

**Annual activity and economy report of**

**Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education in 2021**

Bratislava, April 2022

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# FOREWORD

*Dear readers,*

*We present to you the annual report of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education for 2021. This is the third year of the Agency's activities since its establishment. In addition to the accreditation procedures already in place, coupled mostly to addressing the shortcomings identified in the previous period, other types of procedures were also introduced.*

*The year 2021 was mainly marked by the first accreditations already according to the new accreditation standards issued by the Agency in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). In total, the first 177 applications of higher education institutions for accreditation of the new study programme were considered. Overall, this is an important step when the new rules apply. These should make it possible to improve the compilation of study programmes by higher education institutions, taking into account European customs of quality assurance and improvement. Accreditations have brought experience in the application of new procedures. Once evaluated, they will be used to improve accreditation processes.*

*This year also brought new valuable experience in the compilation and work of working groups composed of external assessors. The additional survey activity was the Academic Quarter hour student satisfaction survey, which managed to get up to 20,000 respondents. The results were also presented by electronic form of dashboard (boards).*

*An organic part of the Agency's work was also a series of professional events for professionals in higher education institutions; in an onlin way, usually between 300 and 400 candidates participated. The Agency also cooperated with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on a project of recommendations for the improvement of higher education in the Slovak Republic, funded by the European Commission. The OECD appreciated the agency's work in implementing quality assurance systems according to ESG and particularly highly highlighted the implementation of professional events for higher education institutions.*

*Robert Redhammer*

*Chairman of the Executive Board*

# INTRODUCTION

In 2021, the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as "the Agency"), which by law carries out activities of external quality assurance of higher education, continued to fulfil its mission. Its activities were focused on the procedures for granting accreditation of new study programmes. Part of the activities concerned verification of the results of measures taken in previous accreditations, acting on own initiative or other proceedings within the meaning of the act. The Agency's activities also addressed a number of objections of the parties dealt with by the Board of Appeal.

In 2021, the Agency continued to carry out events to clarify several aspects of accreditation standards, the internal quality assurance system and the knowledge of higher education institutions of the problems and experiences encountered in its activities.

Within the framework of internal activities, the Agency prepared 2 thematic reports, amended several of its internal regulations and started to develop the preconditions and procedures that will be necessary when assessing the internal quality assurance systems of higher education institutions with standards.

The submitted Annual Report on the Activities and Management of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education for 2021 is a fulfillment of § 4 (2), g (3) of the Quality Assurance Act and contains all data within the meaning of Section 20 (8) of this Act.

# ABOUT AGENCY

# Legal definition and mission

The Agency is a public body which carries out external quality assurance activities for higher education. It was established on 1 November 2018 by Act No. 269/2018 Coll. on Quality Assurance of Higher Education and on amendments to act No. 343/2015 Coll. on public procurement and on amendments to certain acts as amended (hereinafter referred to as the "Quality Assurance Act") and is based in Bratislava.

The agency's mission is to contribute to improving the quality of higher education in the Slovak Republic with external quality assurance tools according to the principles of ESG 2015 and in accordance with the expectations of stakeholders in education. The Agency provides higher education institutions with a professional and independent view of the quality of education and strengthens the quality culture. In particular, the Agency shall decide on matters relating to the granting of authorisations to higher education institutions on the basis of their applications and shall also carry out other related tasks.

# Structure and composition of the Agency´s bodies in 2021

The Act on Quality Assurance in § 5 - 18 sets out in detail the method of choice, appointment, term of office, rights and obligations, remuneration and other details for members of the agency's bodies. They are:

* + 1. Chairman of the Executive Board,
		2. Vice-Chairman of the Executive Board,
		3. Executive Board,
		4. Board of Appeal,
		5. Agency Controller,
		6. Head of Office.

# Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Executive Board

The Chairman of the Executive Board shall be the statutory body of the Agency, shall manage the Agency, act on its behalf and represent it externally. The Chairman of the Executive Board shall be represented in his absence by the Vice-Chairman of the Executive Board. The Chairman and Vice-President of the Executive Board are appointed and dismissed by the Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as "minister"). In 2021, the following posts were held by:

**prof. Ing. Robert Redhammer, PhD.**, Chairman of the Executive Board

**prof. RNDr. René Matlovič, PhD.**, **LL.M.**, Vice-Chairman of the Executive Board.

# Executive Board

The Executive Board shall have nine members, including the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairman. The members of the Executive Board are appointed and dismissed by the Minister – two members on the proposal of the Council of Higher Education institutions of the Slovak Republic and two members on the proposal of the Slovak Rectors' Conference from persons who are internationally recognized experts in the field of their activities, two members on the proposal of the Student Council of Higher Education Institutions and two members on the proposal of employers' representatives. The ninth member shall be the Chairperson of the Executive Board. In 2021, the Executive Board worked in the following composition:

**prof. Ing. Robert Redhammer, PhD.**, chairman

**prof. RNDr. René Matlovič, PhD.**, **LL.M.**, vice-chairman

## prof. Július Horváth, PhD., member

**prof. RNDr. František Kačík, PhD.**, member

**Ing. Viliam Kupec, PhD.**, member

**Mgr. art. Bálint Lovász**, member

## prof. PaedDr. Vladimír Patráš, CSc., member prof. MUDr. Iveta Šimková, CSc., member prof. JUDr. Ivan Šimovček, CSc., member.

Two members of the Executive Board, Prof. MUDr. Iveta Šimková, CSc., and Prof. PaedDr. Vladimír Patráš, CSc., were appointed by the Minister for their second term on 15. The other members of the Executive Board shall run for their first term of office.

# Board of Appeal

The Board of Appeal shall review the procedures of the Executive Board and the working groups of the Executive Board of the Agency on the basis of objections made by the parties to decisions or observations of the Executive Board. The Board of Appeal shall have five members and two alternates appointed and dismissed by the Minister. In 2021, the composition of the Board of Appeal was as follows:

**prof. doc. JUDr. Marek Šmid, PhD.**, Chairman

**JUDr. Peter Štrpka, PhD.**, member
**JUDr. Marcel Jurko, PhD.**, member
**Mgr. Roman Oleksik, LL.M.**, member
**prof. Ing. Jozef Mihok, PhD.**, member

**prof. JUDr. Margita Prokeinová, PhD.**, alternate member.

# Agency Controller

On the basis of the results of the selection procedure, the Controller shall be appointed for a term of office of four years and dismissed by the Minister. In 2021, **Ing. Ivan Hargaš** held the position.

# Head of Office

In particular, the Head of the Office shall ensure the proper functioning of the Agency, including the administrative, technical, spatial and staffing of the Agency, shall manage the Agency's office to the extent determined by the President of the Executive Board. The Head of the Office shall be appointed and dismissed by the Chairperson of the Executive Board on the basis of the results of the selection procedure. In 2021, the post of head/head of the office was held by:

**Mgr. Zuzana Romančíková**, Head of Office until 31. 8. 2021

**Ing. Dušan Faktor, PhD.**, Head of Office from 4. 10. 2021.

# Organisational structure and human resources

The exercise of the Agency's remit and the full provision of its activities shall be linked to staffing by qualified staff. The year 2021 was a sign of stabilisation of the collective and its professionalization so that its composition correlates with the needs of the Agency and ensures statutory obligations. As of December 31, 2021, the Agency registered a total of 32 employees in employment, including 17 men and 15 women. 8 employees performed part-time work. There were a total of 22 persons who carried out their activities on the basis of agreements carried out outside the employment relationship (agreement on the execution of work – 7 persons; agreement on work activities – 13 persons; agreement on the brigadier work of students – 2 persons).

The basic breakdown of the Agency and its structure are already determined by the Act on Quality Assurance by the constitution of the Agency's bodies and by defining their rights, obligations and basic links. As of 19.8.2021, there has been a change within the internal organisational breakdown of the Agency brought about by the adoption of the new establishment plan by Internal Regulation No 3/2021; the Regulation was approved by the Executive Board at its meeting on 19 August 2021. Within the meaning of Article 3 of these Establishment Rules, the Agency shall be divided into:

* department of accreditation activities,
* Analytical department
* Department of operations and economics,
* Legislative unit,
* Internal quality assurance unit.

The main tasks, the duties of work and the responsibilities of the individual departments are set out in the establishment plan; each section is headed by its head/manager and is responsible for its activities to the Head of the Office. The Legislative and Legal Unit provides assistance to other organisational units of the Agency according to the needs and instructions of the Chairperson of the Executive Board. The operation of the Internal Quality Assurance Unit shall be carried out by the Internal Quality Assurance Coordinator appointed and dismissed by the Chairperson of the Executive Board.

# Professional development of employees

The training and development of the Agency's staff is one of its priorities. The professional development of staff, the improvement and dissemination of their competences, knowledge and skills is particularly important in the area of the specific activities carried out by the Agency.

The Agency enables its staff to continuously learn and shift their skills and competences. Employees receive an offer of training from external suppliers with the possibility of their direct participation, whether full-time or online, according to the requirements of daily experience and the needs of colleagues themselves. Thanks to training, female colleagues deepen their qualifications and thus become more productive and successful in their work.

Each newly recruited employee receives compulsory initial training and then during the year he/she supplements his/her knowledge in individual areas according to the job title and description of his/her work activities. In addition to the initial trainings, the process of adaptation of the employee during the first months of his/her activity in the organization is also important. The Agency cares that every new staff member has the conditions created to help him to navigate more quickly and carry out his/her work as best and efficiently as possible, to be aware of the agency's mission, to accept its values and to integrate into the collective.

In 2021, the Agency's staff received 3 types of training:

* training of newly recruited employees,
* training aimed at improving employees' professional knowledge,
* training aimed at improving staff's skills in working with information and communication technologies used within the Agency.

The Agency recruited 3 new staff during 2021. The training process for both new and existing employees was as follows:

Training of newly recruited employees, which focused mainly on:

* occupational health and safety and fire protection – training was led by Ing. Eva Hlivová – bezp.sk;
* accreditation processes – the training was led by Dr. Andrej Piovarči, in charge of the department of accreditation activities;
* the use of the information system, the administration of the registry and the Agency's website.
1. Training aimed at improving the professional knowledge of the staff of the Agency has been geared towards:
* IS VEMA – module of personnel and wages, economic module, module of travel orders for domestic and foreign business trips of agency employees and their correct setting for the needs of the Agency (organized by employees of spol. VEMA);
* 5 steps to correct written expression – Slovak language in official correspondence (ODITEA, s.r.o.);
* How to properly exercise basic financial control? With a bonus for participants – processed answers to common questions from practice (ODITEA, s. r. o.);
* New trends and modern administration of registry and archival documents with a focus on practice – amendment of the Act from 1. 1. 2021 (PROEKO, s. r. o.);
* Procurement basics (PROEKO, s.r.o.);
* Low value contracts (PROEKO, s.r.o.);
* Graphic design (Draw planet, CZ);
* Termination of PP from the point of view of application practice – Current changes after the amendment of the Labour Code (EDOS – PEM, EDOS-SMART, s. r. o.);
* Travel refunds currently in 2021 with examples from practice following other regulations (EDOS – PEM, EDOS-SMART, s.r.o.);
* periodic training on health and safety at work (organised by: Ing. Eva Hlivová – bezp.sk);
* New rules for employers to control COVID-19 in the workplace, options, prohibitions, restrictions (PROEKO, s.r.o.);
* Administration of the Register for Beginners (PROEKO, s.r.o.);
* Training on the assessment process (trained by Ing. A. Piovarči, PhD.);
* procedure for accreditation of the new SOP (trained by Ing. A. Piovarči, PhD.);
* discussion of standards and methodology (the President and Vice-Chairman of the Agency's Executive Board responded to questions and suggestions from the ACA);
* methodological training for the preparation of evaluation reports in the accreditation of new SPPs (trained by the President and Vice-President of the CoR);
* Graduate profile, educational objectives and outputs (trained by Doc. PaedDr. Marcela Verešová, PhD.);
* the quality of distance learning (discussion meeting with the representatives of the reviewers);
* forms and procedure for the application of HEI´s for accreditation of the study programme (trained by Ing. M. Džubáková, PhD.).

The Agency also considers the participation of employees in consultations and discussion meetings organised by the Agency for stakeholders, practitioners and assessors as education (they trained and answered questions from the Chairman and Vice-President of the Executive Board, Ing. M. Džubáková, PhD., and Ing. A. Piovarči, PhD.). The events are specified in a separate chapter of this annual report.

In the context of improving skills in working with information and communication technologies used within the Agency, staff members have completed:

* IS training, application module – new SP (trained by Ing. B. Steinmüller, Ing. A. Zacharova, PhD., RNDr. A. Žemličková);
* Using the DOODLE tool (trained by Ing. A. Zacharova, PhD.);
* IS training, feedback for members of working groups (trained by Ing. M. Džubáková, PhD.);
* Registry – How to befriend it?, training on working with the e-box (training was prepared and led by Mgr. Zuzana Šindlerová);
* travel expenses of agency staff (training prepared and led by Ing. Ján Slimák);
* training to operate and manage the Agency's website according to the posts responsible for disclosing information in their area of competence.

The staff of the Accreditation Activities Department were also participants in webinars organised by ENQA, EUA or EQAF. Webinars served to expand knowledge and information regarding improving the quality of higher education institutions. The events mediated the experience of various experts (staff) of the European institutions aimed at improving higher education institutions. In particular, the following webinars were concerned:

* Webinars and workshops organised through Erasmus+ and the EU under the MICROBOL project – series: Micro-credentials linked to the Bologna Key Commitments
* Webinár EQAF 2021 – téma: 2021 European Quality Assurance Forum Building trust

and enhancement: from information to evidence;

* Webinars ENQA:
	+ Online quality assurance experiences from ENQA members;
	+ Outcomes of the EUniQ Pilots and Implications for the Framework for QA of European Universities;
	+ Stakeholder involvement in external quality assurance;
* Webinars EUA:
* DIGI-HE project webinars: Developing a high-performing digital education ecosystem;
* European learning and teaching forum;
* Smooth recognition of academic qualifications;
* Universities and the European Open Science Cloud.

# Spatial and material equipment of the Agency

The Agency is located in an office building on Freedom Square 11 in Bratislava, where it has rented office space and uses the entire 5th floor, part 3 and part 1st floor. The total area of the rented area is 483 m2. The Agency has 6 parking spaces for these areas. Offices and meeting rooms are equipped with new office furniture, IT and audiovisual technology owned by the Agency. There are a total of 14 offices, 3 of which are used by the Agency's management (Chairman, Vice-President and Head of Office) and 11 offices are available to staff. At the same time, the Agency has 3 meeting rooms, which are used for meetings of the Executive Board, the Board of Appeal, external visits and for training and working meetings. Employees on each floor are served by a kitchenette equipped with everyday appliances and sanitary facilities.

In the building on the ground floor there is a reception provided and operated by the lessor; the reception serves all companies located in the office building.

The surroundings of the agency's headquarters have very good amenities and accessibility from all directions, as it is located almost in the center of Bratislava.

# INSTITUTIONAL ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AGENCY

Since its inception, and 2021 was no exception, the Agency has created the conditions for taking a firm place in the higher education system in Slovakia. The way in which it is established, the way in which the bodies are occupied, the scope, the management and also the multi-source funding, the legislative preconditions for its independent decision-making are created. The Agency actively influences the higher education environment in line with the expectations of stakeholders and adapts its actions and activities to its changes.

# External legislative changes

The legislative environment within which the Agency operates is mainly made up of the Act on Quality Assurance. This was amended in 2021 by Act No. 345/2021 Coll. of 17 September 2021 amending Act No. 269/2018 Coll. on Quality Assurance of Higher Education and on amendments to Act No. 343/2015 Coll. on Public Procurement and on amendments to certain acts as amended schools and on amendments to certain acts as amended.

That amendment extended the period within which the Agency must take a decision from 180 days to 1 year (Section 21(7)), thus creating a sufficient timeframe for the completion of the proceedings, taking into account all its procedural aspects. Another objective of the amendment was to resolve a situation in which it was not possible to take the state examination in the relevant study programme to students who fulfilled all the conditions for its implementation, but the Agency had to suspend the implementation of the study programme pursuant to § 27(1) of the study programme, even though according to point (c) of this paragraph the detected deficiency could be eliminated by modifying the study programme. With the new § 32a, the Agency will decide, at the request of the higher education institution, to revoke the accreditation of habilitation and inaugural proceedings. By supplementing the transitional provision § 39a, the Agency is authorized, at the request of the higher education institution, to register in the register of study programmes changes resulting from the need to align study programmes with the standards for the study programme by 31 August 2022.

This amendment removed some inconsistent provisions from the Quality Assurance Act and, in particular, by extending the maximum period of proceedings, created the conditions for better fulfillment of the Agency's mission.

# Internal rules of the Agency and their amendments

In the exercise of its competence and the consistent exercise of the powers in its possession, the Agency shall rely on a system of internal rules and internal legislation. It consists of 32 directives, regulations and other types of standards governing internal and external procedures. This internal legislation is gradually adapted to new external and internal conditions.

In the course of 2021, the Executive Board of the Agency approved new internal rules governing the procedure for the remuneration of the members of the Agency's working groups and the procedures for providing accommodation and reimbursement of assessment expenses, as well as the new establishment plan and registry rules:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Number** | **Title of the internal regulation** | **Date of approval by the Executive Board** |
| **n. 1/2021** | Internal regulation: Remuneration procedure for the members of the SAAHE´s Executive Board review panels. | Approved on28. 1. 2021 |
| **n. 2/2021** | Internal regulation on the scope and method of providing accommodation and transport of members of the SAAHE Executive Board review panels  | Approved on17. 6. 2021 |
| **n. 3/2021** | Internal regulation: SAAHE´s Organizational Rules | Approved on19. 8. 2021 |
| **n. 4/2021** | Internal regulation: SAAVŠ Registry Rules | Approved on19. 8. 2021 |

During 2021, the Agency also amended a number of internal regulations from previous periods. Based on feedback from application practice, it was forced to amend some internal regulations repeatedly in 2021:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Number** | **Title of the internal regulation** | **Date of approval by the Executive Board** |
| **1/2021** | Remuneration procedure of members of the SAAHE´s Executive Board review panels of 14. 4. 2021 | Approved on22. 4. 2021 |
| **9/2019** | Mzdový predpis SAAVŠ zo dňa 14. 4. 2021 | Approved on22. 4. 2021 |
| **3/2019** | Rokovací poriadok výkonnej rady SAAVŠ zo dňa 23. 9. 2021 | Approved on23. 9. 2021 |
| **9/2019** | Mzdový predpis SAAVŠ zo dňa 13. 10. 2021 | Approved on21. 10. 2021 |

# Reviewers of the Agency

In 2021, the Agency continued to expand the list of assessors from the ranks of university teachers, scientists, employers, experts in quality assurance systems, students and foreign experts. The Agency has published on its website a third (open) invitation to sign up to this list; the call continues from the end of 2020.

The Agency also proceeded to targeted contacts of experts from a number of important foreign experts from academia. 44 experts sent their applications for inclusion in the list of assessors and subsequently approved by the Executive Board. Of this number, 40 assessors are listed as at 31.12.2021; 4 have not yet expressed their consent to the listing.

A total of 292 applications were received under the third call; of these 53 applications came from abroad. For 2021, 158 assessors were approved by the Executive Board. Of these, 143 persons gave their consent to the listing of assessors. Of this number, 35 are assessors from the Czech Republic and 33 assessors from other countries. For reasons of lack of experience of candidates or incompatibility of functions pursuant to Article 2(4) of the Principles for Listing assessors, removal from that list and creation of working groups of the Executive Board of the Agency (hereinafter referred to as 'the principles for listing assessors'), 8 applications were rejected. Data on the total number of assessors of the Agency are given in the following table:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Total number of approved assessors by the Agency's Executive Board 2019-2021** | **1 533** |
| - of which the number of assessors who, after approval by the Executive Board of the Agency, have given their consent to the listing | **1 459** |
| - foreign reviewers | **362** |
| - of which reviewers from the Czech Republic | **172** |
| - of which the number of assessors who, after agreeing to be included in the list of reviewers, have received training for reviewers | **1 152** |
| - trained reviewer from foreign countries (outside the Czech Republic) | **113** |
| - trained reviewers from the Czech Republic | **127** |

On the basis of the principles for inclusion in the list of assessors, the Executive Board may include in the working groups only those assessors who, after approval by the Executive Board, have given their consent to be entered on that list and have subsequently received training for reviewers. Of the 143 assessors included in the list, 95 were trained in the basic training module in 2021 + standards of 95 reviewers.

For individual assessors, the Agency records the trade union focus of the assessor, his profile (university teacher, practitioner, internal system expert, student, etc.) and other data on the professional activity of the assessor. On the basis of the evaluation of the data, it may nominate a reviewer to a review panel to review the specific activity of the higher education institution.

The Agency shall regularly publish and update the list of persons entered in the list of assessors on its website.

# MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

There were 16 executive board meetings in 2021; for the pandemic situation, 10 meetings were held online. The date of the proceedings and the brief content of each meeting are given in the following overview.

## 25th meeting of the Executive Board on 28. 1. 2021

The first executive board meeting in 2021 was opened by Executive Board Chairman Robert Redhammer with the participation of all executive board members. The main points of the meeting included deciding on the opening of own-initiative proceedings and the working groups for individual proceedings to verify compliance with the laws and internal regulations of the 5 higher education institutions. 23 candidates were included in the list of assessors by decision of the Executive Board. At this executive board meeting, the remuneration procedure for the members of the Executive Board working groups, the draft budget for 2021 and the draft procurement plan for 2021 were approved.

## 26th meeting of the Executive Board on 18. 2. 2021

At the onlin meeting, revised draft working groups were submitted to the Executive Board for approval following comments from the members of the Executive Board for Proceedings Nos 2021/33-OAC and 2021/35-OAC. Due to the refusal of membership of the Working Party, a proposal was submitted to the Executive Board to modify the composition of the working groups for proceedings Nos 2021/29-OAC, 2021/30-OAC and 2021/31-OAC. All proposals for the composition of the working parties have been approved by the Executive Board. Variants of changes in methodology, the upcoming survey of student satisfaction and the course of consultations with higher education institutions on standards and accreditation applications were discussed. Three assessors were removed from the list of assessors by a decision of the Executive Board. At this meeting of the Executive Board, the evaluation of comments on the draft Appendix No. 1 to the standards for the study programme was approved before it was submitted to the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic for expression and draft amendments to the methodology for evaluating standards.

## 27th meeting of the Executive Board on 18. 3. 2021

The meeting was held in an onlin manner with the presence of all members of the Executive Board. The members of the Executive Board discussed the draft action plan in the SEQA-ESG project and took decisions on the assessment of the ability of higher education institutions to carry out the relevant study programmes. A further 73 candidates were included in the list of assessors by decision of the Executive Board; 1 bidder was eliminated. At this meeting of the Executive Board, the Agency's draft accounts for 2020 and the draft modification of the public procurement plan for 2021 were approved.

## 28th meeting of the Executive Board on 8. 4. 2021

The meeting was held in an onlin manner with the presence of all members of the Executive Board. The members of the Executive Board discussed the draft action plan in the SEQA-ESG project and took decisions on the assessment of the ability of higher education institutions to carry out the relevant study programmes. A further 73 candidates were included in the list of assessors by decision of the Executive Board; 1 bidder was eliminated. At this meeting of the Executive Board, the Agency's draft accounts for 2020 and the draft modification of the public procurement plan for 2021 were approved.

## 29th meeting of the Executive Board on 22. 4. 2021

For the purpose of assessing the activities of higher education institutions, the Executive Board at the meeting mostly approved the proposals for the composition of the working groups of the Executive Board. It adopted a further decision concerning the verification of the results of the measures taken by the higher education institution in relation to study programmes, where, in connection with their implementation, the higher education institution was obliged to report to the Ministry of Education on the outcome of the measures taken to remedy the deficiencies under the applicable regulations; there was also a discussion on the complaint sent to the Agency. By decision of the Executive Board, 24 candidates were included in the list of reviewers, 2 candidates were removed from the list. At this meeting of the Executive Board, a proposal to amend the internal regulation No. 1/2021. The procedure for the remuneration of members of the review panels of the SAAHE Executive Board was approved, the proposal to amend the internal regulation No. 9/2019 - Salary Regulation of the SAAHE, the substantive evaluation and financial accounting of the funds provided for 2020 and the discussion of the proposal of the internal system of quality assurance of SAAHE activities

## 30th meeting of the Executive Board on 6. 5. 2021

At the 30th meeting of the Executive Board, proposals for the composition of executive board working groups for procedures on the granting of accreditations of study programmes of higher education institutions were largely approved. The objection of bias lodged against a member of the working party has been assessed. In the list of assessors, the Executive Board included a further 12 candidates and removed 1 from the list. At the meeting, the Executive Board also approved the draft Amendment 1 to the standards for the study programe.

## 31st meeting of the Executive Board on 20. 5. 2021

At this meeting, the Executive Board assessed the reports on the outcome of the measures taken by higher education institutions and decided on the fulfilment of regulations and criteria issued according to the applicable regulations, approved the draft composition of the working groups of the Executive Board and gave its consent to the submitted proposals for modifications to the study programmes. 16 candidates were included in the list of assessors by decision of the Executive Board. At this meeting, the Annual Report on the Agency's activities and management for 2020 was discussed and approved with comments and a proposal for the remuneration of the members of the working groups of the SAAHE Executive Board in the proceedings on their own initiative.

## 32nd meeting of the Executive Board on 17. – 18. 6. 2021

At the two-day exit meeting of the Executive Board held in Beladice, the Executive Board devoted mainly to deciding on the verification of the results of measures taken by higher education institutions in relation to study programmes, where, in connection with their implementation, the higher education institution was obliged to report to the Ministry on the outcome of the measures taken to remedy deficiencies according to the applicable regulations. The proposals for the composition of the working parties were approved and objections of bias towards the members of the working parties were assessed. A further 10 candidates were included in the list of assessors by the decision of the Executive Board, 2 candidates were removed from the list. At this meeting, the draft modification of the SAAVŠ budget for 2021 and the proposal for a SAAHE directive on the scope and method of providing accommodation and transport to members of the working groups of the Executive Board were approved.

## 33rd meeting of the Executive Board on 8. 7. 2021

At this meeting, the Executive Board continued to approve the draft composition of the working groups of the SAAHE Executive Board, assessed reports on the outcome of the measures taken by higher education institutions and took decisions on the assessment of the ability of higher education institutions to carry out the relevant study programmes. Furthermore, it decided on the granting of prior consent to the submitted proposals for the modification of study programmes pursuant to Section 30(9) of Act No. 269/2018 Coll., evaluated the objection of bias filed against a member of the working group of the Executive Board in proceedings No. 2021/134-OAC. A further 11 candidates were included in the list of assessors by decision of the Executive Board.

## 34th meeting of the Executive Board on 19. 8. 2021

In particular, the Executive Board devoted itself to deciding on the verification of the results of measures taken by higher education institutions in relation to study programmes, where, in connection with their implementation, the higher education institution was obliged to report to the Ministry of Education on the outcome of the measures taken to remedy the deficiencies according to the applicable regulations. It approved the proposal to modify the study programme, the composition of 7 working groups of the Executive Board, the completion of the procedure for verifying compliance with legal and internal regulations pursuant to Section 35(14) of Act No. 269/2018 Coll. and took note of the withdrawal of the application for accreditation to the study programme. At this meeting, the draft organizational plan of SAAVŠ and the draft registration rules of SAAHE were approved.

## 35th meeting of the Executive Board on 23. 9. 2021

At this meeting, the Executive Board assessed the applications for accreditation of study programmes and granted the Agency's prior approval to modify the study programme pursuant to Section 30 of the Quality Assurance Act. It approved the draft composition of 2 working groups and removed 1 candidate from the list of SAAHE reviewers. The Executive Board also approved a proposal to amend internal regulation No. 3/2019 The Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board of SAAHE.

## 36th meeting of the Executive Board on 21. 10. 2021

At this meeting, the Executive Board decided to a large extent on the granting or refusal of accreditation to study programmes pursuant to Section 30 of the Act on Quality Assurance and adjustment of study programmes of higher education institutions, which create a prerequisite for meeting the standards for the study programme. Finally, it approved 2 working groups for the purpose of assessing the activities of higher education institutions.

## 37th meeting of the Executive Board on 4. 11. 2021

At this meeting, the Executive Board assessed applications for accreditation of study programmes and verified the results of the measures taken by higher education institutions in relation to study programmes, for which, in connection with their implementation, the higher education institution was obliged to report to the Ministry of Education on the outcome of the measures taken to remedy the deficiencies according to the applicable regulations.

## 38th meeting of the Executive Board on 18. 11. 2021

At this meeting, the Executive Board mainly assessed applications for accreditation of study programmes pursuant to Section 30 of the Quality Assurance Act. In addition, it identified shortcomings in the procedure for verifying compliance with the legislation and internal regulations of the higher education institution, approved the initiation of the withdrawal procedure and the working group on this procedure.

## 39th meeting of the Executive Board on 2. 12. 2021

At the beginning of the meeting, the Executive Board approved a working group for the purpose of assessing the activities of higher education institutions and assessed proposals for modifications to study programmes. It continued by granting the Agency's prior consent to the modification of the study programme pursuant to Section 30 of the Quality Assurance Act and dealt with applications for accreditation of study programmes. At the end of the meeting, the Chairperson of the Executive Board presented a draft timetable for the executive board meetings for 2022.

## 40th meeting of the Executive Board on 16. 12. 2021

The last meeting in 2021 took place onlin in an onlin manner with the participation of all executive board members. Proposals for modifications to study programmes and applications for accreditation of study programmes were assessed. 22 candidates were included in the list of assessors by executive board decision and 9 were removed from the list. At this meeting, 2 thematic reports of SAAVŠ were approved with comments: Changes in higher education due to the introduction of quality assurance systems 2019 – 2021 and Quantitative overviews of demographic development in Slovak higher education for the years 1989 – 2020. At the end of the last Executive Board meeting in 2021, the Executive Board approved a schedule of meetings for 2022.

Resolutions adopted by the Executive Board for 2021 are published on the Agency's website.

# PERFORMANCE OF THE AGENCY

Under the Act on Quality Assurance, the performance of the Agency's remit is ensured primarily through proceedings starting at the request of a higher education institution or an applicant for state consent, or on the Agency's own initiative. In 2021, i.e. in the period until the alignment of higher education institutions with the Quality Assurance Act and with standards, the Agency carried out proceedings in the following areas.

# Verification of the results of the measures taken in previous accreditations

In 2021, the Agency also dealt with verification of the results of measures taken by higher education institutions in relation to deficiencies identified by the Accreditation Commission in its statement on previous accreditations. These were assessments of the ability of the higher education institution to carry out the relevant study programme or habilitation procedure and the procedure for appointing professors (hereinafter referred to as the "inaugural procedure") which resulted from the conclusions of accreditation under the previous legislation. Due to the adoption of the Act on Quality Assurance and the transfer of rights and obligations from the Accreditation Commission to the Agency from 1 January 2020, the results of the measures taken by higher education institutions to remedy deficiencies within the meaning of the transitional provision of Section 35(6) of the Quality Assurance Act are verified by the Agency at the basis of a previous request from the Ministry of Education, to which higher education institutions send reports on the measures taken to remedy the deficiencies.

The higher education institution has been obliged to report to the Ministry on the measures taken to remedy the deficiencies (hereinafter referred to as the "report") according to the regulations in force until 31 October 2018 due to the failure to meet one or more of the criteria for accreditation of higher education study programmes at the same time. The outcome of the higher education institution's measures taken to address deficiencies was verified by the Agency according to criteria issued according to the regulations in force until 31 October 2018.

In 2021, the Ministry of Education forwarded to the Agency to handle 104 reports of higher education institutions from the previous accreditation period. Of the total number of reports received by the Agency, 92 reports concerned the correction of shortcomings in relation to the implementation of the study programmes and 12 were concerned the correction of deficiencies in relation to the implementation of the habilitation procedure and the inauguration procedure.

## Verification of the results of the correction of deficiencies in relation to the implementation of study programes

In 2021, the Agency assessed 92 reports on closing gaps in relation to the implementation of study programmes. The most common reason for reporting higher education institutions in relation to the implementation of study programmes assessed by the Agency was non-compliance with the KSP-A6 criterion Guaranteeing the quality and development of the study programme. This criterion was the reason for reporting to the higher education institution in 86 cases.

In other cases, there was a failure to meet another criterion or combination of criteria:

* in 2 reports on the combination of criteria KSP-A1, KSP-A3, KSP-B1, KSP-B9,
* in 2 reports on the combination of KSP-A6 and KSP-A4 criteria,
* in 2 reports on the KSP-A1 criterion.

Explanations to the criteria:

* **KSP-A1** *Level of research or artistic activity of higher education institutions and workplaces ensuring the implementation of the study programme,*
* **KSP-A3** *The structure of the lecturers, respectively. university teachers working in the core forms of teaching depending on the specificities of the field of study (qualification structure),*
* **KSP-A4** *Adequacy of the number of university teachers, researchers or performers conducting final works in relation to the number of students*
* **KSP-A6**  *Guaranteeing the quality and development of the study programme,*
* **KSP-B1** *Fulfillment of the content of the field of study (§ 50 para. In this respect, it was considered that the company's sales volume (c) Act No. 131/2002 Coll.),*
* **KSP-B9** *Sufficiency of the requirements for successful completion of the study in terms of quality of the educational process, ways to ensure the level of quality of the educational process, including the way in which state examinations are evaluated and, in particular, the final work.*

After verifying the outcome of the measures taken by higher education institutions, the Agency stated in relation to the implementation of 90 study programmes that the higher education institution, after the adoption of the measures, meets the relevant accreditation criteria. The Agency subsequently marked the abolition of the time limit in the register of study programmes if the obligation of the higher education institution arose because of a time limit on rights, and renewed the granted right if the obligation of the higher education institution arose because of the suspension of the granted right.

After verifying the outcome of the measures taken by higher education institutions, the Agency found in relation to the implementation of 2 study programmes that the higher education institution did not meet the relevant accreditation criteria after the adoption of the measures, on the basis of which the Agency suspended the implementation of these study programmes. In both cases, the Agency suspended the implementation of study programmes in connection with non-compliance with the requirements of the KSP-A6 criterion Guaranteeing the quality and development of the study programme.

## Verification of the results of the correction of deficiencies in relation to the conduct of the habilitation procedure and the inauguration proceedings.

In 2021, the Agency assessed 12 reports concerning the correction of deficiencies in relation to the implementation of the habilitation procedure and the inauguration proceedings. In verifying the results of the actions taken by higher education institutions in relation to the conduct of habilitation procedures and inauguration proceedings, the Agency used criteria for assessing the ability of the higher education institution to carry out habilitation and proceedings and inauguration proceedings.

After verifying the outcome of the measures taken by higher education institutions in relation to the implementation of habilitation procedures and inaugural proceedings of higher education institutions, the Agency noted in all 12 reports on the correction of deficiencies in relation to the habilitation and inauguration proceedings that the higher education institution, after the adoption of the measures, met the relevant accreditation criteria and subsequently marked the abolition of the time limit in the register of study fields

The reason for submitting these reports was in 11 cases the non-compliance with the KHKV-A5 criterion Guaranteeing the quality of the implementation of habilitation and the procedure for appointing professors (level of guarantors and co-guarantors of habilitation proceedings and procedure for appointment of professors) and in 1 case non-compliance with the KHKV-A1 criterion accredited study programme in the field of study in which the higher education institution applies for accreditation.

## Review panels

In order to verify the measures taken by the higher education institution, assess proposals for the modification of study programmes and applications for accreditation of study programmes, the Executive Board set up working groups from persons included in the list of assessors. A total of 383 assessors have been involved in these activities of the Agency so far. Of this number, 282 assessors participated in the assessment of applications for accreditation of new study programmes, a total of 120 assessors were involved in the assessment of the results of the adopted measures of higher education institutions in relation to the implementation of study programmes and in relation to the implementation of habilitation procedures and inaugural proceedings of higher education institutions in 2021. Of the total number of assessors involved in the verification of higher education measures and draft adjustments in 2021:

* 89 reviewers participated in one assessment,
* 20 reviewers worked in two working groups,
* 8 assessors in three working groups
* 3 assessors cooperated within four working groups.

For accreditations of new study programmes

* + 202 assessors participated in the assessment in one working group,
	+ 64 assessors worked in two working groups,
	+ 13 assessors in three working groups, and
	+ 3 assessors cooperated within four working groups.

# Procedures for granting accreditation of new study programmes

The Act on Quality Assurance allowed higher education institutions to submit applications to the Agency for accreditation of new study programmes under the procedure under Section 30 of the Act by the end of March 2021, even if they are already active in the field and level of higher education. Out of the total number of higher education institutions in the Slovak Republic (33), 16 higher education institutions made use of this possibility and applied to the Agency for accreditation of the study programme in accordance with the aforementioned provision of the Quality Assurance Act, 16 higher education institutions, which submitted 177 applications; 2 higher education institutions submitted an application for accreditation of new combination study programmes. In total, the applications concerned 24 fields of study. The most applications were submitted in the field of economics and management (26 applications), teaching and pedagogical sciences (25 applications), art (19 applications), earth science (13 applications) and general medicine (12 applications).

Applications for accreditation of new study programmes were submitted by higher education institutions in all three higher education levels. The most applications were submitted at the 3rd level of higher education (81 applications), 50 applications were submitted at level 1, 46 applications were submitted at level 2 and 2 applications were submitted in the combined 1st and 2nd levels of higher education. Higher education institutions also submitted 6 applications for accreditation of professionally oriented bachelor study programmes in the 1st level of higher education. In terms of the form of study programmes, 121 applications were submitted to the Agency with a view to their implementation in full-time form and 58 applications in part-time form. The Agency also sent 18 applications for accreditation of study programmes aimed at the performance of regulated professions in the Slovak Republic.

In total, 109 applications were submitted for accreditation of the study programme, in which the language of implementation was to be the Slovak language, in 36 study programmes the language of implementation was to be Slovak language and English in combination, and in 29 applications higher education institutions asked the Agency to grant accreditation of the study programme in English. For other applications, the programmes were to be implemented in Hungarian (2) and the following languages: French, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Italian, Spanish (2), Dutch, German and Swedish (2).

As of November 30, 2021, the Agency had decided on 138 applications from higher education institutions. In 125 cases, the Agency decided to grant accreditation of a new study programme and in 15 cases the Agency decided to reject the application of the higher education institution or not to grant accreditation of the study programme on the grounds that the study programme did not meet the standards for the study programme.

The higher education institutions that have submitted an application for accreditation of a new study programme pursuant to Section 30 of the Act on Quality Assurance are as follows: The University of Economics in Bratislava, Comenius University in Bratislava, the Slovak Technical University in Bratislava, the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, the Academy of Economics and Management of Public Administration in Bratislava, the University of János Selye in Komárno, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Trnava University in Trnava, University of St. Petersburg. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Academy of Arts in Banská Bystrica, Catholic University in Ružomberok, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, University of Veterinary Medicine and Pharmacy in Košice and Prešov University in Prešov.

## Application for accreditation of the joint study programme

In 2021, 1 application was submitted to Agency 1 for accreditation of the joint study programme of higher education institutions in Slovakia, which is to be carried out in cooperation with several higher education institutions accredited by the relevant institutions abroad. This application shall be subject to an assessment by the Agency.

# Objection lodged

In the framework of the Proceedings of the Agency, a party to proceedings (higher education institution) pursuant to Section 8(4) of the Quality Assurance Act has the possibility to make a reasoned objection of bias against a member of the working group. This possibility was used by higher education institutions in 6 proceedings. The objections lodged pursuant to the above-mentioned provision of the Quality Assurance Act were subsequently decided by the Executive Board. In 2 proceedings, the Executive Board assessed the objections of bias against a member of the working group as justified. In the other 4 proceedings, the Executive Board assessed the objections raised against a member of the working group as unfounded.

According to Section 22(1) of the Quality Assurance Act, a party to proceedings has the right to object to the Agency's decision or opinion within 15 working days from the date on which the decision or statement was served on the party to the proceedings. The possibility to object to the Agency's decision has been used by higher education institutions in 3 proceedings of the Agency so far. The Commission of the Agency for the Assessment of Objections decides on the objections lodged by a party to proceedings in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Quality Assurance Act.

According to Section 22(1) of the Quality Assurance Act, a party to proceedings has the right to object to the Agency's decision or opinion within 15 working days from the date on which the decision or statement was served on the party to the proceedings. The possibility to object to the Agency's decision has been used by higher education institutions in 3 proceedings of the Agency so far. The Commission of the Agency for the Assessment of Objections decides on the objections lodged by a party to proceedings in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Quality Assurance Act.

# Other proceedings and decisions of the Agency

## Proposals for the modification of study programes of HEIs

If, pursuant to Section 35(7) of the Quality Assurance Act, the Minister of Education, after prior statements by the Accreditation Commission on the outcome of the measures taken by the Higher Education Institution to remedy deficiencies in relation to the implementation of study programmes, decided to grant a right with a time limit, to renew the right with a time limit or to suspend the granted right to carry out the relevant study programme, the higher education institution, in accordance with the transitional provisions of the Quality Assurance Act, was obliged to submit to the Agency a proposal for the modification of the study programme or notification of its cancellation.

In the event that the outcome of the measures taken under the transitional provisions of the Quality Assurance Act was verified by the Agency and found that the higher education institution did not meet the relevant accreditation criteria after the adoption of the measures, the Agency subsequently suspended the implementation of the study programme pursuant to Section 27 of the Quality Assurance Act. On the basis of such a decision of the Agency, higher education institutions were obliged under Section 27(4) of the Quality Assurance Act to notify the Agency of the cancellation of the relevant study programme or to submit a draft modification of the study programme within the specified period. In the event that a higher education institution submits to the Agency within a specified period a proposal for the modification of the study programme, the Agency shall already assess this change according to the standards for the study programme and evaluate whether or not the proposed change creates a prerequisite for meeting the standards for the study programme.

The Agency shall give its consent to the submitted proposal for the modification of the study programme if the proposed amendment creates a prerequisite for meeting the standards for the study programme. The higher education institution will then adjust the study programme no later than the following academic year, which it informs the Agency without delay, and the Agency verifies this fact in the register of study programmes within 30 days of notification of the higher education institution.

In 2021, a total of 16 proposals for modifications to study programmes were submitted to the Agency within the meaning of Section 35(7) of the Quality Assurance Act. The Agency also continued to assess 5 draft modifications filed in 2020. By 15 December 2021, the Agency had given 16 consents to the proposed adjustments. In 4 cases, the Agency stated that the submitted proposal for modification of the study programme of the higher education institution does not create a prerequisite for meeting the standards for the study programme and by decision asked the higher education institution to submit a new draft modification of the study programme within 180 days. In all four cases, higher education institutions submitted a new proposal to modify the study programme within the set time limit; these proposals are currently being considered by the working groups. In the case of 1 draft amendment and 4, in the order of the second proposals for the modification of the study programmes of the higher education institution, the assessment is currently under way.

The Agency's decisions that the draft adaptation does not constitute a prerequisite for meeting the standards for the study programme were based on the following reasons:

* the results of the creative activity of the proposed teachers providing profile subjects do not correspond to the significant international level envisaged by the standards for the study programme (in 3 cases),
* the proposed providing teachers are qualified in a field of study other than the field of study under consideration (in 2 cases);
* the workload of the proposed person responsible for the study programme did not create a prerequisite for bearing responsibility for the implementation, development and quality assurance of the study programme and achieving the required educational outcomes of the study programme (in 3 cases);
* one of the proposed teachers providing the profile subjects of the study programme did not in fact provide a single profile subject in the study programme under consideration (in 2 cases);
* insufficient knowledge of the Slovak language by the person who has the respective competences and bears the main responsibility for the implementation, development and quality assurance of the study programme, with regard to the proper functioning of the study programme carried out in the daily form of study in the Slovak language (in 1 case).

## Proceedings on the Agency´s own initiative

Under the transitional provisions of the Quality Assurance Act, the Agency may initiate proceedings on its own initiative within a time pending the submission of information by the higher education institution that it has aligned the internal system with the standards for the internal system if it has reasonable grounds to suspect that the higher education institution is not complying with the legislation or its internal regulations. On the basis of Section 35(14) of the Quality Assurance Act, the Agency initiated 8 proceedings. In one of the proceedings, the Agency identified deficiencies and initiated proceedings for the withdrawal of the accreditation of the habilitation procedure and the inaugural proceedings in the relevant department of habilitation proceedings and the inaugural proceedings of the higher education institution.

## Requests for prior consent to the modification of the new study programme

If the higher education institution is not entitled to modify the relevant study programme and intends to modify it, it is obliged to ask the Agency to grant consent to its modification within the meaning of Section 30(9) of the Quality Assurance Act.

In the application for prior consent, the higher education institution briefly states the characteristics of the modification of the study programme within the meaning of Section 2(g) of the Quality Assurance Act:

* addition or deletion of compulsory articles or compulsory optional articles
* a change in the conditions for the proper completion of the study, or
* modification of the information sheet of the compulsory subject or compulsory optional subject and the expected impact of the modification of the study programme on the fulfilment of the related standards for the study programe.

Higher education institutions have submitted 145 applications to the Agency this year for prior approval to modify the study programme. Subject to the granting of prior approval by the Agency, higher education institutions may make adjustments to the relevant study programme. However, granting the Agency's consent does not also imply confirmation of compliance of the above mentioned study programmes with the standards for the study programme. With reference to the relevant provisions of the Act on Quality Assurance and Standards for the study programme, the higher education institution is obliged to align the realized study programmes with the standards for the study programme by 1 September 2022.

# 7. ACTIVITIES OF THE BOARD OF APPEAL

In 2021, there were 2 meetings of the Board of Appeal, namely the meeting of 8.In 2021, there were 2 meetings of the Board of Appeal, namely the meeting of 8.In 2021, there were 2 meetings of the Board of Appeal, namely the meeting of 8.11.2021 and the meeting of 15.12.2021.

## Meeting of the Board of Appeal on 8. 11. 2021

The first meeting of the Board of Appeal in 2021 was opened by the Chairman of the Board of Appeal, Prof.doc. JUDr. Marek Šmid, PhD., with the participation of all the members of the Board of Appeal. At this meeting, the main item of the meeting was the discussion of objections of the Prešov University in Prešov to the decision of the Executive Board rejecting objections to bias against a member of the working group. In view of the first-ever appeal procedure dealt with by the Agency and/or the Board of Appeal, the proceedings were stayed, with the Board of Appeal reconvening on 15 March 2021.

## Meeting of the Board of Appeal on 15. 12. 2021

At the second meeting of the Board of Appeal in the relevant calendar year, there was a final decision on the objection of the Prešov University in Prešov. At the relevant meeting, the Board of Appeal also assessed and decided on the objections of the Slovak Technical University in Bratislava. In both cases, the Board of Appeal upheld the decisions of the Executive Board at first instance. Resolutions of the Board of Appeal shall be published on the Agency's website.

# THEMATIC REPORTS OF THE AGENCY AND SURVEY OF STUDENT SATISFACTION

# Thematic reports

In 2021, on the basis of §4 (2) (g) (2) of the Quality Assurance Act, the Agency prepared and published two thematic reports.

The first is the thematic report Quantitative overviews of demographic development in Slovak higher education for the years 1989-2020. He has been working on basic quantitative surveys of demographic development in Slovak higher education since 1989. It summarizes data from various publicly available sources and offers graphical overviews of the development of student numbers, graduates, supplemented by the demographics of 19-year-olds and the numbers of university teachers. The data are mainly drawn from data published by the Ministry of Education of Research and Sport Science of the Slovak Republic, the Centre of Scientific Technical Information of the Slovak Republic (CVTI), the former Institute of Information and Forecasts of Education (ÚIPŠ), as well as data from the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, Eurostat, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), ineko organisations, SGI and others. The aim of this report was to concentrate existing publicly available data in one place and to display them graphically so that the interested person can get a more comprehensive view of the trends of those indicators and their context. This report was approved by the Agency's Executive Board at its 40th meeting on 16 December 2021 and is available in print as well as electronic form on the Agency's website.

The second thematic report prepared and published in 2021 is the report Changes in Higher Education as a result of the introduction of quality assurance systems 2019-2021. It maps the fundamental changes in higher education, which were initiated by the adoption of the Quality Assurance Act, the establishment of an accreditation agency and its three-year operation. It provides an overview of events in the higher education environment with links to the legislative framework of the Slovak Republic, to European standards, through information on the construction of an accreditation agency, procedures for external quality assurance, draft accreditation standards, as well as an overview of the first qualitative and quantitative changes in the internal legislation of higher education institutions themselves and in the offer of study programmes. This report was also approved by the Agency's Executive Board at its 40th meeting on 16 December 2021 and is available in print as well as electronic form on the Agency's website.

# Student satisfaction survey Academic quarter-hour of an Hour

In order to obtain feedback from students that could be useful in improving the quality of higher education institutions, the Agency decided in May 2021 to conduct a student satisfaction survey Academic Quarter hour. This survey started to be prepared already in 2020 and was aimed at mapping the satisfaction of students in Slovakia with their studies and student life. The target group – in 2021 – were students of universities of the first (bachelor's) and second (master/engineering) level and associated study (e.g. pharmacy, medicine).

Students were addressed as a matter of priority through school emails entered in the Central Register of Students. In this way, up to 99% of students out of a total of 126,798 students were reached. The survey managed to collect 20,056 questionnaire replies, of which 19,983 remained after the duplicates were removed. The resulting return of 16 % can be considered as an above-standard result in the surveys. The survey is representative at the level of type of HEIs (public, state, private), forms of study (full-time and external), degree (1st, 2nd and associated studies), sex of respondents, faculty and fields of study. The sample also included a significant proportion of international students (1,419) and students with specific needs (1,024), allowing the needs of these important and often overlooked groups of students to be explored. The questionnaire was in four language mutations – Slovak, Hungarian, English and Ukrainian and was also in a form accessible to students with visual impairments.

On 25 October 2021, specific data were made available to each higher education institution (while maintaining the anonymity of the respondents). At the same time, a webinar was carried out explaining how to work with the data. The results are also made available in the form of an interactive web application covering a large part of the questions. Partial results of the survey were communicated through two press conferences and four press releases and are available on the Agency's website. The overall overview and detailed results of the survey shall be prepared by the Agency in the form of a specific thematic report.

The total cost of the student satisfaction survey was €108,612.82. To cover part of the project costs, the Agency received a special-purpose grant from the Ministry of Finance of 50,000,- €, upon request. The remainder of the €58,612.82 was covered by the Agency's budget. The highest items within the estimated and subsequently real expenditures drawn were reimbursements for external services – comprehensive technical provision of the survey questionnaire, provision of PR campaigns and presentation of results. The number of questionnaire replies far exceeded the Agency's expected estimate, which increased the originally planned budget under this heading. Another important item was translations and corrections to and from foreign languages (English, Russian and Hungarian) to ensure the participation and expression of foreign students studying at Slovak universities. The Student Satisfaction Survey also had its web interface available; this entails the costs of its creation and administration, so that all necessary information can reach students, stakeholders and, at the same time, the general public as quickly as possible. Among other things, social networks have been used to raise the profile and support of the whole survey. Part of the total costs was also the coverage of the six-month personnel expenditure of the analytical team, which was earmarked and allocated to the work related to the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the questionnaire of the student satisfaction survey. The drawing of project costs by item is detailed in section 12.2.3. For the sake of complexity, it should be noted that work on the evaluation, summary and presentation of the results, as well as on the preparation of the final thematic report, is still ongoing.

# EVENTS AND CONSULTATIONS

In 2021, the Agency provided professional events and thematic consultations on standards and technical support for application in order to support the process of harmonisation of internal systems and the development of the quality of higher education:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Theme/Title** | **Date** |
| Submission of applications for accreditation of the study programme | 5, 9 and 19 February 2021 |
| Alignment of study programmes | 5 March 2021 |
| Education profile, objectives and outputs | 19 March 2021 |
| Student-oriented education (in coop. with Student Council for HE) | 9 April 2021 |
| Quality of distance learning | 16 April 2021 |
| Involvement of employers in the development of the quality of higher education | 4 May 2021 |
| Internal system – finding your own path | 18 May 2021 |
| Academic integrity | 1 June 2021 |
| SAAHE working meeting with persons responsible for the internal quality assurance system of higher education institutions for submitting applications for assessment of the internal system | 11 June 2021 |
| Let's open universities to the world | 25 June 2021 |
| Survey outputs "Academic quarter of an hour" - webinar for HEIs | 25 October 2021 |
| How to create, modify, approve a study programme - experience from review processes I. | 29 October 2021 |
| Conclusion of the OECD, EC and Government Office of the Slovak Republic "Improving the Quality of Higher Education" | 25 November 2021 |
| How to create, modify, approve a study programme of experience from review processes II. | 26 November 2021 |
| Internal quality assurance systems – the relevance, structure and interconnection of the policies, structures and processes of the internal quality assurance system. | 10 December 2021 |

From November 2020, the Agency offers higher education institutions the opportunity to request online consultation on standards and accreditation applications via the <https://saavs.sk/konzultacie-ku-standardom/> website. Higher education institutions have requested 52 online consultations since the start of the service. The Agency also continuously answers questions on standards sent by e-mail at konzutacie@saavs.sk or questions on the submission of applications at ziadosti@saavs.sk.

# INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

# Project SEQA-ESG

The Agency is a partner in the international project Supporting European quality assurance agencies in meeting the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area, SEQA-ESG). The main objective of the project is to support the national quality assurance agencies of the participating countries and representatives of the relevant state institutions as national policy makers in the establishment of a quality assurance system for higher education in accordance with ESG 2015.

As part of this project, ENQA held two workshops in 2021, which were held online via videoconference in view of the COVID-19 pandemic situation. The Agency was represented at the meetings by executive board chairman Robert Redhammer, Andrea Zacharova and Ivana Radova. The second of the workshops was organized by the Czech Republic with our cooperation.

The first workshop took place in an online form on 18 and 19 October 2021 with the participation of representatives of the countries involved in the project and experts R. Heintze (AQAS) and F. Crozier (AQU). The first day, programe focused on the standard 2.2 ESG, the second day the participants devoted themselves to the standard 2.3 ESG. The second workshop dealt with national criteria and their link to ESG. It took place in an online form from 29 to 30 November 2021 with the participation of representatives of all participating countries and eminent experts from ENQA and other quality assurance agencies. The programme focused mainly on ESG 2.1 standards and Part 1 of the ESG standards, with which Article 2.1 is linked.

Basic topics discussed:

* the importance of covering all aspects of ESG 2.1,
* involving all stakeholders in improving the quality culture, communicating with them at all stages of the process
* on-the-spot visits as a basis for verifying the situation in higher education,
* the importance of the combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators,,
* the most problematic standards: 1.1, 1.3 and 1.4, worst 1.3 Student-oriented learning

The workshop included presentations of experts and subsequent discussions of participants, which confirmed the diversity of external quality assurance processes for very similar challenges and problems. The discussion also touched on thematic analyses, their understanding and interpretation. As part of their performances, the event organisers presented experiences and challenges related to ESG 2.1 and Part 1 of the ESG.

# V4QA Forum

The Hungarian Accreditation Agency (Magyar Felsőoktatási Akkreditációs Bizottság) took the opportunity of the Hungarian Presidency of the Visegrad Group to organise a joint meeting of the accreditation agencies of the V4 countries. On 6 and 7 October 2021, the Chairman and Vice-President of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education attended the event. Participants of the event represented accreditation authorities for higher education from Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. They informed about the mission, tasks, structure and activities of individual agencies and the specificities of the higher education system in individual countries. They agreed on mutual cooperation, which they formalised by signing a Memorandum of Understanding. The issue of involving foreign experts in the assessment of higher education institutions, the creation of a common list of assessors, the mutual exchange of information and the possibilities for exchange traineeships of workers were also discussed. Participants addressed the challenges arising from structural changes in higher education. In informal discussions, experience of the ENQA admission process and enrolment in EQAR was exchanged.

# QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE AGENCY'S ACTIVITIES

The processes for ensuring the quality of the Agency's activities in 2021 were related to the preparation and implementation of the measures identified in the SEQA project in accordance with the National Action Plan in the field of external quality assurance of higher education institutions in the Slovak Republic. The objectives for ensuring the quality of the Agency's activities for 2021 and 2022 were set out in the Action Plan on the basis of the conclusions of a meeting with experts from the European Association of Quality Assurance Agencies for Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Register for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (EQAR), discussions with stakeholders, including representatives of practice, and experience from other countries. The main objectives related to quality assurance of the Agency's activities were defined and implemented in priority area 4.

In action 4.4 of the Action Plan, further external quality assurance procedures and processes were implemented in accordance with the requirements of the Quality Assurance Act:

* + granting accreditation of study programmes pursuant to Section 30 of the Act,
	+ granting accreditation of the joint study programme pursuant to § 30 and § 36 para. 2,
	+ prior consent to the modification of the study programme pursuant to § 30,
	+ proposal for modification of the study programme pursuant to § 27,
	+ the procedures for receiving and managing initiatives and procedures on their own initiative,
	+ a system for disclosing mandatory information on the initiation and outcome of proceedings.
* At the same time, feedback activities were created and launched in 2021 to improve external quality assurance services. A survey of the views of the members of the working groups, a survey of the views of the assigned staff of the Agency and a prepared survey of the applicants' representatives were initiated.
* In 2021, great efforts were made to build and improve the modules of the Agency's information system. The Modules Requests, Feedback, and Suggestions were created. Furthermore, the module Assessors and Trainings was developed.
* The professional development processes of the Agency's staff have been improved (see 2.4. Professional development of employees, 4. Assessors of the Agency) and a stabilized staff structure of the Agency. A department for internal quality assurance of the Agency has been set up.
* In fulfilling the goals in activity 4.3. in 2021, an analytical department was created and a national survey of student satisfaction was created and implemented. At the same time, in 2021, the Agency compiled and published 2 thematic reports.
* Furthermore, the processes of exchange of experience and good practices in the field of internal and external quality assurance continued (SEQA-ESG project, V4QA Forum, discussion meetings and thematic consultations with higher education institutions and invited guests).

# FINANCING AND MANAGEMENT OF THE AGENCY

The method of financing the Agency is precisely defined in Section 19(1) – (5) of the Quality Assurance Act; pursuant to Its Paragraph 20(1) – (8), the Agency has a clearly defined form of management.

The funds are kept by the Agency in accounts with the State Treasury, each source of income being kept in a separate account and kept by accounts according to a separate regulation. During the year, the Agency shall manage according to the revenue and expenditure budget drawn up and approved by the Executive Board for the calendar year in question.

# Financial statements for 2021

The Agency's accounts were drawn up in accordance with the relevant rules and approved by the Agency's Executive Board at its meeting of 24.2.2022. The complete accounts also include the opinion of the Agency's Controller Ing. Ivan Hargaš dated
21. 2.2022:

*"the financial statements give a true and fair view of the economic and financial situation of the independent public institution SAAHE as of 31 December 2021 and the results of its management for the year ending are in accordance with the Act on Accounting No. 431/2002 Coll., as amended."*

In his statement, Ing. Hargaš further states: *'on the basis of the verification of the budgetary management captured in the accounts*, *I conclude that I have not identified significant facts that would call into question the reported results'.*

# Clearing with the state budget

In 2021, the management of the Agency was governed by a budget approved by the Executive Board on 28 January 2021 and its modification was approved twice by the Agency's Executive Board during the year.

The agency's source of revenue for 2021 was earmarked funds from the state budget, provided through the budget of the provider by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as "MŠVVaŠ SR"), in accordance with Section 19(5) of the Act on Provision for material and financial provision of the Agency's activities (hereinafter referred to as "purpose"), subject to the conditions set out in the concluded Contract No. 1. The total amount of funds provided was **1,239,768,- €** for the purpose of using current expenses.

The provider provided the Agency with funds under the contract in three instalments as follows:

* the first instalment of € 547 518,50 in the form of current expenditure,,
* a second instalment of € 547 518,50 in the form of current expenditure, and
* a third instalment of € 144,731.00 on the basis of a signed amendment to the contract.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Finančné prostriedky poskytnuté Slovenskej****akreditačnej agentúre pre vysoké školstvo v roku 2021** | **2021****(1. a 2. splátka)** | **Úprava rozpočtu poskytovate- ľom MŠVVaŠ** | **Účelová dotácia na prieskum** | **2021****(3.****splátka)\*** | **Spolu** |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  | **študentskej****spokojnosti** |  |  |
| **Výdavky spolu (600+700)** | **1 095 037,00 €** | **94 731,00 €** | **50 000,00 €** | **144 731,00****€** | **1 239 768,00****€** |
| **Bežné výdavky (600)** | **1 095 037,00 €** | **94 731,00 €** | **50 000,00 €** | **144 731,00****€** | **1 239 768,00****€** |
| ***Mzdy, platy, služobné príjmy a ostatné******osobné vyrovnania (610)*** | ***621 000,00 €*** | ***65 000,00 €*** | ***15 000,00 €*** | ***80 000,00 €*** | ***701 000,00 €*** |
| ***Poistné a príspevok******do poisťovní (620)*** | ***217 039,50 €*** | ***22 717,50 €*** | ***5 242,50 €*** | ***27 960,00 €*** | ***244 999,50 €*** |
| ***Tovary a služby (630)*** | ***250 240,00 €*** | ***7 013,50 €*** | ***29 757,50 €*** | ***36 771,00 €*** | ***287 011,00 €*** |
| ***Bežné transfery (640)*** | ***6 757,50 €*** | ***0,00 €*** | ***0,00 €*** | ***0,00 €*** | ***6 757,50 €*** |
| **Kapitálové výdavky (700)** | **0,00 €** | **0,00 €** | **0,00 €** | **0,00 €** | **0,00 €** |
| ***Obstarávanie******kapitálových aktív (710)*** | ***0,00 €*** | ***0,00 €*** | ***0,00 €*** | ***0,00 €*** | ***0,00 €*** |

The funds were specifically disaggregated between the different headings and subheadings of the economic classification and could be used to:

1. wage expenditure (610), insurance premiums and insurance contributions (620);
2. other expenditure within the category of goods and services (630);
3. current transfers (640), such as membership contributions to international organisations,
4. the acquisition of capital assets (710), such as the purchase of licences, machinery, equipment, equipment, technology or means of transport;,

The Agency's initially approved budget for 2021, as adjusted by item and sub-heading, is set out in the following table:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Finančné prostriedky poskytnuté Slovenskej akreditačnej agentúre pre vysoké školstvo v roku 2021** | **Schválený** | **Upravený** |
| **Výdavky spolu (600+700)** | **1 091 716,00** | **1 291 484,00** |
| **Bežné výdavky (600)** | **1 040 000,00** | **1 239 768,00** |
| ***Mzdy, platy, služobné príjmy a ostatné vyrovnania (610)*** | **621 000,00** | **726 000,00** |
| ***Poistné a príspevok do poisťovní (620)*** | **217 039,50** | **260 484,50** |
| ***Tovary a služby (630), v tom*** | **250 240,00** | **246 526,00** |
| 631 Cestovné náhrady | 3 000,00 | 3 000,00 |
| 632 Energie, voda a komunikácie | 15 000,00 | 18 610,81 |
| 633 Materiál | 19 040,00 | 12 178,98 |
| 634 Dopravné | 1 000,00 | 1 000,00 |
| 635 Rutinná a štandardná údržba | 1 000,00 | 1 000,00 |
| 636 Nájomné za nájom | 75 000,00 | 41 725,50 |
| 637 Služby, v tom | 136 200,00 | 169 010,71 |
| *637027 Odmeny zamestnancov mimopracovného pomeru* | 50 000,00 | 40 730,50 |
| *637200 Ostatné služby* | 86 200,00 | 128 280,21 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Bežné transfery (640), v tom*** | **6 757,50** | **6 757,50** |
| 649 Transfery do zahraničia | 3 000,00 | 3 000,00 |
| 640 PN + členské | 3 757,50 | 3 757,50 |
| **Kapitálové výdavky (700)** | **51 716,00** | **51 716,00** |
| ***Obstarávanie kapitálových aktív (710), v tom*** | **51 716,00** | **51 716,00** |
| 711 Nákup pozemkov a nehmotných aktív(softvéru, licencií) | 16 716,00 | 16 716,00 |
| 713 Nákup strojov, prístrojov, zariadení, techniky a náradia | 20 000,00 | 20 000,00 |
| 714 Nákup dopravných prostriedkov všetkých druhov | 15 000,00 | 15 000,00 |

The Agency had capital expenditures from 2020 totalling €51,716.- and their balance as at 31.12.2021 totalled €39,309.50. This capital expenditure may be used by the Agency by 31 December 2022 at the latest.

# Implementation of appropriations for 2021 by 31 December 2021

The total absorption of funds in 2021 was €1,137,481.46. Current expenditure was drawn down in the following breakdown:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Finančné prostriedky poskytnuté o v roku 2021 - čerpané v roku 2021** | **Čerpanie** |
| **Výdavky spolu (600+700)** | **1 137 481,46 €** |
| **Bežné výdavky (600)** | **1 137 481,46 €** |
| ***Mzdy, platy, služobné príjmy a ostatné osobné vyrovnania (610)*** | ***659 353,05 €*** |
| ***Poistné a príspevok do poisťovní (620)*** | ***240 914,17 €*** |
| ***Tovary a služby (630), v tom*** | ***236 430,57 €*** |
| 631 Cestovné náhrady | 432,96 € |
| 632 Energie, voda a komunikácie | 18 610,81 € |
| 633 Materiál | 12 123,72 € |
| 634 Dopravné | 0,00 € |
| 635 Rutinná a štandardná údržba | 0,00 € |
| 636 Nájomné za nájom | 41 725,50 € |
| 637 Služby, v tom | 163 537,58 € |
| *637027 Odmeny zamestnancov mimopracovného pomeru* | *46 205,30 €* |
| *637200 Ostatné služby* | *117 332,28 €* |
| ***Bežné transfery (640), v tom*** | *783,67 €* |
| 642015 Na nemocenské dávky | 483,67 € |
| *649003 Medzinárodným organizáciám* | *300,00 €* |
| **Kapitálové výdavky (700)** | **12 406,50 €** |
| ***Obstarávanie kapitálových aktív (710), v tom*** | ***12 406,50 €*** |
| 711 Nákup pozemkov a nehmotných aktív (softvéru, licencií) | 0,00 € |
| 713 Nákup strojov, prístrojov, zariadení, techniky a náradia | 12 406,50 € |
| 714 Nákup dopravných prostriedkov všetkých druhov | 0,00 € |

## 610 – mzdy, platy, služobné príjmy a OOV; 620 – poistné a príspevok do poisťovní;

**637027 – odmeny zamestnancov mimo pracovného pomeru**

Under the above items, funds were spent on salaries paid and contributions to insurance companies, for employees in employment and for non-employment employees.

## 631 – Travel allowances

In 2021, as a result of pandemic measures, most planned business trips were cancelled.

Business trips carried out in 2021:

* an exit meeting of the Executive Board and selected SAAVŠ staff responsible for the relevant accreditation procedures and coordination of the meeting in Beladice,
* participation of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Executive Board at the meeting of the V4 Forum at the invitation of the Hungarian Accreditation Agency (Magyar Felsőoktatási Akkreditációs Bizottság).

## 632 – Energy, water, communications

Expenditure on energy, telecommunications charges, internet connection and postal services.

## 633 – Material

Purchase of equipment for new colleagues, purchase of ordinary consumables (office and hygiene supplies, cleaning and disinfectants, respirators, AG tests, etc.), interior retrofitting due to the expansion of the Agency to other office premises, purchase of books and telecommunications equipment for new employees.

## 634 – Freight

Transport of purchased goods (purchases made via the Internet and subsequently delivered by courier service).

## 636 – rental

Payment for rental of premises and other services related to the rental of premises.

## 637200 – other services

Personnel expenditure – meal vouchers, creation of social fund, expenditure on training of employees, etc. Other services providing the operation of the Agency, such as software services, agency website, work security and GDPR, professional consulting services, translations and various fees. In 2021, the service item paid bonuses to members of working groups, to proceedings for received reports on the elimination of deficiencies of higher education institutions, which the Agency is obliged to assess on the basis of the assumed competences of the Accreditation Commission, an advisory body of the Government of the Slovak Republic. The amount of money spent on these proceedings amounted to €15,584.-

## 640 – current transfers

Compensation of salary for the first 10 days of incapacity for work of Agency staff and payment of membership fees: ENQA, European Network for Academic Integrity fee and participation fees held by European University Association conferences.

## 700 – capital expenses

The capital provided in 2020 was spent on purchase in 2021 with the possibility of being used up by the end of 2022. The balance sheet of capital expenditure is given in the following overview:

|  |
| --- |
| **Capital expenses** |
| **Period** | **Budget** | **Implementation** | **Balance** |
| 2019 | 7 125,84 € | 7 125,84 € | **0,00 €** |
| 2020 | 51 716,00 € | 12 406,50 € | **39 309,50 €** |

The pandemic situation and the covid-19 restrictions have had a significant impact on the planned and consequently actual absorption of funds. The meetings were moved to the onlin environment and all planned attendance meetings, trainings, workshops and business trips, whether domestic or foreign, were cancelled. Many of the planned activities were forced to be cancelled or postponed by the Agency. The events, seminars, consultations and conferences were held in the onlin environment. Also as a result of the above, €102,286.54 was not spent on the total amount of funding provided for 2021 from current expenditure. These have been moved under the Financial Regulation Act to be recharged by the end of March 2022. They shall be used as a matter of priority to pay the salaries of agency staff, staff to an agreement on the execution of work and an agreement on work activities, payment of invoices for the month of December 2021 due by the end of January 2022 at the latest.

# Absorption of appropriations for 2020 carried over under the contract for absorption in 1Q 2021

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Mzdy, platy, služobné príjmy******a ostatné osobné vyrovnania (610)*** | **50 419,27** | **50 419,27** |
| ***Poistné a príspevok do poisťovní (620)*** | **18 418,46** | **18 418,46** |
| ***Tovary a služby (630)*** | **72 158,79** | **72 158,79** |
| ***Bežné transfery (640), v tom*** | **2 858,00** | **2 858,00** |
| **Kapitálové výdavky (700)** | **51 716,00** | **12 406,50** |
| **Výdavky spolu (600+700)** | **195 570,52** | **156 261,02** |
|  |
| **Rozpočet po zmenách (600+700)** | **Čerpanie** | **Zostatok** |
| 2020 | **195 570,52** | **39 309,50** |

## 610 – Wages, salaries, service income and other personal compensations

Payment of employees' wages for December 2020; due in January 2021.

## 620 – Premiums and contributions to insurance companies;

Payment relating to the heading in section 610 — wages, salaries, service income and IP.

## 630 – Goods and services

Part of the money saved was used to prepare the survey of the student questionnaire and related services.

## 632 – Energy, water, communications

Expenditure on energy, telecommunications charges, internet connection and postal services.

## 633 – Material

Purchase of normal consumables (office and hygiene supplies, cleaning and disinfecting agents, masks and others).

## 636 – Rental

Payment for rental of premises and other services related to the rental of premises.

## 637200 – other services

Personnel expenses – meal vouchers, creation of social fund (for December 2020), training of employees scheduled for the end of 2020, realized in 1Q 2021. Other services ensuring the normal operation of the Agency.

The balance of funds provided for 2020 is **€39,309.50** under heading 700 capital expenditure, which the Agency is entitled to exhaust by 31 December 2022 at the latest.

# Absorption of appropriations granted for the special-purpose subsidy for 2021 by 31.12.2021

Following a request dated 3. 5. 2021, the Agency received from the provider Appendix 1 to the contract no. 0084/2021 a special-purpose grant of 50,000,- € from the provider of Appendix 1 to the contract for the provision of funds, a special subsidy of 50,000,- € as a contribution to cover part of the costs associated with carrying out the student satisfaction survey.

The economic evaluation of the project and the settlement of the special-purpose grant are as follows:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Zúčtovanie účelovej dotácie Slovenskej akreditačnej agentúre pre vysoké školstvo v roku 2021 | **Plánované výdavky** | **Účelová dotácia MŠVVaŠ** | **Reálne čerpanie****projektu** |
| **2021** | **2021** | **2021** |
| **Bežné výdavky (600)** | **101 552,44 €** | **50 000,00 €** | **108 612,82 €** |
| ***Mzdy, platy, služobné príjmy a ostatné osobné vyrovnania (610)*** | ***28 500,00 €*** | ***15 000,00 €*** | ***28 500,00 €*** |
| ***Poistné a príspevok do poisťovní (620)*** | ***9 960,75 €*** | ***5 242,50 €*** | ***10 208,63 €*** |
| ***Tovary a služby (630)*** | ***63 091,69 €*** | ***29 757,50 €*** | ***69 904,19 €*** |
| ***Služby v tom (637)*** | ***63 091,69 €*** | ***29 757,50 €*** | ***69 904,19 €*** |
| ***Korektúry a preklady*** | ***2 245,00 €*** | ***1 757,50 €*** | ***3 071,93 €*** |
| ***Úprava webu*** | ***0,00 €*** | ***0,00 €*** | ***2 640,00 €*** |
| ***Fokusové skupiny a regrutačné náklady*** | ***1 450,00 €*** | ***1 200,00 €*** | ***1 779,20 €*** |
| ***Komplexné technické zabezpečenie prieskumného dotazníka*** | ***22 608,00 €*** | ***12 000,00 €*** | ***25 501,06 €*** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Komplexné zabezpečenie PR kampane, prezentácie výsledkov*** | ***35 952,00 €*** | ***14 000,00 €*** | ***35 952,00 €*** |
| ***Odmeny zamestnancov******mimo pracovného pomeru*** | ***836,69 €*** | ***800,00 €*** | ***960,00 €*** |

## 610 – Wages, salaries, service income and other personal adjustments

Reimbursement of part of the personnel expenses of the analytical team, which was allocated and allocated six months for the work related to the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the student satisfaction survey questionnaire.

## 620 – Premiums and contributions to insurance companies

 The heading is closely related to heading 610 — wages, salaries and service income and the IPA.

## 637 – Services

The highest items within the estimated and subsequently real expenditures drawn were reimbursements for the comprehensive technical provision of the survey questionnaire and comprehensive provision of PR campaigns and presentation of results. The number of questionnaire replies far exceeded the agency's expected estimate, which increased the originally planned budget in this item by €2,893.06, taking into account the workload of the contractor's processing. Another important item was translations and corrections to and from foreign languages (English, Russian and Hungarian) in order to ensure the participation and expression of foreign students studying at Slovak universities. Compensation of employees on the basis of non-employment contracts was also paid. The Student Satisfaction Survey also had at its disposal its web interface and the associated costs of creating and managing it promptly in a 24/7 way, so that all necessary information can reach students, stakeholders, but also the general public as quickly and as close as possible. Among other things, social networks have been used to raise the profile and support of the whole survey.

# Own funds management

The Agency's own resources are made up of fees for acts on the basis of tariffs in the scale of fees within the meaning of Section 21(1)(a) and (b) of the Act on Quality Assurance and scope of the Agency's actions relating to a specific request by a party to proceedings. According to Section 19(4) of the Act, the fee rates take into account the estimated costs associated with the agency's actions. Their amount depends on the anticipated workload of the proceedings and the estimated costs of the activities of the members of the working group according to the type and scope of the proceedings.

The Agency obtained its own funds from fees paid, by wire transfer, within the meaning of the scale of fees, pursuant to Section 21(1)(a) and (b) of the Act and the scope of the Agency's acts relating to a specific request by a party to proceedings. The total amount of own funds raised in 2021 was 306,883,- €. The Agency was paid 124 fees in different amounts according to the type of proceedings and the requirements of the party to the proceedings in accordance with the applicable scale of fees. The Agency maintains its own funds in a separate account with the State Treasury and used to pay the remuneration for individual members of the PS, the accommodation of the members of the PS and paid the transport allowances to the members of the PS, part of the salaries to employees and the business trips of employees in connection with the assessment at the place of the higher education institution.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Vlastné finančné prostriedky Slovenskej akreditačnej agentúry pre vysoké školstvo v roku 2021** | **Schválený** | **Upravený** |
| **Výdavky spolu (600+700)** | **306 883,00** | **306 883,00** |
| **Bežné výdavky (600)** | **306 883,00** | **306 883,00** |
| ***Mzdy, platy, služobné príjmy a ostatné vyrovnania (610)*** | **20 000,00** | **20 000,00** |
| ***Poistné a príspevok do poisťovní (620)*** | **10 000,00** | **10 000,00** |
| ***Tovary a služby (630), v tom*** | **276 883,00** | **276 883,00** |
| 631 Cestovné náhrady | 5 000,00 | 5 000,00 |
| 637 Služby, v tom | 136 200,00 | 136 200,00 |
| *637007 Cestovné náhrady* | 71 870,00 | 71 870,00 |
| *637011 Odmeny* | 200 000,00 | 200 000,00 |
| *637012 Poplatky k účtu* | 13,00 | 13,00 |

# Absorption of own funds for 2021 by 31.12.2021

The total amount of own funds spent was €159,671.51; expenditure on direct costs related to proceedings carried out during 2021. The vast majority of them were duly terminated, the working groups duly and timely submitted an evaluation report on the basis of which the Executive Board of the Agency assessed and decided in the application submitted by the Higher Education Institution. Pending proceedings will be financially settled in the course of 2022.

The absorption of own funds in 2021 is in the following table:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Vlastné finančné prostriedky čerpané v roku 2021** | **Čerpanie** |
| **Výdavky spolu (600+700)** | **159 671,51 €** |
| **Bežné výdavky (600)** | **159 671,51 €** |
| ***Mzdy, platy, služobné príjmy a ostatné osobné vyrovnania (610)*** | ***12 850,00 €*** |
| ***Poistné a príspevok do poisťovní (620)*** | ***4 491,08 €*** |
| ***Tovary a služby (630), v tom*** | ***142 330,43 €*** |
| 631 Cestovné náhrady | 2 783,44 € |
| 637 Služby, v tom | 139 546,99 € |
| *637007 Cestovné náhrady* | 22 267,39 € |
| *637011 Odmeny* | 117 274,00 € |
| *637012 Poplatky k účtu* | 5,60 € |

## 610 – Wages, salaries, service income and other personal adjustments

Agentúra čiastočne pokryla náklady na mzdy zamestnancom, ktorí sa aktívne podieľali v procese posudzovania vysokej školy, na základe jej predchádzajúcej žiadosti a procese posudzovania na mieste danej VŠ.

## 620 – Premiums and contributions to insurance companies

Heading of the economic classification directly related to the above mentioned heading 610 wages, salaries, service income and IP.

## 631 – travel expenses

Cestovné náhrady zamestnancom agentúry spojené s posudzovaním na mieste vysokej školy, v roli koordinátorov s členmi pracovných skupín VR agentúry.

## 637 – services in which

**637007 – travel expenses**

Náhrady za dopravu a ubytovanie členom pracovných skupín VR agentúry, spojené

s posudzovaním na mieste vysokej školy.

## 637011 – rewards

Funds spent on the payment of remuneration to the members of the Working Groups for the preparation of the evaluation report or the opinion of the Working Party for the purposes of the Agency's proceedings, in accordance with Internal Regulation No 1/2021 The remuneration procedure for the members of the CoR's Working Groups of the Agency and at the same time in accordance with the order contracts concluded. Of the service item in 2021, the remuneration of the members of the working groups was the highest amount, namely 117 274,- €.

# Status and movement of assets

# Non-current intangible assets

Non-current intangible assets acquired by the Agency shall be measured at cost less value adjustments and accumulated impairment losses. Cost includes all costs directly attributable to the assets acquired. Where the use of non-current intangible assets is determined by contract, the period of use shall be determined according to the validity of the contract; in other cases, the provisions of the Income Tax Act as amended apply mutatis mutandis.

The Agency shall have licenses for information systems and software included in the records of intangible assets; its increase in 2021 was due to the acquisition of statistical software and its total movement is shown in the following table:

|  |
| --- |
| **Nehmotný majetok** |
|  | **Softvér** | **Oceniteľné práva** | **Spolu** |
| **Stav k 1. 1. 2021** | **10 269,08** | **2 760,00** | **13 029,08** |
| prírastky | 7 044,00 |  | 7 044,00 |
| úbytky |  |  |  |
| presuny |  |  |  |
| **Stav k 31. 12. 2021** | **17 313,08** | **2 760,00** | **20 073,08** |
|  |
| **Oprávky k 1. 1. 2021** | **1 283,64** | **184** | **1 467,64** |
| prírastky | 5 330,22 | 552 | 1 467,64 |
| úbytky |  |  |  |
| **Oprávky k 31. 12. 2021** | **6 613,86** | **736** | **7 349,86** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Opravné položky k 1. 1. 2021** |  |  |  |
| prírastky |  |  |  |
| úbytky |  |  |  |
| **Opravné položky k 31. 12. 2021** |  |  |  |
|  |
| **Zostatková hodnota k 1. 1. 2021** | **8 985,44** | **2 576,00** | **11 561,44** |
| **Zostatková hodnota****k 31. 12. 2021** | **10 699,22** | **2 024,00** | **12 723,22** |

# Non-current tangible assets

Non-current tangible assets are measured at cost less value adjustments and accumulated impairment losses. The cost includes all costs directly attributable to the acquisition of the asset. The Agency shall classify separate movables and sets of self-movable items whose entry price is less than 1 700, - € and operating and technical functions for more than one year as small tangible assets. The provisions of the Income Tax Act, as amended, apply to the depreciation of non-current tangible assets.

In the records of tangible assets, the Agency has included mainly computers, notebooks, audiovisual technology and copiers. In the records of small tangible assets, the Agency records some laptops and accessories. Movements of the Agency's tangible assets in 2021 are summarized in the following table:

|  |
| --- |
| **Hmotný majetok** |
|  | **Samostatné hnuteľné veci a súbory****hnuteľných vecí** | **Drobný a ostatný dlhodobý****hmotný majetok** | **Spolu** |
| **Stav k 1. 1. 2021** | **6 595,08** |  | **6 595,08** |
| prírastky | 7 804,18 | 4 684,16 | 12 488,35 |
| úbytky |  |  |  |
| presuny |  |  |  |
| **Stav k 31. 12. 2021** | **14 399,26** | **4 684,16** | **19 083,42** |
|  |
| **Oprávky k 1. 1. 2021** | **1 648,80** |  | **1 648,80** |
| prírastky | 2 867,15 | 695,08 | 3 562,23 |
| úbytky |  |  |  |
| **Oprávky k 31. 12. 2021** | **4 515,95** | **695 ,08** | **5 211,03** |
|  |
| **Opravné položky k 1. 1. 2021** |  |  |  |
| prírastky |  |  |  |
| úbytky |  |  |  |
| **Opravné položky k 31. 12. 2021** |  |  |  |
|  |
| **Zostatková hodnota k 1. 1. 2021** | **4 946,28** | **0** | **4 946,28** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Zostatková hodnota****k 31. 12. 2021** | **9 883,31** | **3 989,08** | **13 872,39** |

# CONTROLLER´S REPORT

I prepared as a controller – agency body, a statement on the submitted financial statements, a non-profit entity – an independent public institution of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education established pursuant to Section 4(1) of Act No. 269/2018 Coll. on Quality Assurance of Higher Education and on amendments to act No. 343/2015 Coll. on public procurement of 11. which includes the balance sheet as at 31 December 2021, the profit and loss account and notes summarizing significant accounting policies and accounting methods, as well as other explanatory information.

# Responsibility of Controller of the Agency

It was the responsibility of the SAAVŠ controller appointed pursuant to Section 10(1) of Act No. 269/2018 Coll. to express an opinion on the submitted financial statements on the basis of control – verification in accordance with § 10 para. 2(2)(c)."

I carried out the verification in accordance with the auditing standards. According to these standards, I should have complied with ethical requirements, planned and carried out verifications to obtain reasonable assurance that the financial statements did not contain material misstatements. The verification shall include the carrying out of procedures for obtaining evidence of the amounts and data recognized in the financial statements.

Part of the verification is also the evaluation of the budget management of SAAVŠ resulting from act No. 523/2004 Coll. on financial rules of public administration valid in the Slovak Republic for public institutions, as amended.

The procedures chosen depended on the judgment of the controller, including an assessment of the risks of material misstatement in the financial statements, whether as a result of fraud or error. In assessing this risk, as controller, I took into account the internal checks carried out relevant to the assessment of the entity's financial statements in order to provide a true and fair view of SAAHE management in 2021.

Furthermore, the verification shall include an assessment of the appropriateness of the accounting policies and accounting methods used and the adequacy of the accounting estimates made by the statutory body, as well as an assessment of the presentation of the financial statements as a whole. I believe that the verification evidence I have obtained provides a sufficient and appropriate basis for my opinion after verification.

# Responsibility of the statutory body SAAVŠ for the financial statements

The Chairman of the Executive Board of SAAVŠ appointed pursuant to Section 6 of Act No. 269/2018 Coll. is responsible for the efficient and efficient use of funds and their settlement with the state budget and for the management of the Agency's assets under Section 20(6) of Act No. 269/2018 Coll. At the same time, he is responsible for the preparation of financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with the Act on Accounting No. 431/2002 Coll., as amended, and for internal controls – basic financial controls that the statutory body considers necessary for the preparation of financial statements that do not contain material misstatements, whether as a result of fraud or error. The Chairman of the Executive Board of the Agency is responsible for compliance with the rules of budgetary management and financing pursuant to Act No. 523/2004 Coll. on the Financial Regulations of public administration and on amendments to certain acts as amended.

# CONTROLLER´S OPINION

In my opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the economic and financial situation of the independent public institution SAAVŠ as at 31 December 2021 and the results of its management, for the year ending, are in accordance with the Act on Accounting No. 431/2002 Coll., as amended, at that date. On the basis of the verification of the budgetary management recorded in the Agency's accounts, I conclude that I have not identified significant facts that would call into question the reported ones. The Agency's own funds shall consist of fees for operations on the basis of tariff rates.

Ing. Ivan Hargaš

SAAHE Controller 21. 2. 2022

# CONCLUSION

The annual report submitted summarizes an overview of the activities carried out by the Agency in 2021 and other activities related to the exercise of its remit. It recapitulates the changes made to internal regulations and also reflects external legislative changes. In 2021, the Agency fully implemented its mission and carried out activities of external quality assurance of higher education on the basis of the law. Its activities were focused on the procedures for granting accreditation of new study programmes. Part of the activities also concerned verification of the results of measures taken in previous accreditations or own-initiative procedures.

In 2021, the Agency continued to carry out events to clarify several aspects of accreditation standards, the internal quality assurance system and to inform higher education institutions of the problems and experiences it encountered in its activities. A survey of student satisfaction was also carried out, 2 thematic reports were produced, international cooperation continued and the preconditions and procedures that will be necessary in assessing the compliance of internal quality assurance systems of higher education institutions with standards began to be created.

A substantial part of the report is devoted to the analysis of the agency's management with state budget resources as well as with its own resources and contains data within the meaning of Section 20(8) of the Quality Assurance Act.

## © Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education

Bratislava April 2022

The SAAHE Annual Activity and Management Report for 2021 was commented on by the SAAHE controller ,Ing. Ivan Hargaš dňa 25. 4. 2022.

The annual report on the activities and management of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education for 2021 was approved by the Executive Board of SAAVŠ on 28.4.2022.

The report is available on the SAAHE website [www.saavs.sk](http://www.saavs.sk/)