the Agency Council even more detailed guidance on what it should take into account and what it should express a view on when reconsidering the case.

At its meeting in May, the Appeal Committee decided on three complaints by the applicant(s) against the decision by which the Agency Council rejected the application for reaccreditation of the higher education institution. The Appeal Committee upheld the complaints of some of the appellants and set aside the contested decisions, while dismissing the complaints of others in the second point of its decision. The higher education institutions brought administrative disputes before the Administrative Court of the Republic of Slovenia against the decisions in the second point. The Appeal Committee, at its meetings in September and November, prepared replies to all three actions. The cases before the Administrative Court of the Republic of Slovenia are still pending.

IV. ACCREDITATIONS AND EVALUATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND HIGHER VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Accreditation decisions in higher education

In 2022, the Agency Council:

- granted accreditation to 9 study programmes,
- reaccredited 13 higher education institutions,
- adopted 4 transformations of higher education institutions,
- completed 17 procedures of evaluation of samples of study programmes,
- stayed the procedure on the grounds of withdrawal of five applications for accreditation of a study programme,
- rejected one application for the accreditation of a study programme and four applications for the evaluation of a sample of a study programme.

External evaluations of higher vocational colleges

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

Detailed data is provided in tables and explanatory notes.

Table 2:

CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED BEFORE 2022				
Type of procedure	Type of accreditation	Number of Council decisions	Decision	
Higher education institution	Reaccreditation	13	9 reaccreditations for a full period and 4 for a shorter period	
Higher education institution	Extraordinary evaluation	1	Reaccreditation for a shorter period	
Higher education institution	Transformation of institution	3	2 positive and 1 negative decision	
Higher vocational college	External evaluation	5	4 positive and 1 negative opinion	
Study programme	Accreditation	6	5 positive and 1 negative decision	
Study programme	Accreditation	3	Withdrawal of application	
Study programme	Accreditation	1	Application rejected	
Study programme	Evaluation of a sample	2	Non-compliances established	
Study programme	Evaluation of a sample	4	Application rejected	

EXPLANATORY NOTE:

The table shows the number of accreditation and evaluation decisions in 2022 concerning applications submitted before that year.

Table 3:

CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED IN 2022 (from 1 January to 31 December 2022)					
Type of procedure	Type of accreditation	Anticipated number of applications	Number of applications received	Number of Council decisions	Decision *notes
Higher education institution	Reaccreditation	7	8*	0	*One of the institutions submitted its application in 2022 instead of 2023.
Higher education institution	Accreditation of location	2	3	2	Positive
Higher vocational college	External evaluation	9	8	5	
Study programme	Accreditation	20	14	7	4 positive decisions, 2 applications were withdrawn, 1 application was rejected
Study programme	Extraordinary evaluation	/	1	0	
Study programme	Evaluation of a sample	20	21*	15	6 programmes with identified non-compliances. *One of the applications for a sample in 2023 was submitted in 2022.

EXPLANATORY NOTE:

In 2022, the Agency anticipated 63 applications for accreditations and evaluations and received 54 applications.

The purpose of evaluations of a sample of study programmes is to advise higher education institutions in improving the quality of delivery, 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 2022, third-cycle study programmes were assessed through the evaluation of a sample, with the emphasis on the assessment of scientific and research work.

Major deficiencies or non-compliances were established in five third-cycle programmes and two lower-cycle programmes from the previous period for the following reasons (summarised):

- the contact hours of study programme courses were not implemented in accordance with the curricula or the legislation in force;
- the learning outcomes of the courses and their delivery were not adapted to the cycle and type of study programme;
- internal and external stakeholders were not properly involved in the preparation of the self-evaluation report;

- the quality loop for the evaluated study programme was not closed;
- the delivery of a university study programme was not separated from the delivery of a higher professional study programme;
- science and research projects were not relevant;
- science and research activities of course holders were deficient.
- the acquisition of competences and the production of theses were possible in fields for which the study programme is not accredited;
- the rules for the completion of study were not uniform for all students;
- study programme enrolment procedures are unclear.

In these cases, the Council imposed a deadline on the applicant to eliminate and report on the identified non-compliances or deficiencies.

For programmes where only opportunities for improvement were identified, the Agency Council decided 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 programme accreditation, evaluation of a sample and institution reaccreditation 19 times. 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.

The Agency Council reaccredited four higher education institutions for a shorter period. The following reasons have been pointed out (summarised):

- Insufficient professional, research and development activity, and failure to meet the conditions for student and teacher involvement;
- the internal quality assurance system did not enable the closure of the quality loop in several or all areas of operation of a higher education institution;
- inadequate updating of the content and delivery of study programmes (acquisition of competences is not ensured, contact hours are not implemented as planned and in accordance with minimum legal standards, etc.);
- non-compliance with regulatory provisions in the composition of university bodies.
- inappropriate library activity (inappropriate staff, deficient materials, entry in Cobiss database).

In 2022, the Council discussed three initiatives for the extraordinary evaluation of a study programme and a 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 for response.

The Council did not initiate the procedure in two cases because:

- the higher education institution is already in the final phase of the process of extraordinary evaluation, in which a group of experts has identified a number of non-compliances, and therefore the introduction of an extraordinary evaluation of the study programme does not make sense;
- the higher education institution has adequately explained the arguments in the initiative.

In the case of one study programme, the Council imposed an extraordinary evaluation because there were reasonable grounds for suspecting deficiencies or non-compliances in the delivery of the study.

Still pending at the Administrative Court is an administrative dispute against two negative decisions on accreditation and reaccreditation of a study programme.

There were 8 external evaluation procedures for colleges in the external evaluation plan for higher vocational colleges and one college from the 2021 plan. One higher vocational college from the 2022 plan submitted its application on 3 January 2023.

The Agency Council adopted 9 decisions or positive opinions on meeting quality standards set by the Criteria for External Evaluation of Higher Vocational Colleges. It issued an opinion about one college not meeting the quality standards in the areas of professional education, study programme delivery, human resources structure and internal organisation (see the explanatory note to Table 4).

Table 4:

NEGATIVE DECISIONS OF THE COUNCIL IN 2022 (from 1 January to 31 December 2022)			
Type of procedure	Type of accreditation	Number of decisions	Notes
Higher education institution	Transformation of institution	1	
Study programme	Accreditation	1	
Higher vocational college	External evaluation	1	It is an opinion of the Agency Council.

EXPLANATORY NOTE:

The Agency Council did not grant accreditation to one study programme, adopted a negative decision on the transformation of a higher education institution because it did not comply with the conditions laid down by the ZViS and the quality standards according to the Accreditation Criteria. It also issued a negative opinion for a higher vocational college on meeting quality standards set by the Criteria for External Evaluation of Higher Vocational Colleges.

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

- inadequate habilitation of the holder (appropriateness in terms of fields);
- inconsistent content of the study programme;
- the applicant has not fulfilled the necessary material conditions as required by Article 15 of the Criteria for the Accreditation and External Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes;
- underdeveloped research in the field of the study programme;
- inadequate recognition of practical training and inadequate practical training;
- inappropriate method of delivering a study programme, when students are disabled from attaining certain competences or learning outcomes determined by the study programme,
- unprofessional human resource structure and failure to provide professional development for human resources.

Table 5:

NUMBER OF UNRESOLVED APPLICATIONS ON 31 DECEMBER 2022			
Type of procedure	Type of accreditation	Number of unresolved applications	Notes
Higher education institution	Reaccreditation	12	5 applications were submitted in the autumn, 2 applications were under appeal, 1 application is for reaccreditation of

NUMBER OF UNRESOLVED APPLICATIONS ON 31 DECEMBER 2022

Type of procedure	Type of accreditation	Number of unresolved applications	Notes
			universities, which is extremely complex.
Higher education institution	Transformation of institution	1	The application was under appeal.
Higher education institution	Accreditation of location	1	The application was submitted at the end of October 2022.
Study programme	Accreditation	7 + 2	3 applications were submitted in the second half of the year, 3 applications are expected to be decided on by March 2023.
Study programme	Extraordinary evaluation of programme	1	The application was submitted in November 2022.
Study programme	Reaccreditation	1	Administrative dispute pending before the Administrative Court of the Republic of Slovenia.
Study programme	Evaluation of a sample	6	One application for a sample for 2023 was submitted in 2022, 2 applications were planned to be assessed in autumn.
Higher vocational college	External evaluation	3	1 application was submitted in September, 2 applications were submitted just before summer.

EXPLANATORY NOTE:

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

- a) 3 applications were submitted between September and December 2022, so the procedures in accordance with the law and the Accreditation Criteria could not be completed yet and will continue in 2023;
- b) applicants supplementing their applications;
- c) obtaining the opinion of the competent ministry in the case of a regulated study programme;
- d) an action was filed in two procedures, which must be decided by the Administrative Court of the Republic of Slovenia.

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

- a) 5 applications were submitted in September 2022, which means that the procedures have only just begun;
- b) 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;

- c) 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 2021

Compared to 2021, the number of positive decisions adopted by the Agency Council in accreditation and evaluation procedures was smaller, namely:

Higher education

- accreditations of study programmes: 17 in 2021; 9 in 2022;
- initial accreditations of higher education institutions: 1 in 2021; 0 in 2022;
- reaccreditations of higher education institutions: 5 in 2021; 13 in 2022;
- transformations of higher education institutions: 9 in 2021; 4 in 2022;
- evaluations of samples of study programmes: 27 in 2021; 17 in 2022;

Total: 2021: 59 positive decisions, 2022: 43 positive decisions.

In 2022, 37 visits took place in procedures of reaccreditation of higher education institutions, extraordinary evaluation of study programmes and higher education institutions, accreditation of study programmes and evaluation of samples of study programmes (in 2021, there were 30, but more comprehensive).

The Agency examined and recorded 478 modifications of study programmes (612 in 2021).

Higher vocational education

- site visits: 10 in 2021 and 10 in 2022.
- opinions on the compliance with standards prescribed by the law: 3 in 2021 and 9 in 2022;
- qualified opinions: 2 in 2021, 0 in 2022;
- opinions identifying major deficiencies or non-compliances with the standards prescribed by law: 1 in 2021 and 1 in 2022.

Table 6: Number of accredited study programmes according to Klasius-p-16 – comparison between 2021 and 2022

Klasius-P-16	Year	Number of accredited programmes	Number of all accredited programmes in the year	Percentage of accredited programmes
(01) Education	2021	1	17	5.9
(01) Education	2022	0	9	0
(02) Arts and humanities	2021	2	17	11.8
(02) Arts and humanities	2022	1	9	11.1
(03) Social sciences, journalism and information	2021	2	17	11.8
(03) Social sciences, journalism and information	2022	1	9	11.1

Klasius-P-16	Year	Number of accredited programmes	Number of all accredited programmes in the year	Percentage of accredited programmes
(04) Business, administration and law	2021	4	17	23.5
(04) Business, administration and law	2022	3	9	33.3
(05) Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	2021	6	17	35.3
(05) Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	2022	1	9	11.1
(06) Information and communication technologies (ICTs)	2021	1	17	5.9
(06) Information and communication technologies (ICTs)	2022	2	9	22.2
(07) Engineering, manufacturing and construction	2021	1	17	5.9
(07) Engineering, manufacturing and construction	2022	2	9	22.2
(09) Health and welfare	2021	2	17	11.8
(09) Health and welfare	2022	2	9	22.2
(10) Transport, protection, catering and tourism, personal services	2021	2	17	11.8
(10) Transport, protection, catering and tourism, personal services	2022	0	9	0

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.

V. THE AGENCY'S PRIORITIES (IMPORTANT TASKS) IN 2022

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 2022.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2022 ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan tasks are set out or determined by taking into consideration:

- 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 substantive 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

VI. OVERVIEW OF WORK BY DEPARTMENTS IN 2022

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION DEPARTMENT

Activity/task	Contents	Category
Proposing amendments, criteria, forms, templates for writing reports	Updating criteria according to the new Act.	Criteria and other provisions
Accreditation and evaluation procedures (assigning, conducting and deciding)	Assigning procedures, conducting procedures, reviewing and preparing materials for Council meetings, reviewing and considering at Agency Council meetings, letters and decisions.	Accreditations and evaluations
Managing iNakvis (rules of procedure)	Proposal to optimise the rules of procedure in iNakvis.	Accreditations and evaluations
Inter-department cooperation	Inter-department cooperation on changes of legislation in higher education, the resolution of the National Programme for Higher Education and other topics related to the development and upgrading of the quality assurance system of Slovenian higher education.	Cooperation with stakeholders
Visits to institutions and cooperation with stakeholders	Online or in-person meetings with representatives of different higher education institutions and colleges to inform stakeholders about the work of NAKVIS and to build trusting relationships.	Cooperation with stakeholders
Monitoring relevant practices and new developments and preparing proposals	Through participation in working groups of international associations and participation in various international and national events, the Agency monitors examples of current practices and innovations in the field of quality improvement and integrates them into its procedures and practices as appropriate.	Cooperation with stakeholders
Planning and carrying out expert training	Preparation of a training programme for experts and holding of workshops and events for the Agency's experts.	Training courses
Public records	Activities related to the establishment, maintenance and updating of public records kept by the Agency under the ZViS.	Records
Monthly updates to public records following the Council meeting	Public register updates following the Council meetings.	
Archiving	In accordance with the Protection of Documents and Archives and Archival Institutions Act (ZVDAGA), resolved cases are regularly archived.	Records
- Archiving resolved case files	Archiving resolved case files.	
Register of experts	Reviewing and monitoring entries in the Register of Experts, keeping records and preparing the call for candidates for the Agency's experts.	Records

Activity/task	Contents	Category
- Monthly register updates following the Council meeting	Register updates following the Council meetings.	
- Review of expired entries (twice a year, 16 May and 15 December)	Review of expired entries.	
Participation in associations and organisations (ENQA, ECA, CEENQA, etc.)	Active participation in associations of quality assurance agencies of which NAKVIS is a member.	International
Project collaboration	Participation in projects, involvement in projects related to the preparation of micro-credentials.	International
Communications and public relations	Activities related to the ongoing and two-way communication and information to the public (higher education stakeholders) on the activities of NAKVIS.	Communication
- Preparing statements, responses, presentations, social media	Preparing press releases, answers to journalists' questions and Agency presentation texts, interaction on social media; contact with journalists from the field.	
- Internal communication	Regular internal communication on the Agency's operation and planned activities (+ iNakvis upgrade – internal communication).	
- Developing a communication plan – disseminating the self-evaluation results	Disseminating the self-evaluation results.	
Website and social media management	Keeping the website up-to-date (Slovenian and English versions – ensuring translations of content) and publishing and following the latest posts.	Communication
- News and publishing key messages, multimedia content production and processing	Preparing and publishing news (+ other documents) on the website, updating and adapting the website as needed, publishing key information/other interactive content on social media (Twitter + Youtube), preparing and processing various multimedia content (video, images, logos etc.).	
E-newsletter	Monthly preparation and publication of an e-newsletter on the Agency's website and electronic communication to stakeholders.	Communication

ANALYTICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT

Activity/task	Contents	Category
Report on Work and Operations of the Agency in 2021	Overview of the completed tasks from the 2021 Action Plan, the work of the Agency Council, Appeal Committee and resources.	Plans and reports
Annual Work Plan of the Agency 2022	Preparation of the Annual Work Plan (AWP 2022).	Plans and reports
Making and designing the Guide version for print	The Guide to Assessments in Accreditation and Evaluation Procedures has been developed over several years as a result of careful study of work in practice, expert reports and self-evaluation reports from institutions/colleges. In addition to presenting the results of different analyses and characteristics of assessments, it highlights errors in assessments and provides a thorough insight into the high-quality, in-depth professional assessment across all standards of quality in the Criteria and across types of accreditation or evaluation.	Plans and reports
Self-evaluation report of the Agency	The Agency's Self-Evaluation Report was a priority in 2022, as the Agency will be externally reviewed by a team of ENQA experts in early 2023. This is a mandatory external review, which is a condition for renewal of ENQA membership and for renewal of entry in the European Register of Agencies – EQAR. One of the important tasks in self-evaluation is to survey or obtain the views of both internal and external stakeholders on the Agency's operation.	Self-evaluation of the Agency
Report on evaluations of samples of study programmes and thematic analysis	Analysing reports on evaluation of samples of study programmes by delineated topics.	Plans and reports
Systemic analysis	The systemic analysis is carried out over a longer period – from 3 to 5 years according to a pre-agreed methodology. It is a comprehensive analysis of accreditations and evaluations in higher and higher vocational education, as well as self-evaluation of institutions and colleges over the period. The findings of the analysis suggest substantive orientations and improvements in quality assessment.	Analyses, documents, publications

Activity/task	Contents	Category
Annual publication of the Agency	Each year, the Agency produces a publication presenting its organisation, tasks, mission and values, its work during the previous calendar year, topical issues and, as a rule, publishes the proceedings of the annual international conference. It is published in the Slovenian and English languages.	Analyses, documents, publications
Annual consultation with the Agency's experts and representatives of institutions/colleges	The Agency invites all important stakeholders in accreditation and evaluation procedures. It is aimed at presenting new developments in the Agency's work, exchanging views, discussing examples of good practice, jointly solving potential problems, as well as addressing topical issues identified in analyses of evaluation and accreditation practices.	Consultations
Research	The Agency provides information on the research achievements of study programme holders to the group of experts, who needs them to assess their scientific, professional, research or artistic work in accordance with the Accreditation and Evaluation Criteria. For each higher education teacher, the number of publications in indexed journals and the number of quality publications (those in the top quarter of quotations according to the SICRIS methodology) over the last five years are shown. The Agency obtains them from the Institute of Information Sciences (IZUM).	External databases
Libraries	The Agency has encouraged the Ministry of Culture to prepare the Rules, which are expected to be adopted in the first half of 2023.	External databases
Employment	Activities to obtain data on the employment of graduates of Slovenian higher education institutions.	External databases
Translation	The Agency ensures up-to-date translations of all relevant documents, from regulations (criteria, standards), self-evaluation reports, guides, analyses, guidelines, etc. to the Agency's annual publication.	Translation
Interpreting	Interpretation from Slovenian into English and vice versa is provided mainly during visits to institutions and colleges where the participants are unwilling or unable to communicate in English, which is the working language in accreditation and evaluation procedures due to the presence of foreign experts in the groups of experts (an obligation under the ZViS); it can also be provided at other events,	Translation

Activity/task	Contents	Category
	such as external evaluation of the Agency during a visit by ENQA representatives.	
Information system maintenance	<p>eNakvis is the information system targeting external users. It concerns especially the management of accreditation and evaluation procedures. Some of the tasks are related to routine maintenance (software updates, troubleshooting) and some are related to investment. This includes optimising the performance of the application, improving the user experience, increasing transparency, etc. Regular coordination meetings are organised with universities, institutes/colleges and other data users such as the Ministry of Higher Education and Science (eVŠ) and the CPI.</p> <p>iNakvis is the Agency's internal information system for professionals used for recording working time, holidays, etc., as well as for managing procedures, analyses, writing reports, plans, etc.</p>	eNakvis
Attendance records	iNakvis, the Agency's internal information system, is constantly being developed and updated. An important task in 2022 was the creation of attendance records in this system, thus regulating and simplifying the tasks of all employees as well as those of the General Affairs Department.	iNAKVIS
Independence of agencies	An international analysis of the independence of agencies produced in cooperation with the various agencies associated in CEENQA.	Plans and reports

GENERAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

Activity/task	Contents	Category
Legislation (higher and higher vocational education)	Participation in the working group responsible for the Act; reviewing and examining notes; harmonising the text of the draft Act; explaining the articles of the Act.	Regulations
Internal legal acts	Preparation of new rules and updates; acts on changes to job classification; clean copies of internal legal acts.	Regulations
GDPR	Counselling and raising awareness among employees about personal data processing; cooperating with the data protection officer; adapting personal data management according to the provisions of the ZVOP-2.	Regulations

Activity/task	Contents	Category
- Adapting personal data management in the light of the provisions of the ZVOP-2	Adapting the Agency operation on the entry into force of the ZVOP-2.	
Legal support to the Agency Council	Participating in Agency Council meetings; reviewing the minutes, help with drafting decisions; monitoring of members' term of office.	Quality assurance support
- Calls for the appointment of new members at the end of terms	Calls for the appointment of new members and the arrangements for the new members to take up their duties.	
- Appointment of a new member on the expiry of Dr Završnik's term of office	one member is appointed by representative trade unions in the field of higher education by agreement - Coordination with trade unions – 2 submitted the appointment of their member without proof of agreement.	
- Legal support to Agency Council activities	Participation in Agency Council meetings, overseeing the legality of decisions of the Agency Council.	
- Formulation of decisions of the Agency Council	Reviewing the session minutes, help with drafting decisions.	
Legal assistance to staff in conducting procedures	Legal assistance to staff in conducting procedures.	Quality assurance support
- Advising in conducting procedures.	Advising in conducting procedures.	
Preparation of legal opinions	Studying the issue and preparing legal opinions on specific dilemmas on the application of legislation.	Quality assurance support
- Legal opinions	Studying the issue and preparing legal opinions on specific dilemmas on the application of legislation.	
Structure of the Appeal Committee	Overseeing the composition/membership of the Appeal Committee.	Appeal Committee
- Appointment of the last alternate member of the Appeal Committee	- Drafting and publishing public calls for appointing the last alternate member of the Appeal Committee.	
Support to the activities	Support to the activities of the Appeal Committee.	Appeal Committee
Employment	Implementation of employment procedures.	Human resource affairs
- Public call for the Agency Director	Implementation of the public call for the Agency Director.	
Wages and salaries	Preparation of data for wage calculation.	Human resource affairs
Education and healthy working environment	Monitoring education needs, annual education plan; safety at work; promotion of health, Family-Friendly Enterprise.	Human resource affairs

Activity/task	Contents	Category
Copyright contracts for experts	Preparation of copyright contracts and financial documents for the payment of taxable disbursements to individuals.	Financial affairs
Payments	Preparation of financial documents for payment of the Agency's financial liabilities.	Financial affairs
Implementation of the budget	Activities related to budget implementation.	Financial affairs
Managing procedures related to requests for access to public information	Managing procedures related to public information.	Public information
Catalogue of public information	Preparation and updating of the catalogue.	Public information
Provision of general information from the Agency field of activities	Provision of general information and data from the Agency field of activities.	Public information
Contracts	Participation in below-threshold public contracts.	Business and administrative tasks
Receiving and sending mail and recording documents	Receiving and sending mail in physical and electronic form.	Business and administrative tasks
Business contacts	Participation on the organisation and coordination of business contacts.	Business and administrative tasks
External supervision	Preparation of required documentation and cooperation with supervisory authorities.	Supervisions
Internal audit	Preparation of required documentation and cooperation with internal auditor.	Supervisions
Human resource affairs	Keeping of human resource records.	Records and documentation
Financial affairs	Keeping of financial records.	Records and documentation
Records of personal data processing	Records of personal data processing.	Records and documentation

Explanatory note to the overview of work by departments

Most of the tasks set out in the department-specific action plan have been completed, while the remaining tasks (e.g. accreditation and evaluation procedures, thematic analyses, legal support to the Agency Council and staff in the management of the procedures, organisation of meetings with higher education and higher vocational education stakeholders, maintenance of the IT system, budget implementation) are part of the Agency's permanent tasks, which are implemented on an annual basis.

Activities on the Act on Quality in Higher and Higher Vocational Education have come to a standstill following a working group meeting in January due to the change of government. They are planned to continue after the adoption of the Act amending the Higher Education Act.

Outside the 2022 Action Plan, a new revision of the job classification was prepared and adopted in December, which introduced some new jobs and resulted in new employment contracts for some employees.

Due to the expiry of the term of office or employment contract of the Agency Director in April 2023, a public call for the Agency Director was launched at the end of 2022.

In 2022, the Agency started to intensify its activities to obtain data on the employment of graduates of Slovenian higher education institutions, which will continue in 2023.

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 2022, as the Act was adopted only at the end of 2022 and entered into force at the end of January 2023.

The review of work by departments in 2022 shows that the Agency has carried out all the planned tasks and spent all the financial resources, which we consider to be very good.

The Agency has continuously sought the opinions of various higher education and higher vocational education stakeholders, carried out a thorough self-evaluation, which is the basis for a visit and review by a group of ENQA experts in March 2023. However, it is already clear that it has laid a good foundation for the work in 2023.

VII. RESOURCES

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

2021 Outturn of the Agency's state budget	Policy / Main programme / Sub- programme / Budget heading	Adopted budget 2022 (in EUR) – before the REVISION	Valid budget 2022 (in EUR)	Budget outturn 2022 (in EUR)	Budget implementat ion as a percentage of 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	Wages and salaries	814,199.00	826,413.32	826,413.32	100%
9886	Material costs	257,176.49	247,172.18	247,169.39	100%
9887	Investments	82,261.00	89,166.75	89,166.75	100%
9888	Quality in higher education	400,884.51	391,768.75	391,768.75	100%
	TOTAL	1,554,521.00	1,554,521.00	1,554,518.21	100%

The **budget's implementation rate as a percentage of the adopted budget** (salaries, material costs, investments, quality of higher education) was **100%** in 2022.

The use of the allocated funds in 2022 is the same as in 2021, 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 2016 to 2022

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
INTEGRAL FUNDS							
Wages and salaries	569,367	575,233	625,920	692,304	740,968	775,830.05	826,413.32
Material costs	215,715	208,000	269,996	275,863	243,289	219,724.43	247,169.39
Investments	30,947	49,013	45,497	99,125	82,321	82,134.82	89,166.75
Remuneration for the work of the members of the Council and the Appeal Committee	30,472	32,565	36,979	31,849	35,997.08	38,299.73	34,151.37

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Accreditation costs	363,460	251,192	121,234	169,939	218,997	328,119.63	304,841.56
Material costs – visibility				54,479	41,580	61,401.24	52,775.82
CF – compensation funds			3,961		-		
1+2+3+4+5+6+7	1,209,959	1,116,003	1,103,587	1,323,558	1,363,152	1,505,509.90	1,554,518.21
EIQAS	33,263	4,247		-			
TOTAL EXPENDITURE 1+2+3+4+5+6+7+8	1,243,222	1,120,250	1,103,587	1,323,558	1,363,152	1,505,509.90	1,554,518.21

HUMAN RESOURCES

As of 1 January 2022, a major change in job classification came into force, when the Agency was again reorganised from four departments to three, namely the Analytics and Information Technology Department, the Quality Assurance and International Cooperation Department and the General Affairs Department.

The number of employees remained unchanged in 2022. According to the adopted human resource plan, the Agency had 20 employees: a Director, 7 employees in the Analytics and Information Technology Department, 7 employees in the Quality Assurance and International Cooperation Department, and 5 employees in the General Affairs Department.

We have been justifying the need for additional employees for several years now, and it would be necessary to increase the number of employees in the coming years.

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.

The staff training plan for 2022 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.