

WORK AND FINANCIAL PLAN OF THE SLOVENIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION 2024



Foto: DOBA Fakulteta



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Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education

**WORK AND FINANCIAL PLAN OF THE
SLOVENIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE
AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

2024

Introduction

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. Following the successful visit of a group of experts from the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the renewal of our membership in ENQA and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), we will continue to evaluate our work and deepen our cooperation with various stakeholders to improve our assessment procedures. We will continue to conduct accreditations and external evaluations of higher education institutions, study programmes and higher vocational colleges. We will organise various thematic events for higher education stakeholders related to current higher education topics such as micro-credentials and employability.

We will organise training and education courses for experts and staff, conduct visits and organise meetings with representatives of institutions. We will actively participate in the reform of higher education legislation, continue to work towards an autonomous Agency Act, and ensure that implementing regulations and internal legal acts are drafted and amended. In addition, we will closely monitor the proposed changes, criteria and forms, and consistently manage financial and human resources matters.

In-depth substantive analytic work in selected areas will continue to be one of the key pillars of the Agency. In 2024, we plan a thematic analysis on the quality of teacher training and doctoral study programmes. We will also continue activities for the preparation of a systemic analysis, which will comprise quality, quantity and comparative analyses of the outcomes and characteristics of evaluation practices.

We will increase the visibility and recognition of our work through effective communication with internal and external stakeholders. To this end, we have developed presentation animations covering the different areas of the Agency, designed to help different higher education groups. We will continue to actively promote international cooperation, in particular within organisations such as ENQA, EQAR, CEENQA, ECA and BFUG.

In addition, we will continue to upgrade the IT area through the internal and external iNakvis and eNakvis information systems and the integration with the information systems of the Ministry and the major universities, thus contributing to improving efficiency and providing quality information and support.

The 2024 Work and Financial Plan of the Agency (AWP) has a standard structure. The introduction is followed by an overview of accreditations and evaluations of higher education institutions, higher vocational colleges and study programmes as at 31 December 2023 and the 2024 plan. Next is the Action Plan by departments prepared on the basis of the Agency's new strategic goals and values and areas of quality assessment according to the Quality Manual. Finally, the AWP concludes with a plan of financial and human resources.

Franci Demšar, Ph.D., Director

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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 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.

INTERNAL ORGANISATION OF THE AGENCY

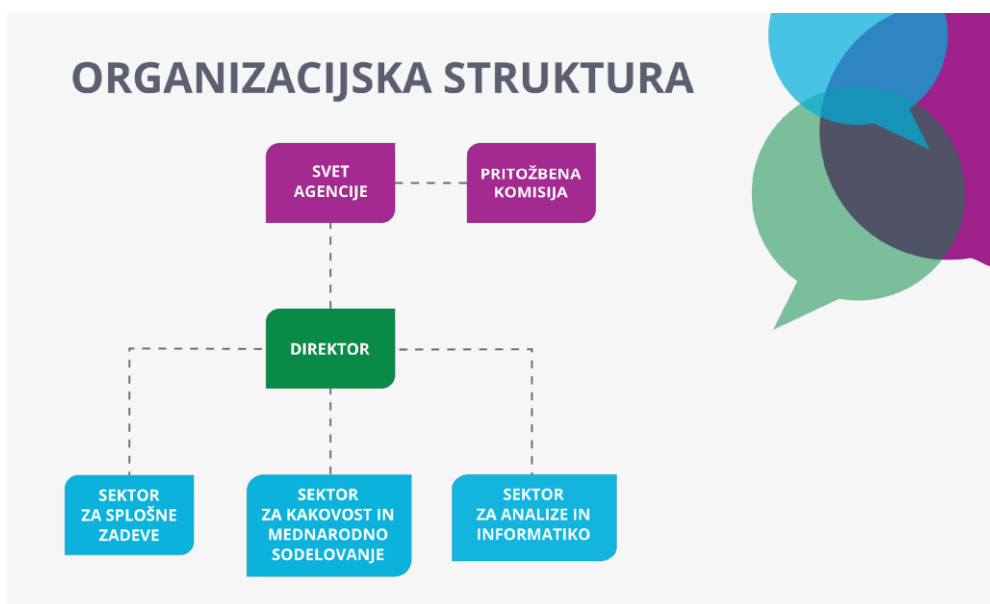
In order to improve its work, the Agency has undergone several organisational transformations since 2018. In 2020 and 2021, its operations were divided into four departments: Quality Assurance; Analytics; International Cooperation and Information Technology; and General Affairs. As practice has shown 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 the beginning of 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.

Table 1: Overview of the main areas of work by department:

| |
|---|
| <p>Director: Franci Demšar, Ph.D, alternate Jožica Kramar</p> |
| <p>Quality Assurance and International Cooperation Department</p> <p>Head of the department: Klemen Šubic, alternates: Nataša Kramar and Gregor Rebernik.</p> <p>Staff: Filip Draženović, Anita Kajtezović, Martina Mravlja, Maruša Trobec and Julija Uršič</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: Maja Milas, alternates Tatjana Debevec and Andrej Krček</p> <p>Staff: Matjaž Štuhec, Ph. D., Tatjana Horvat and Tilen Heco</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - plans and reports (annual work plan and report on the 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.); |
| <p>General Affairs Department:</p> <p>Head of the department: Barbara Zupančič Kočar, alternates: Mateja Bajuk Malešič and Snežana Mačar.</p> <p>Staff: Slađana Tomić, Prudencija Perat and Zala Sečnik</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 2: Council members in 2024

| 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 |
| Goran Turk, Ph.D. | Rectors' conference |
| Klemen Širok, Ph.D. | Rectors' conference |
| Sebastjan Kristovič, Ph.D. | Representative association of independent higher education institutions |
| Branko Škafar, Ph.D. | Representative association of higher vocational colleges |
| <i>not appointed yet</i> | Representative organisation of students in cooperation with student councils |
| David Bohar | Representative organisation of students in cooperation with student councils |
| <i>not appointed yet</i> | Representative trade unions in higher education |
| 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 appeals committee shall consist 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:

Table 3: Appeal Committee members in 2024

| Members | Term of office | Alternates |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Uršula Habe Nagode, chair | 20 June 2023 to 19 June 2027 | Robert Marolt, M.Sc. |
| Marko Novak, Ph.D., deputy chair | 20 June 2023 to 19 June 2027 | Tina Tratnik |
| Andreja Rakuša, member | 20 June 2023 to 19 June 2027 | Katarina Vatovec, Ph.D. |

THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIC GUIDELINES UNTIL 2025

In December 2020, the Agency adopted a medium-term development strategy until 2025 entitled *the Strategic Development of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education for the 2021–2025 Period (hereinafter: the Strategy, adopted at the 157 meeting of the Agency Council on 17 December 2020)*. The Agency connects the strategic orientations for this period mainly with the further development of analytical and development work; preparation of a special guide to accreditations and evaluations with an emphasis on in-depth substantive assessment according to quality standards; with continuous and more focused training of participants in accreditation and evaluation procedures; with strengthening international activity in current areas; and with proactive communication. In order to facilitate the experts' work, the Agency is planning on establishing up-to-date databases on research and library activities at higher education institutions, their spaces and equipment. The main strategic goal until 2025 is the adoption and entry into force of an independent Agency Act – the Act on Quality in Higher Education.

In the Agency's strategy, its values are divided into three groups, namely **professionalism (P); transparency (T) and development (D), linked to the strategic goals for the 2021–2025 period.**

1. Adoption of the Act on Quality in Higher and Education (R)

The draft Act on Quality in Higher and Higher Vocational Education (Quality Act), with its objectives and rationale, international comparisons and explanations of the individual articles, as prepared by the Agency in 2022, is still pending consideration by the competent Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation and other stakeholders in higher and higher vocational education. Activities related to the Act were halted in spring 2022 due to the change of government, and the new government has given priority to the overhaul of the Higher Education Act (ZViS). The Ministry of Higher Education invited all relevant and credible stakeholders to participate in the overhaul process, and appointed a special inter-ministerial working group, which, in addition to representatives of the ministry, includes representatives of the Rectors' Conference of the Republic of Slovenia, independent higher education institutions, the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, the Coordination of Independent Research Institutes of Slovenia, trade unions, the Student Organisation of

Slovenia, the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and NAKVIS. Most of the Agency's legislative work in 2023 was therefore devoted to the overhaul of the ZViS, in the context of which it also made proposals to improve the provisions on quality assessment, accreditation and evaluation procedures together with appeals, to regulate the possibility for the Agency to participate in foreign accreditation procedures, etc.; at the same time, it argued for the need for a separate Quality Act, which it continued to actively pursue. The work of the ZViS overhaul group was intensive and continued throughout the year, with the group meeting on a fortnightly basis. Detailed starting points for the new Act have been developed, with the first version expected to be finalised at the end of January 2024, when the working group will continue its work. Nevertheless, the Agency will continue to strive for a stand-alone Agency Act, which it will also advocate in its coordination with the Ministry.

2. Improving assessment according to quality standards and accreditation and evaluation procedures (S)

With the aim to improve assessment according to quality standards and accreditation and evaluation procedures, the Agency can boast the development of the Guide to External Assessments. Its Slovenian version 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. A range of meetings, presentations and consultations were organised with a focus on strengthening cooperation with different higher education stakeholders both at home and abroad. The Agency organised several thematic meetings, hosted various representatives of other agencies and participated in a number of important events, both at home and internationally. Its efforts were focused on building and consolidating links with diverse stakeholders, which is also a key element of the strategy for further quality work and fruitful cooperation.

The Agency's annual international consultations are aimed at sharing experiences and transferable practices in current higher education issues and discussing the challenges that arise (e.g. micro-credentials, European universities, library activity, distance external evaluations). The Agency continued the training of candidates for Agency experts, covering the regulations used by experts in their work, how to work as part of a group of experts, lessons learned from assessment experience, and the use of the Guide to External Assessments. The training, which is compulsory, is followed by compulsory practical training of candidates – participation in the procedure of accreditation or evaluation of a specific institution, college or study programme. The Guide to Assessments in Accreditation and Evaluation Procedures had 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. At the end of 2022, the guide was translated into English, and the English version was published in book form at the beginning of 2023; in 2024, we will continue to use the guide in various events and promote it at various events at home and abroad.

In accordance with the Strategy, the Agency will strive to further raise the level of expert external assessments that will take into account the specifics of higher education and be related to various cycles and types of study, disciplines in which study programmes are embedded and status and organisational differences between higher education institutions. It will continue to focus on improving the assessments of experts and, on their basis, the decisions of the Agency Council. It plans to continue organising education, training and meetings with all major stakeholders in accreditation and evaluation procedures, including current higher education topics such as micro-credentials and employment of students.

3. In-depth substantive analytical work in selected areas (S)

The Agency carries out periodic thematic and systemic analyses to further develop its external quality system; in the years since the last ENQA review, it has prepared an analysis of expert group reports on the quality standards to be met by universities and other higher education institutions for the reaccreditation, and other thematic reports. It has prepared an analysis of evaluations of samples of study programmes with the so-called international dimension, an analysis of employment of graduates of Slovenian higher education institutions and an analysis of the independence of quality assurance agencies in higher education. It continued the analysis of the scientific, research, professional and artistic work of the holders of courses in the programmes being accredited.

In 2024, the Agency plans a thematic analysis on the quality of teacher training and doctoral study programmes. Thematic analyses are characterised by going deeper into the relevance of expert assessments according to the prescribed areas of assessment and quality standards for the evaluation of study programmes than systemic analyses.

The findings of analyses will be presented at national and international consultations and will provide the basis for the Agency's topic-specific contributions to annual publications. It will continue to develop further guidelines for external assessments which, instead of operations and protocols, will focus more on substantive assessment dilemmas and starting points and a more thorough interpretation of regulations. They will seek greater compliance with various academic standards.

4. Establishing up-to-date databases on selected activities in higher education institutions (T)

The iNakvis internal information system provides a strong support in the creation of up-to-date databases and internal records of the Agency. The databases are used on a regular basis for accreditation or evaluation procedures and shared with experts to help them in their professional assessment.

The Agency will develop the eNakvis external information system for gathering data and connecting with external information systems, and iNakvis for the creation of various databases and their updates, which will be of even greater help in the work of the Agency Council and the Appeal Committee, experts and Agency staff. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, an updated database on the employment of graduates by higher education institutions and study programmes is also planned, taking into account the cycle, type or nature of the latter. iNakvis will also continue to support the self-evaluation of the Agency and its analytical activities.

The Agency will provide access to a variety of data to the general public, especially students and prospective students

5. Pursuing sustainable development goals (R)

In line with the Sustainable Development Goals, the Agency has been carrying out distance site visits, education and training courses, annual consultations and meetings since 2019. The relocation to the new premises has reduced monthly rental expenses; work from home, distance site and accreditation visits have slightly reduced expenditure on travel and accommodation for experts. In doing so, the Agency is doing its bit for sustainable development.

Taking into account the sustainable development goals (SDG 2030) adopted at the UN General Assembly in 2015, the Agency's operation will continue to be aimed at improving its internal quality assurance system and activities associated with these aims and at cooperation in harmonising the elements of an external quality assurance system with sustainable development goals in Slovenian higher education area.

The Agency will continue to ensure work from home for its employees, a sensible planning of foreign travel, and carry out distance accreditations, evaluations, education and consultations, including international meetings.

6. Enhanced international cooperation (S)

The Agency is active in various associations of agencies (ENQA, EQAR, CEENQA, BFUG, ECA) based on the common field of improving external quality assurance systems. At the same time, it strengthens its visibility and influence through various forms of bilateral cooperation with foreign partner agencies. Working visits to and exchange of personnel between different higher education quality assurance agencies are primarily aimed at strengthening cooperation in the European area, identifying common problems of agencies, proposing appropriate solutions and exchanging examples of good practice. During the presidency of CEENQA, the Agency introduced innovations according to which all members of the association prepare contributions in delineated subject fields and present them publicly. The Agency has actively participated in various education and training courses and exchanges of experts and employees.

NAKVIS can boast an excellent external assessment report by ENQA (published at the end of 2023), which demonstrates the conformity of the Agency's work with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). On this basis, the Agency's membership of ENQA and the European Quality Assurance Register in Higher Education (EQAR) has been renewed for a further 5 years, which is a testament to the quality of the Agency's work and an incentive for its continued success. In accordance with the adopted plan, international activities will be strengthened further so that the Agency has a broad overview of examples of good practice, policies, analyses and comparisons on the European and global levels and adapt their application in the Slovenian higher education area to its specifics.

7. Proactive communication (T)

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 (X 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.

In 2024, the Agency will continue to increase the visibility and recognition of its work through effective communication with internal and external stakeholders. To this end, it has developed presentation animations covering the different areas of the Agency, designed to help different higher education stakeholders and the public. The animations focus on assessing joint study programmes, organising work in groups of experts and writing reports, establishing effective communication in the Agency's processes, and carrying out assessment of higher vocational colleges. The Agency presents a comprehensive procedure of sample evaluations of study programmes and their follow-up. It stresses the importance of participation in self-evaluation procedures and thematic analysis with a clear purpose, basis and intended impact. At the same time, it focuses on the computerisation of the Agency, which is key to improving efficiency and international cooperation, thus contributing to expanding the Agency's influence and reputation at global level.

The Agency wants to continue to provide its stakeholders with the most up-to-date, accurate and diverse information on Slovenian higher and higher vocational education.

II. WORK PLAN

The 2024 Work Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Quality Manual. It starts with tables about envisaged accreditations and evaluations, followed by an action plan outlining the tasks up to the end of 2024, the plan for the use of available financial resources and the plan for the education and training of human resources.

II.2. PLANNED ACCREDITATIONS AND EVALUATIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND STUDY PROGRAMMES AND HIGHER VOCATIONAL COLLEGES

Table 4:

| NUMBER OF UNRESOLVED APPLICATIONS AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023 | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Type of procedure | Type of accreditation | Number of unresolved applications | Notes |
| Higher education institution | Reaccreditation | 10 | 9 applications were submitted in autumn, 1 application is for reaccreditation of a university and was brought under an appeal procedure. |
| Higher education institution | Initial accreditation | 1 | The application was submitted in August. |
| Higher education institution | Transformation of institution | 2 | One application is under an appeal procedure, another was submitted in the second half of the year and concerns a complex process of transformation into a university. |
| Higher education institution | Accreditation of location | 2 | The applications were submitted in autumn. |
| Study programme | Accreditation | 16 | 5 applications were submitted in the summer, 2 in December, one application will be subject to a repeated procedure, in case of one application there was a change of an expert, 7 applications are expected to be decided on by February 2024. |
| Study programme | Extraordinary evaluation of programme | 1 | Expected to be decided on by February 2024. |
| Study programme | Reaccreditation | 1 | Following an administrative dispute before the Administrative Court, the |



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NUMBER OF UNRESOLVED APPLICATIONS AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

| Type of procedure | Type of accreditation | Number of unresolved applications | Notes |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| | | | application is under an appeal procedure. |
| Study programme | Evaluation of a sample | 5 | The applications were scheduled for assessment in autumn. |
| Higher vocational college | External evaluation | 8 | 5 applications were submitted in autumn and 3 applications were submitted just before summer. |

EXPLANATORY NOTE:

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

- 5 applications were submitted in the summer and 2 in December 2023, so the procedures in accordance with the law and the Accreditation Criteria could not be completed yet and will continue in 2024;
- in case of one application, there was a change of an expert, which extended the deadline for submitting the report;
- in case of one application, the Council reappointed a group of experts.

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

- 9 applications were submitted in September 2023, which means that the procedures have only just begun;
- one application is for the reaccreditation of a university, which is one of the most complex procedures (two site visits are foreseen, as well as a wider group of (international) experts); in addition, it was under an appeal procedure.

The reasons for unresolved applications in the procedures for external evaluation of higher vocational colleges are the following:

- 5 applications were submitted in autumn, in line with the annual plan;
- 3 applications were submitted just before summer. Due to the absence of various stakeholder groups (students, graduates, teachers, etc.), it is generally not possible to carry out site visits during study holidays, which slightly extends the duration of the procedures.

Table 5:

| CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATIONS EXPECTED TO BE SUBMITTED IN 2024 | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Type of procedure | Type of accreditation | Envisaged number of applications in 2024 | Envisaged number of visits | Envisaged number of processed applications | Envisaged completion of procedures in 2025 | |
| Higher education institution | Initial accreditation | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | |
| Higher education institution | Reaccreditation | 5 | 0* | 0 | 5 | |
| Higher education institution | Transformation of institution | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | |
| Higher education institution | Accreditation of location | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | |
| Higher vocational college | External evaluation | 7 | 4 | 4 | 3 | |
| Study programme | Accreditation | 20 | 3 | 7 | 13 | |
| Study programme | Evaluation of a sample | 22 | 22 | 14 | 8 | |

Notes to the table:

*Even though five higher education institutions must submit a reaccreditation application in 2024 and one of the compulsory components is a visit (generally two) to the institution, no institution visits are envisaged until the end of 2024. The reasons for this are the complexity of these procedures and the fact that applications must be submitted by 30 September 2024. According to the rules of procedure for the reaccreditation of an institution, the procedure leading up to the first visit to the institution takes nearly 4 months.

Table 6:

| PLANNED EVALUATIONS AND ACCREDITATIONS IN 2024 | | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------|---|--------------|
| | Transferred applications* | Obligations in 2024 | Envisaged new applications in 2024** | Total |
| Institutions | 10 | 5*** | 4 | 19 |

| | | | | |
|------------|----|--------|----|----|
| Programmes | 16 | 22**** | 20 | 58 |
| Colleges | 6 | 7 | / | 13 |
| TOTAL | 32 | 34 | 24 | 90 |

Notes to the table:

*"Transferred applications" are all applications submitted before 2024.

**These are applications for the initial accreditation of higher education institutions and applications for the accreditation of new study programmes.

*****List of higher education institutions that will submit a reaccreditation application in 2024:**

1. University of Nova Gorica
2. College of Ptuj
3. B&B College of Sustainable Development
4. College of Accounting and Finance
5. IEDC-Bled School of Management, Faculty of Postgraduate Studies of Management

**** Sample of study programmes.

At its 193rd meeting, the Agency Council confirmed the Sample Evaluation Plan for 2024. The plan includes first- and second-cycle study programmes, which are broken down internally into fields.

Table 7:

| LIST OF STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE 2024 EVALUATION OF SAMPLE | | | | |
|---|--|------------------------|-------|-------------------|
| University/in dependent higher education institution | Higher education institution | Study programme | Cycle | Type of programme |
| University of Ljubljana | Faculty of Arts | Asian studies | 1 | University |
| University of Ljubljana | Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television | Stage acting | 2 | Master |
| University of Maribor | Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science | Electrical engineering | 1 | University |
| University of Ljubljana | Faculty of Electrical Engineering | Electrical engineering | 2 | Master |



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|--|--|---|---|---------------------------------|
| University of Nova Gorica | Faculty of Natural Sciences | Physics and astrophysics | 2 | Master |
| University of Ljubljana | Faculty of Arts | Geography | 2 | Master |
| University of Ljubljana | Academy of Music | Musical arts | 1 | University |
| University of Ljubljana | Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television | Theatre and radio directing | 2 | Master |
| University of Maribor | Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Transportation Engineering and Architecture | Industrial engineering | 1 | University |
| University of Maribor | Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Transportation Engineering and Architecture | Industrial engineering | 2 | Master |
| University of Maribor | Faculty of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering | Chemistry | 2 | Master |
| Independent higher education institution | VIST – Faculty of Applied Sciences | Cosmetics | 1 | Higher educational professional |
| University of Primorska | Faculty of Management | Management | 2 | Master |
| University of Primorska | Faculty of Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Information Technologies | Mathematics | 1 | University |
| Independent higher education institution | ERUDIO Education Group | Entrepreneurship and international business | 2 | Master |

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|---------------------------------|
| University of Primorska | Faculty of Management | Political Science - international relations and economic diplomacy | 2 | Master |
| University of Ljubljana | Faculty of Social Work | Social work | 2 | Master |
| University of Ljubljana | Faculty of Social Sciences | Sociology | 2 | Master |
| University of Maribor | Faculty of Mechanical Engineering | Textile design technologies | 1 | Higher educational professional |
| Independent higher education institution | Faculty of Commercial and Business Sciences | Security management | 1 | Higher educational professional |
| Independent higher education institution | Faculty of Environmental Protection | Environmental protection and eco-technologies | 1 | Higher educational professional |
| University of Ljubljana | Faculty of Arts | History | 2 | Master non-educational |

Table 8:

| ENVISAGED VISITS IN 2024 | | | |
|---|-------------------|------------------|--|
| Institute/college | Number of visits* | Number of days** | Notes |
| University of Ljubljana | 10 | 18 | 1 study programme accreditation from 2023, 1 sample evaluation from 2023, 9 sample evaluations from 2024 |
| University of Maribor | 4 | 8 | 5 sample evaluations from 2024 |
| University of Primorska | 2 | 4 | 3 sample evaluations from 2024 |
| New University | 1 | 3 | RA from 2019 |
| University of Nova Gorica | 1 | 2 | 1 sample evaluation from 2024 |
| Independent higher education institutions | 13 | 30 | 9 reaccreditations from 2023, 4 sample evaluations from 2024 |
| Colleges | 9 | 18 | 5 evaluations from 2023, 4 evaluations from 2024. |
| TOTAL | 40 | 83 | |

Notes to the table:



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RA: reaccreditation of a higher education institution

*Visits related to all planned evaluations of samples of study programmes, planned evaluations of colleges and the remaining evaluations or accreditations from previous years are taken into account.

**The number of visit days depends on the complexity of the institution/college or the evaluation, modification and delivery of study programmes.

III. ACTION PLAN FOR 2024

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.

IV. WORK PLAN BY DEPARTMENTS

| Activity/task | Contents | Category |
|--|---|--------------------------------|
| Quality Assurance and International Cooperation Department | | |
| Proposing amendments, criteria, forms, templates for writing reports | Updating criteria according to the legislative changes. | Criteria and other provisions |
| Review of the options in the Criteria for External Evaluation and the ZVSI to extend the evaluation period | Discussion on the advisability of extending the evaluation period in external evaluations of higher vocational colleges. | |
| 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 |
| Regular monthly meetings | Regular monthly meetings to review material and discuss outstanding issues (first Thursday of the month). | |
| Introducing new employees to conducting procedures | Monitoring and support, knowledge transfer and unification of work. | |
| Preparation of the plan for the evaluation of a sample of study programmes | Preparation of the plan of study programmes for the evaluation of a sample. | |
| Preparation of the plan for external evaluation of higher vocational colleges | Preparation and adoption of the plan and communication to the higher vocational colleges. | |
| Managing iNakvis (rules of procedure) | Proposal to optimise the rules of procedure in iNakvis. | Accreditations and evaluations |



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| Activity/task | Contents | Category |
|---|---|-------------------------------|
| Module for international activities | Preparation of the basis for the creation of a module for the Agency's international activities. | |
| Inter-ministerial and 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 |
| Thematic analysis of doctoral programmes in cooperation with the Analytics Department | Contributing to the thematic analysis of doctoral programme evaluation procedures and expert group reports. | |
| 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 the Agency and to build trusting relationships. | Cooperation with stakeholders |
| Regular monthly meetings with the University of Ljubljana | Follow-up and discussion of current and pending issues. | |
| Monitoring relevant practices and new developments and preparing proposals | Through participation in working groups of international associations and 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 |
| 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 |
| Monthly register updates following the Council meeting | Monthly updating of the Register of Experts in accordance with the decisions taken at the Agency Council meetings. | |
| Review of expired entries (twice a year, on 16 June and 15 December) | Review of past entries to update the Register of Experts. | |
| Inclusion of candidates for entry in the register in the procedures (as external observers) | Candidates who have completed the first part of the training should also promptly enter the second part, where they participate in site visits as external observers. | |



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| Activity/task | Contents | Category |
|--|---|---------------|
| Call for new candidates | Call for candidates for entry in the register for both experts and students of the Agency. | |
| Updating the register of foreign experts | Continuous updating of the register of foreign experts in iNakvis according to applications received, needs and participation in specific procedures. | |
| Participation in associations and organisations (ENQA, ECA, CEENQA, etc.) | Active participation in associations of quality assurance agencies of which NAKVIS is a member. | International |
| ENQA, CEENQA, ECA | Active participation of employees in associations of quality assurance agencies of which NAKVIS is a member. | |
| Project collaboration | Participation in projects, involvement in projects related to the preparation of micro-credentials. | International |
| Organising and carrying out the yearly international conference | Annual international online conference organised by the Agency to address topical issues in the field of quality assurance in higher education. | 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 the Agency. | 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. | |
| E-newsletter | Monthly preparation and publication of an e-newsletter on the Agency's website and electronic communication to stakeholders (last week of the month). | |
| News and publishing key messages, multimedia content production and processing | Preparing and publishing news (and other documents) on the website, updating and adapting the website as needed, publishing key information/other interactive content on social media (X and Youtube), preparing and processing various multimedia content (video, images, logos etc.). | |



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| Activity/task | Contents | Category |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| Analytics and Information Technology Department | | |
| 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-evaluations of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges over the period. The results of the analysis help the Agency and experts, as well as institutions and colleges, to improve the assessment of higher and higher vocational education activity or quality in accreditation, evaluation and self-evaluation procedures. They suggest substantive orientations and improvements. | Analyses, documents, publications |
| Employability database | Establishment of a database on the employment of students by higher education institutions and study programmes, taking into account the cycle, type or nature of the latter. | External databases |
| Translation | The Agency ensures up-to-date translations of all relevant documents, from regulations (criteria, standards), analysis, guidelines, etc. to the Agency's annual publication. | Translation |
| Interpretation | Interpretation 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). Interpreting is done from Slovenian into English and vice versa. This can also be provided in other events, such as the external evaluation of the Agency during a visit by ENQA representatives, etc. | Translation |
| Upgrade of internal information system iNakvis | The Agency's internal information system, designed to improve the Agency's performance and planned activities, enables both monitoring and | iNakvis |



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| Activity/task | Contents | Category |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| | updating of tasks from the action plan, creation of events and online meetings by automatically generating web links for them, keeping records of higher education institutions and study programmes, records of experts, preparation of materials for Council meetings, records of working time, as well as fast communication between co-workers. The system is constantly being developed and updated. | |
| Maintenance of the eNakvis information system | Part of the maintenance of the external IT system (eNakvis) is related to routine maintenance, including software updates and troubleshooting, while the other part is related to major maintenance. This includes activities such as optimising the performance of the application, improving the user experience and increasing transparency. | eNakvis |
| Preparation of the annual publication of micro-credentials | Preparation of the Agency's annual publication, including the Agency's Annual Report on its work for 2023 and the proceedings on micro-credentials. | Analyses, documents, publications |
| Report on Work and Operations of the Agency in 2023 | Overview of the completed tasks from the 2023 Action Plan, the work of the Agency Council, Appeal Committee and financial resources. | Plans and reports |
| Annual Work Plan of the Agency 2025 | Preparation of the Annual Work Plan with principal work tasks in 2025. | Analyses, documents, publications |
| Analysis on agency independence | Conducting in-depth interviews with the aim of qualitative analysis on the independence of agencies in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). | Analyses, documents, publications |
| 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. | External databases |



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| Activity/task | Contents | Category |
|--|--|---------------------------|
| Report on evaluations of samples of study programmes and thematic analysis | Analysing reports on evaluation of samples of study programmes by delineated topics; in 2024, a thematic analysis on the quality of teacher training and doctoral study programmes is expected. | |
| General Affairs Department | | |
| Legislation (higher and higher vocational education) | Participation in the working group responsible for the preparation of the ZViS, reviewing and examining remarks, harmonising the text of the draft Act and 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 |
| 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 |
| Appointment of a new member on the expiry of the term of office of trade union representatives | 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; reminders sent in connection with the call for appointment. The task will continue from 2023 to 2024, as the stakeholder has still not appointed a new Council member. | |
| Legal assistance to staff in conducting procedures | Legal assistance to staff in conducting procedures. | Quality assurance support |
| Preparation of legal opinions | Studying the issue and preparing legal opinions on specific dilemmas on the application of legislation. | Quality assurance support |



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| Activity/task | Contents | Category |
|--|--|------------------------|
| Structure of the Appeal Committee | Overseeing the composition/membership of the Appeal Committee (monitoring the terms of office, drafting and publishing public calls for nominations for members of the Appeal Committee and their alternates, serving on the Appeal Committee selection panel, preparing documents for the Council's meeting materials). | Appeal Committee |
| Support to the activities | Preparation and distribution of materials and documents relating to the Appeal Committee meeting, participation in the Appeal Committee meeting and taking of minutes, correspondence with Appeal Committee members, coordination of decisions between members. | Appeal Committee |
| Employment | Recruitment procedures (publishing the job postings, selection procedure, preparation of employment contracts, annexes to employment contracts, registration with the National Health Insurance Fund, entry of data in the records (Mferac) of new recruits, preparation of authorisations). | Human resource affairs |
| Wages and salaries | Preparation of data about wages. | Human resource affairs |
| Preparation of annual leave notices for 2024 | Preparation of annual leave notices. | |
| Education and healthy working environment | Monitoring education needs, proposals, preparation of annual education plan, safety at work, promotion of health, Family-Friendly Enterprise. | Human resource affairs |
| Education and training plan for 2024 | Preparation of education and training plan. | |
| 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 |



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| Activity/task | Contents | Category |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| 2024 statistics of below-threshold contracts | Preparation of data for the statistics. | |
| Managing procedures related to requests for access to public information | Initial examination of the documentation, consideration of the request and any exceptions to access (decision), preparation and submission of the documentation. | Public information |
| Catalogue of public information | Preparation and regular 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 |
| Ekstrem čisto company – contract on cleaning business premises | Collection of tenders, selection of contractor, preparation of contract. | |
| Receiving and sending mail and recording documents | Receiving and sending mail in physical and electronic form, preparation of documents for signing, scanning and recording documents, assisting colleagues in tracking and searching for documents, preparation and completion of documents (e.g. medical referrals, travel orders, etc.), correspondence with the owner of the premises. | 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, additional clarifications and collection of additional documentation, cooperation with employees, preparation of response report, implementation of (corrective) actions to improve internal controls, etc. | Supervisions |



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| Activity/task | Contents | Category |
|--|--|---------------------------|
| Internal audit | Selection of an external provider to conduct an internal audit, preparation of required documentation, additional clarifications and collection of additional documentation, cooperation with employees, preparation of response report, implementation of (corrective) actions to improve internal controls, etc. | Supervisions |
| Implementation of (corrective) measures to improve internal controls | The following corrective measures were implemented in 2023: the Agency's contracting rules and working time rules were updated. The implementation of the IT corrective measures is foreseen for 2024. | |
| Human resource affairs | Keeping records of employee attendance, keeping records of medical examinations, managing employee data in the Mferac system and personal files, keeping records of education and training. | Records and documentation |
| Financial affairs | Keeping records of concluded contracts, travel orders, copyright contracts, business partners, fixed assets, payments, refunds, Agency's membership fees and records of use of business telephones. | Records and documentation |
| Records of personal data processing | Personal data processing records, list of persons authorised to access personal data. | Records and documentation |

VI. RESOURCES

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Policy: EDUCATION AND SPORT

Programme: Higher and higher vocational education

Subprogramme: Promoting quality in higher education

Under the subprogramme Promoting quality in higher education, funds can be transferred between budget items in accordance with the legislation in force.

| EXPENDITURE | ADOPTED BUDGET for 2024 |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| WAGES AND SALARIES | 936,044.61 |
| MATERIAL COSTS | 213,808.60 |
| INVESTMENTS | 86,261.00 |
| QUALITY | 308,823.82 |
| | 1,544,938.01 |

Explanation of individual types of expenditure on subgroup level

Salaries and other personnel expenditure

The planned expenditure for salaries and other personnel expenditure is EUR 936,044.61.

Material costs – expenditure on goods and services

Planned use of funds for:

- office and general materials and services EUR 28,190.60,
- special materials and services (promotion of health, professional support in reviewing the recovery plan) EUR 7,956.42,
- power, communications, water and public utility services EUR 15,798.80,
- transportation costs and services EUR 10.00,
- business trips EUR 19,482.00,
- regular maintenance (operating expenses) EUR 17,449.00,
- rent for equipment and office space EUR 111,661.17,
- other operating expenses EUR 13,260.61.

Investments and investment maintenance

Planned use of funds for:

- regular maintenance and upgrading of eNakvis EUR
37,323.57,
- development of iNakvis – the Agency’s internal information system EUR
33,684.25,
- acquisition of computer hardware and intangible property (licenses) EUR 15,253.00.

Quality

Planned use of funds for:

- Agency publications, publishing publications and analyses, translation of documents, publication of criteria in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, making presentation films, etc. EUR 68,823.80,
- operating expenses for: costs of remuneration for Council and Appeals Committee members, payments to Agency experts, consultations with experts, services of higher education institutions/schools, education and training for experts, etc. EUR 240,000.00

V.I. HUMAN RESOURCES

In autumn 2018, the Agency adopted the Agency HR development plan. This is the first single document providing for: constant training, the staff’s professional and personal growth, planning their education, study assistance, reward and promotion at work as well as future HR planning and care for a healthy and stimulating working environment. The plan was updated in February 2024.

V.II. PLAN OF EMPLOYEE EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR 2024

In 2024, the Agency plans to organise the following seminars or workshops for all employees:

- Personal Data Protection – refresher seminar, Feb/March

Envisaged trainings, education programmes, seminars, workshops and events in 2024:

- education in analytics and information technology,
- education in establishing the principles of artistic research (doctorates in the arts),
- education in artificial intelligence and links to higher education, including in the area of ensuring academic integrity,
- participation in international seminars and trainings of umbrella European quality assurance associations in higher education, mainly on the fields of work (ENQA, ECA, INQAAHE, ESU),
- 19th forum on quality assurance in higher education (EQAF forum),
- participation in training by ECA association,
- reimbursement of work-related costs and payment of other remuneration from the employment relationship in the public sector,
- reporting statistics on low-value below-threshold contracts,
- seminars on finance, etc.

Employees may also attend seminars and events appearing during the year that are not listed in the plan if there are sufficient funds available.

The Agency will spend approximately EUR 5,000.00 to finance the continuous education in 2024. Employees wishing to enrol for further studies in the academic year 2024/2025 submit an application for study funding to the Director no later than 20 September 2024. The application should indicate the course in which they intend to enrol and the costs of the study.

The Agency will conclude a *contract on education* with an employee if the Director and the department head believe that their studies are related to the Agency's work or that the acquired competences will contribute to the employee's work performance. The contract on education will also determine the share of costs funded by the Agency, which depends on the number of employee applications to continue studies in the interest of the Agency and the available funds.

V. CONCLUSION

On the basis of the presented work and financial plan for 2024, it can be concluded that the Agency remains committed to the quality management of accreditation and evaluation procedures in higher and higher vocational education. Through planned activities such as improving assessment procedures and legal support, organising thematic events, analytical work in selected areas and cooperation with related international organisations, the Agency demonstrates its commitment to continuously improving its work. At the same time, it stresses the importance of transparency and communication with internal and external higher education and higher vocational education stakeholders.

The objectives set reflect the Agency's overall strategy to achieve high quality standards in tertiary education. The commitment to regularly monitor and adapt approaches in line with the expectations of the academic community, students, employers and society as a whole further reinforces the Agency's role as a key player in quality improvement in higher education.