



Evaluation of the internal system of Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education for the year 2022

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THE INTRODUCTION

The Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as “the Agency”) carried out an annual evaluation of its own internal system, in accordance with Article 8 of Internal Regulation No.1/2022 Internal quality assurance system of the Agency’s activities. The present report shall include an evaluation of the fulfilment of the Agency’s mission, objectives and principles for 2022. It summarizes compliance with the policies of the Agency’s internal system and proposes measures for further improvement. In particular, the evaluation was based on a review of the state and performance of the processes linked to the individual policies of the internal system and the results of feedback in 2022. The report also reflects changes in the internal and external environment and their impact on the Agency’s mission, strategy and objectives.

1. Mission, vision and objectives

Mission of the Agency

The mission of the Agency is to contribute to the improvement of the quality of higher education in the Slovak Republic by external quality assurance instruments according to the principles of ESG 2015 and in line with the expectations of the parties involved in education. The Agency provides universities with a professional and independent view of the quality of education and strengthens a quality culture. The Agency shall decide in particular on matters relating to the authorization of higher education institutions on the basis of their applications and shall also carry out other related tasks.

Vision

The Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (‘the Agency’) is the national reference point in the field of quality assurance in higher education. It is recognised within the European Higher Education Area. Its activities contribute to improving the quality of higher education, thus meeting the expectations of stakeholders and the general public, thus strengthening the social status and recognition and increasing the attractiveness of universities in the Slovak Republic.

In 2022, the Agency continued to fulfil its [mission](#) and [vision](#). In 2022, the process of transformation of internal quality assurance in higher education was completed pursuant to Act No 269/2018 on quality assurance of higher education and amending Act No 343/2015 on public procurement and amending certain acts, as amended (the ‘Quality Assurance Act’). Slovak higher education institutions took primary responsibility for the quality of the education provided and brought their internal systems in line with the Agency’s standards. As of 1 September 2022, all Slovak higher education institutions informed the Agency about the alignment of their internal systems with [standards](#). In this period, in addition to activities related to interpretation of standards and other enhancement activities, the Agency carried out external quality assurance activities necessary to harmonise internal systems at the request of HEIs (in particular, prior approvals for modification of the study programme or changes to study programme data — see [Chapter 7.3.3](#)).

In the course of the year, the Agency further implemented external quality assurance activities in accordance with the principles of ESG 2015, in particular related to the accreditation of study programmes, and monitored them and evaluated them in cooperation with stakeholders and took measures to improve them, in particular to increase the expertise and independence of the assessments (see [Chapter 7.3.1](#)). The measures were built on the findings of stakeholder feedback, but also of complaints and appeals examined (see [Chapter 7.3.2](#)).

In 2022, the Agency developed and implemented additional external quality assurance services and tools. In cooperation with HEIs and other stakeholders, it prepared to assess the compliance of

internal systems, supplemented the list of reviewers in particular by foreign experts, prepared and provided technical and methodological support to HEIs when applying for the assessment of internal systems (see [Chapter 7.3.3](#)). All Slovak higher education institutions in accordance with the Quality Assurance Act on 31 December 2022 requested the Agency to assess the compliance of the internal system with standards. In 2022, the Agency took significant steps towards permanent membership of the top European quality assurance institutions in higher education (ENQA and EQAR). Membership in ENQA and EQAR will strengthen the social status, recognition of Slovak higher education institutions and increase their attractiveness in the European Higher Education Area (see [chapter 6](#)).

Throughout the year, the Agency worked closely with stakeholders' representatives to develop internal and external quality assurance, in particular in the preparation of legislative changes, the development of accreditation procedures, the implementation of the recovery and resilience plan, etc. (see [chapter 6](#)).

In addition to the tasks related to decision-making on the rights of higher education within the scope of the act, the Agency also carried out other activities aimed at improving the quality of higher education. It organised public events to improve awareness among stakeholders and the public, regularly informed the public through social networks, media and website (see [chapter 4](#)), prepared and published analyses on quality assurance in higher education (see [chapter 7.1](#)).

1.1. Changes in the internal and external environment

The Agency shall monitor changes in the internal and external environment with a significant impact on the fulfilment of its mission and objectives. The changes with the main impact on the Agency in 2022 included legislative amendments, in particular the amendment to Act No 131/2022 Coll. (hereinafter referred to as 'the Higher Education Act') and related amendments to the Quality Assurance Act, which required the implementation of new, or amendment of the Agency's existing processes (e.g., verifying the fulfilment of the conditions for awarding degrees in Section 76(8) of the Higher Education Act). Those legislative amendments also had a significant impact on the smoothness of the process of alignment of internal systems of HEIs and the submission of requests for the assessment of compliance of internal systems. An overall overview of the changes in the legislative environment in 2022 and the measures taken or planned are described in [Annex 5 of the report](#).

From the perspective of the 2022 Action Plan, we are registering a change to the post of Chairman of the Board of Appeal, which caused a temporary suspension of its activities. Chairman of the Board of Appeal, Dr. h. c. prof. doc. JUDr. Marek Šmid, Ph.D. announced that his appointment to the post of the dean of the Faculty of Theology of Trnava University in Trnava on 1 June 2022, terminated his position as Chairman of the Board of Appeal. At its December meeting, the Board of Appeal elected its new chairman from among its members, Prof. Ing. Jozef Mihok, PhD. The selection procedure for the appointment of a new member of the Board of Appeal organised by the Ministry has not yet been closed. The effects of the macroeconomic environment and the related changes in the expectations of candidates on the labour market should also be included, which has affected the recruitment and success of the Agency in improving the staff coverage of accreditation activities.

1.2. Strategy and objectives

With the increasing complexity of the agenda, the Agency focused in 2022 on the systematization of activities in the different strategic areas of its development. Building on its mission and vision, the Agency formulated its strategic objectives for 2027 in the [Agency's Development Strategy](#) and identified three strategic areas for development:

- I. development of accreditation activities;
- II. development of international cooperation,
- III. development of a culture of quality.

From 2023 onwards, the strategic objectives will be developed and evaluated in the Agency's annual plans. The Agency evaluated the Agency's action (work) plan for 2022 with a view to 2023 (see [Annex 1 of the report](#)). The tasks identified have been fulfilled or, due to their permanent nature, are still carried out (e.g., on-line training of reviewers, or improvement of review panels' access to documents in the Agency's information system).

Reflection and suggestions:

The current mission and vision clearly define the meaning and direction of the Agency and are reflected in the Agency's strategy. The changes and impact of the external and internal environment in 2022 do not require their revision.

With regard to the need to monitor the Agency's progress in the various strategic areas, we propose the creation of system of indicators. The draft indicators are set out [in Annex 2 of the report](#).

2. Principles and policies of the internal system

In 2022, the Agency defined the basic principles it promotes in fulfilling its mission. The principles of *independence, transparency, integrity, cooperation and improvement* have been developed in the policies of the internal system [in Internal Regulation No 1/2022 Internal system for quality assurance of the Agency's activities](#). Internal system policies are implemented by the Agency when developing the Agency's procedures and processes and monitors their compliance as part of the regular evaluation of the internal system.

3. Independence

Independence policy (Internal Regulation 1/2022).

The Agency shall maintain its organisational, operational and decision-making independence in accordance with the Quality Assurance Act, pursuing the public interest, in particular by:

- *the Agency's bodies have full responsibility for the Agency's activities and their results;*
- *the Agency shall develop and use external quality assurance procedures and methods on its own, without interference by third parties, in accordance with the applicable legislative framework;*
- *the Agency shall establish review panel of the Agency's Executive Board without interference by third parties. Although external experts included in the list of reviewers are involved in the external quality assurance process, the independence of their opinions from the home institution's opinions is required, therefore their work is based solely on their own expertise;*
- *the final results of external quality assurance remain always within the competence of the Agency's Executive Board;*
- *the funding of the Agency's activities is provided from a number of sources.*

In 2022, the Agency carried out its activities in maintaining organisational, operational and decision-making independence in accordance with the Quality Assurance Act, pursuing the public interest.

During February and March 2022, the Agency faced a challenge that could have led to a threat to its independence. Articles appearing in the media were outlining criticism of the Agency's activities and calling on political power to intervene against the Agency. These media activities were carried out at

the time of discussion of amendments to higher education legislation (Higher Education Act, Quality Assurance Act, etc.) in the National Council of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as “the National Council”). In this context, the Agency became aware of the existence of an unofficial text of the amendment to the proposed amendment to the Act on Quality Assurance. According to the text of the proposal available to the Agency, inter alia, significant interference with the structure of the Agency’s bodies was envisaged, the termination of the duly appointed members of the Agency’s bodies before the end of their mandate and also that direct political intervention (direct appointment by the Prime Minister without a selection procedure) would appoint a new statutory body of the Agency to become Director-General. The agency reacted to the situation with a number of press releases in which it refuted the arguments of critics. The situation was dealt with by the Executive Board of the Agency, which adopted two resolutions (Nos 43/2 and 43/3) at its meeting on 17 March 2022. The Executive Board issued a detailed opinion in which it dealt with the criticism and questioning of the Agency in an argumentative manner.

Amendments to higher education legislation were discussed by the Committee for Education, Science, Youth and Sport on 10 February 2022. Under item 1 of the agenda, a government draft act amending Act No 131/2002 on HEIs and amending certain acts, as amended, and amending certain acts (Press 822) — second reading was presented. On the government proposal in question, a material was submitted to parliamentarians which included an ideological justification for the need to adopt amendments to the Quality Assurance Act concerning the Agency’s bodies. Due to the fact that they did not have the opportunity to read the text of the amendment, Members interrupted the Committee’s debate on this point. After the suspension of the committee meeting, an informal discussion took place on the proposal with the participation of some parliamentarians, the Slovak Prime Minister’s adviser for higher education and representatives of the Agency, including the Chairman of the Executive Board of the Agency, the Council of Higher Education and the Slovak Rector’s Conference. In the discussion, the Chairman of the Executive Board set out arguments that invalidated the appropriateness of adopting the proposed amendments. Representatives of HEIs also opposed the change. The Committee’s interrupted deliberations subsequently resumed on 17 March 2022. The committee discussed the government’s draft amendments to the laws without tabling the above text as an amendment. The amended laws were adopted without those amendments and entered into force on 25 April 2022.

The amendment to the Higher Education Act and the amendments to the Act on Quality Assurance did not affect the independence of the bodies, activities and decision-making of the Agency.

The Agency’s bodies (in particular the Executive Board and the Board of Appeal) remain fully responsible for their decisions. The Executive Board decided autonomously on the basis of the results of the expert assessment of the appointed review panel, the applicant’s opinion on the evaluation report, or any other available information, without interference by third parties in accordance with [the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board](#).

There have been no changes in the composition of the Executive Board which may affect its decision-making independence.

In 2022, the Agency set up review panels of the Agency’s Executive Board without interference by third parties, in accordance with the [Principles for registration, removal from the list, and the creation of review panels](#) and according to the [Conflict of interests regulation](#). Although external experts included in the list of reviewers were involved in the external quality assurance process, the independence of their opinions from the home institution’s views was required, therefore they have been working solely on the basis of their expertise (the members of the review panels provided a

declaration of absence of conflict of interest which was included in the request for an opinion of a member of the review panel).

Funding for the Agency's activities in 2022 was provided from a number of sources. In addition to revenue from the state budget, the Agency also had funds obtained from fees for accreditation of study programmes. In order to improve the financial coverage of accreditation services within the scope of the Quality Assurance Act, the [fee list](#) was revised in 2022. Some fees based on the amendments to the Higher Education Act and the Act on Quality Assurance have been added. The existing rates have been indexed to cover expenditure related to the work of the review panels and the assessment, also in relation to the increase in remuneration of the members of the review panels ([Directive on the remuneration of members of the review panels of the Executive Board of SAAHE and reimbursement of incidental expenses as amended on 26 January 2023.](#))

Reflection and suggestions:

Maintaining the independence of the Agency and its decision-making is an important prerequisite for its anchoring in the higher education system in Slovakia and in the European quality assurance structures. The existing legislative set-up in the Slovak Republic ensures that the activities of the Agency in accordance with the requirements of the ESG cannot be interfered at any level by the Ministry or any other public authority.

With the support of HEIs representations, the Agency successfully coped with the attempted political interference with its independence, which underlines the importance of the Agency's cooperation with representatives of HEIs, representatives of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders.

4. Transparency

Transparency policy (Internal Regulation 1/2022).

The basic principle of the Agency's work is openness and the highest possible level of transparency. The Agency:

- *Creates and develops appropriate ways of communicating the activities, progress and results of external quality assurance.*
- *It shall ensure public access to external quality assurance standards, procedures and results in order to maintain high confidence of all stakeholders and the public.*
- *It publishes the objectives, policies and procedures of its internal system and reports on its activities.*
- *Publish thematic reports on the development of the higher education system.*
- *It publishes examples of good practice in quality assurance in higher education.*

The Agency shall publish and communicate relevant documents and information on its activities and decisions in such a way as to maintain high confidence of all stakeholders and the public.

In addition to the mandatory data published pursuant to Act No 211/2000 Coll. on¹ free access to information, the Agency informed the public about the progress and results of external quality assurance through the website and the entry of information in the registers on the [HEIs portal](#). The agency published on its website:

- [applications received and documents for applications from HEIs for accreditation of study programmes,](#)

¹ Internal Regulation No 11/2020 Directive on the procedure for mandatory publication of orders, invoices and contracts of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education.

- [requests and supporting documents for the assessment of compliance of the internal system](#) received until 31 December 2022;
- [the completed procedures, decisions and evaluation reports on the basis of which the Agency's Executive Board decided](#);
- [other proceedings and decisions outside the scope of the ESG](#);
- it has published all the [resolutions of the Executive Board](#).

Through the website, the Agency ensured public access to the Agency's standards ([standards for internal quality assurance system](#), [standards for study programmes](#), [standards for habilitation proceedings and proceedings for the appointment of professors](#)), as well as external quality assurance procedures ([Methodology for evaluation of standards](#)), on the basis of which review panels and agency staff assess compliance with standards.

The Agency shall inform the public about the [objectives](#), [policies](#) and [procedures](#) of its internal system (according to Regulation 1/2022 Internal Quality Assurance System) and publish them on its website. In 2022, it carried out the first self-assessment of the internal system in preparation for the assessment by ENQA, the results of which were published in the form of [self-assessment report](#) on the website, together with the tripartite assessment agreement between the Agency, ENQA, EQAR.

The Agency shall inform the public on the website of the reviewers [included in the list of reviewers](#) of the Executive Board, as well as the composition of the review panels. The composition of the review panels is always published in the evaluation report on the basis of which the Executive Board decided. Each applicant shall be informed in advance of the composition of the review panel before the commencement of the assessment and shall have the possibility to object to the bias against a member of the review panel.

Detailed information on the [members of the bodies of the Agency](#) is also published on the website.

Based on the results of its own assessments and on the basis of publicly available information, the Agency draws up and publishes [thematic reports](#) on the development of the higher education system in the Slovak Republic. Two thematic reports were published in 2022. The report "Conclusions from the first accreditations of study programmes" also includes examples of good practice identified by the review panels during the assessment of study programmes in 2021 and 2022.

The Agency shall monitor and evaluate the impact of the information disclosed. In addition to the SAAHE website, the agency maintains two accounts on social networks, Facebook and LinkedIn.

[The website](#) had 18 869 users in 2022 (79.8 % of new users and 20.2 % of regular users; of which 73.4 % of Slovak users; 26.4 % different language users). The most common channels from which they visit our website are HEIs themselves, the media (e.g., SME) or other partners or stakeholders (CHEI, ENQA, SRC, EACEA, ...). The most frequently searched article on the Agency's website are standards, a call for applications for reviewers, applications for accreditation for a study programme, a guide for reviewers and Agency's decisions.

The [LinkedIn](#) social network is used by the agency mainly for the purpose of communicating with the professional community and partners of the agency abroad. The most popular articles are related to foreign cooperation, especially in May, June and July, when employees participated in SEQA — ESG workshops. The most numerous responses to the published articles come from foreign reviewers and foreign partners, demonstrating LinkedIn's effectiveness in establishing foreign relations and networks abroad. In 2022, the [Agency](#) published 33 articles on various topics on Facebook. The total annual impact was 31 588 accounts. Among the most successful posts in 2022 are articles on the first accreditations of study programmes, or news that schools have announced the alignment of internal systems. It can be argued that the most popular articles relate to quality assurance activities at the HEIs themselves.

Reflection and suggestions:

The Agency shall publish and communicate relevant documents and information on its activities and decisions in such a way as to maintain high confidence of all stakeholders and the public. Considerable scope and current procedures are administratively burdensome. In 2023, it will be necessary to focus on improving automation in the publication of selected information and better linking to the Agency's information system. In the area of working with social networks, in addition to more regular publication, the communication strategy will need to be adapted. Complement the informative status of the Agency's activities with posts directly related to quality assurance at HEIs and encourage discussion on selected topics. In the following period and following the example of partner agencies, we propose to develop an agency account on Twitter.

5. Integrity and professionalism

Integrity and professionalism policy (Internal Regulation 1/2022).

The Agency shall promote the principle of integrity in all activities. Members of the bodies of the Agency, reviewers and Agency staff shall perform their duties honestly, conscientiously and impartially, knowing that they pursue the public interest.

The principle of integrity is enforced by meeting the following requirements:

- *Any person involved in the activities of the Agency shall have sufficient competence to carry out the entrusted activities. Professional expertise of the members of the Agency's bodies, reviewers and staff of the Agency shall be developed.*
- *Any activities related to external quality assurance shall avoid possible bias and conflicts of interest.*
- *Care shall be taken to respect the principles of equal treatment and protection against intolerance and discrimination of any kind, and the Agency shall decide in accordance with the principle of legitimate expectations so that, in factually similar cases, there are no unjustified differences between procedures and decisions.*
- *Members of the Agency's bodies, reviewers, Agency staff and contractors are required to behave in accordance with the ethical standards and regulations of the Agency, generally binding legal regulations and ESG 2015 rules.*

The Agency has procedures to ensure the professionalism and integrity of its activities (in particular the [Principles for registration in the list of reviewers removal and the creation of review panels](#); [Conflict of interest regulation](#); [Code of Ethics](#); [Directive on the internal screening system for whistleblowing](#)). In 2022, the Agency monitored compliance with these policies and identified shortcomings in professional conduct, confidentiality, ethics and integrity of the activities carried out.

Any person involved in the activities of the Agency has sufficient competence to carry out the entrusted activities. The entry criteria of competence for the inclusion of persons on the list of reviewers are laid down in the Regulation [Principles for registration in the list of reviewers, removal from the list and the creation of review panels](#). Only reviewers who received initial training and preparatory meetings (briefings) of the review panel were included in the review panel. A member of the review panel shall be contractually bound to comply with the Agency's internal rules and the confidentiality of the assessment.

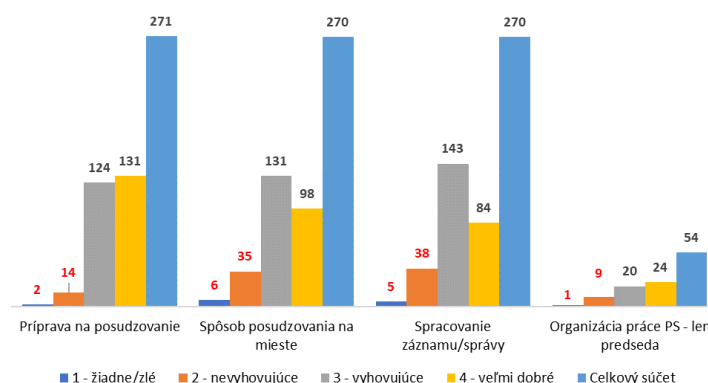
In 2022, the Agency did not outsource assessment activities from other external legal entities. The assessments were carried out by review panels composed of reviewers enrolled in the list of reviewers in their own name on the basis of a mandatory contract. In 2022, a list of legal persons whose evaluation reports were opened to assess the compliance of the internal system was opened with the internal system standards pursuant to Section 4(2)(c)(2) of the Quality Assurance Act, the

Agency automatically recognizes and publishes the criteria and the procedure for their inclusion in [this list](#). No agency is registered in the list by the deadline for processing the report.

Other external service and goods providers were not directly involved in the accreditation activity. They were selected on the basis of pre-defined criteria under the Directive on the establishment of procedures for contracting authorities. The selection was made by market research and via the platform <https://eplatforma.vlada.gov.sk/>. Even for purchases which did not fall within the scope of the Public Procurement Act, goods and services were procured on the basis of a selection of at least 3 suppliers. Suppliers with a direct impact on the quality of the Agency's services included software and telecommunications service suppliers (mainly VNET, WebSupport, UPC, O2, Exe, a.s. and EDIS) and hardware equipment suppliers. According to the results of the 2022 evaluation, there is no need to consider changing one of the key suppliers.

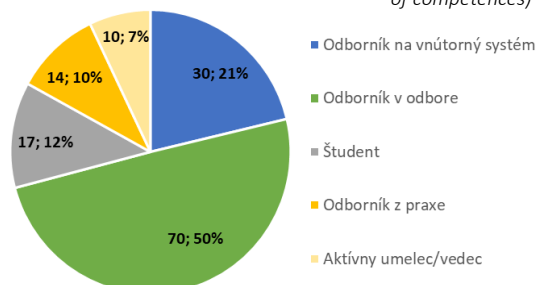
The Agency monitored and evaluated the work of the members of the review panels. The monitoring and evaluation took place in the form of a survey in the SAAHE IS to gather and record information on the activities of the members of the review panels during the assessment. The assigned proceeding coordinator gave an opinion on the work of the review panel member after the assessment has been completed. In 2022, the work of the review panels was evaluated in the accreditation procedures for study programmes completed between 2021 and 2022. The coordinators provided an opinion on the work of 271 reviewers. The level of readiness for the assessment, the method of on-site assessment, the quality of the records and reports processed were assessed. The organisation of the work of the panel was also evaluated by the chairs of the review panels. The most frequently identified lack of assessment was the quality of the processing of evaluation reports (43 evaluations), the other most common weakness was the organization of the assessment and how the assessment was carried out during the on-site visit (41 evaluations). The evaluation of the work of the review panel was also part of the feedback of applicants for accreditation after the completion of the relevant procedure. The persons responsible for the study programme were commented on the work of the review panels by means of a questionnaire survey ([Question 4 of the OTSG feedback, Annex 8 of the report](#),). Dissatisfaction with the work of the review panels ("very dissatisfied" or "rather dissatisfied") was expressed by respondents in 5 out of 42 responses received. On open issues, they most often suggested better tailoring of the expertise, or the composition of the review panel according to the content of the study programme. Two comments complained of a threat to impartiality in the assessment in 'very small' courses of study (with a small number of experts in the region). The results of the monitoring and feedback were used for changes in the design and activities of the review panels and in the training of reviewers.

Evaluation of the work of the review panels 2022



Based on the results of the feedback on the work of the review panels in the accreditation of study programmes, according to the estimated difficulty of the assessment in 2023 and the structure of the evaluators enrolled in 2022 there was a change in the process of acquisition and approval of reviewers in the list of reviewers. Insufficiently covered areas of assessment have been identified and candidates have been targeted mainly among relevant field experts active in reputable HEIs. At its 2022 meetings, the Executive Board approved the inclusion of 104 new reviewers in the list of reviewers (of which 66 foreign reviewers, 30 reviewers with competence to assess the internal system, 70 reviewers may serve as an expert in the field of study). 24 experts from practice (of which 10 active artists/or active scientists) and 17 student reviewers were also added to the list of reviewers. The newest reviewers will be able to assess study programmes in arts (11), teaching and pedagogical sciences (10), historical sciences (9), economics and management (8) and philosophy and informatics (6).

Structure of assessors approved in 2022 (possible overlap of competences)



In 2022, the Executive Board approved the removal of 41 reviewers. The most common reason was the incompatibility with the current function in the workplace and the disappearance of compliance with the requirements for the reviewer (especially the completion of the student's studies).

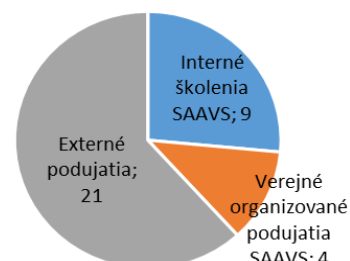
In order to increase the professionalism and integrity of the assessment, the Agency shall involve foreign reviewers in the work of review panels, in particular in the assessment of study programmes in the third and second level of education and in proceedings related to habilitation and inaugural procedures. In 2022, the Executive Board set up 3 review panels to assess study programmes (accreditation and design of study programmes) and 2 review panels to assess misconduct in habilitation and inauguration procedures (own-initiative proceedings). Out of the 19 members of the review panels, 10 were foreign reviewers (52 %). The other applications were examined by the Agency's staff. These were mainly requests for prior approval of the study programme modification, request for change of study programme data and request for withdrawal of accreditation of habilitation and inauguration procedure.

Overall, the Agency created 103 review panels in 2021 and 2022 (of which 69 for the accreditation of study programmes). At least 342 reviewers were involved in the work of the review panel at least once, of which 116 foreign (34 %). In addition, foreign members of the review panels were involved in the assessment of programmes in the field of study "Economy and Management" (21 persons).

In order to reduce the workload of the Chair and the members of the review panel, a secretary will be available to the review panel in the case of proceedings with a high scope of consideration. The secretary will take on some common organisational and support administrative activities of the assessment.

The Agency shall further develop the competence and expertise of the members of the Agency's bodies, reviewers and staff of the Agency. In 2022, it carried out 11 online reviewers' trainings (initial training of reviewers, foreign reviewers, internal system experts, chairpersons, student reviewers, review panel secretaries). In 2022, SAAHE employees participated in 34 training activities (9 internal training sessions, 7 conferences, 3 mobility, 14 webinars/seminars, 1 workshop). 9 internal training sessions were organised for staff, in particular in the field of coordination of different types of applications and the organisation of procedures. The staff participated in 21 external training activities. They focused mainly on the issue of aligning the Agency's internal system with ESG and preparing for the assessment by the ENQA panel. Most often, staff participated in training organised by ENQA, EQAR or partner agencies (10 out of 21 external events). The Agency's staff participated in all [public events](#) organised by the Agency for stakeholders (SQAF 2022, 3 webinars). A detailed overview of the participation of the Agency's staff in training and development events in 2022 is provided [in Annex 6](#) to the report.

Structure of Employee Training
2022 by event type (number)



By the time the report was processed, 26 employees worked in the Agency, of which 12 were women. Nine employees work on a basis of secondary employment policy. Three staff members were recruited in 2022. Two persons for the position of 'coordinator of accreditation activities' and one for the position of 'Repository Manager'. Three employees, by agreement, terminated their employment ('Repository Manager', Human Resources Coordinator, 'Coordinator of accreditation activities').

Any activities related to external quality assurance shall avoid possible bias and conflicts of interest. In the application for registration in the list of reviewers, the Agency had already examined possible conflicts of interest of candidates. Subsequently, in the proposal of the Review panel, the potential conflict of interest with the subject or the assessment body was carefully considered and verified on the basis of other available information. Only reviewers who provided a written declaration on the absence of conflicts of interest and confidentiality were included in the review panels.

Each applicant (HEI) was informed about the composition of the review panel and the possibility to object to bias. In 2022, the Agency did not receive an objection of bias against a member of the review panel. In 2022, the Agency did not receive a complaint or objection to the biased conduct of a member of the review panel, of the Agency's bodies or of a breach of confidentiality rules in the course of the assessment.

The Agency shall monitor, evaluate and eliminate any corrupt, fraudulent or other abusive conduct of parties to proceedings which jeopardizes the conduct and outcome of accreditation activities. The Agency's related procedures are governed by the Directive on the internal system for the verification of whistleblowing notifications. In 2022, the Agency did not receive a notification on anti-social activity.

The Agency shall have rules on protection against intolerance or discrimination of any kind pursuant to paragraph 4(m) of the Code of Ethics. The protection of discrimination on grounds of sex is governed by the Internal Labour Rules. The procedures were applied to the setting up of evaluation panels as well as to evaluation procedures. No complaints of discriminatory behaviour or manifestations of intolerance were received in 2022.

Reflection and suggestions:

In the field of development of professionalism and competence of accreditation activities, the Agency's activities were mainly related to the preparation of the assessments of compliance of internal systems. The work of the review panels in the accreditation of study programmes has been evaluated. According to the estimated difficulty of the assessment in 2023 and the structure of the reviewers included in the list of reviewers, insufficiently covered assessment areas were identified. These have been complemented on an ongoing basis by targeted search and acquisition of experts, in particular from abroad, in order to improve the professionalism and integrity of the assessment. In 2022, the Agency took steps towards a broader involvement of international reviewers in order to further reduce the risk of potential bias or conflict of interest while bringing the quality of assessment procedures and outcomes closer to international practice. Key areas for developing the competence of the review panels were the preparation of guidelines for review panels and the implementation of induction online trainings. The main area of development of staff and members of the bodies was the preparation of the Agency for membership of ENQA and EQAR and the alignment of the Agency's internal procedures with the ESG. The Agency also cooperated with partners of SEQA-ESG and V4QA Forum in this area.

In 2023, major efforts will be needed to prepare review panels to assess the compliance of internal systems. Emphasis will need to be given to skills in formulating conclusions and sufficient justification in the evaluation reports. It will also be necessary to increase the capacity of the Department of Accreditation Activities and to stabilize staff.

Therefore, the key tasks of the Agency in the field of professionalism and competence development in 2023 will be:

- *Systematize the development and training of the Agency's staff and reviewers, focus on the content and progress of the initial training sessions and the integration of new staff in the Agency's environment.*
- *Establish the position of secretary of the review panel in order to reduce the administrative burden on its members.*
- *Continue the involvement of international experts in the work of the review panels.*
- *Carry out practically oriented trainings and trainings of review panels, aimed in particular at establishing compliance and formulating reasoned conclusions.*
- *Increase the involvement and management of student reviewers in cooperation with representatives of student organisations and employers.*
- *Strengthen the Department of Accreditation Activities for an additional member of staff as coordinator and the Economics and Operations Department by the Human Resources coordinator.*

6. Cooperation and partnership

Cooperation and partnership policy (Internal Regulation 1/2022).

Within the framework of its activities, the Agency shall cooperate with stakeholders and other similarly targeted institutions at national and international level. And yet:

- *Key for the development of the Agency is the development of effective communication channels with external stakeholders, in particular public authorities, relevant authorities, universities, foreign partners, stakeholders and the general public, in order to monitor changing conditions, demands and expectations of society and to strengthen and raise awareness of the need to develop a culture of quality in higher education.*
- *The provision and development of the Agency's internal procedures and processes is based on effective internal cooperation and communication between the Agency's organisational units.*

Within the framework of its activities, the Agency shall cooperate with stakeholders and other similarly targeted institutions at national and international level.

The Agency's international cooperation and partnership priorities include achieving sustainable ENQA membership and enrolment in EQAR. In 2022, the Agency carried out steps towards the first external assessment with ENQA. Key activities in 2022 included self-assessment of the compliance of the Agency's accreditation activities and internal system with the requirements of Art. 2 and Art. 3. ESG; drawing up [a self-](#) assessment report ([SAR](#)); sending a request for an external assessment of the Agency with ENQA and signing the so [-called tripartite agreement](#) on reference conditions for assessment between the Agency, ENQA and EQAR. An overview of the steps taken and the related tasks for 2023 is contained in [Annex 4 of the report](#). A key task in 2023 will be the organisation and successful completion of the on-site assessment in March 2023.

In 2022, the Agency completed and evaluated the planned activities of the [SEQA-ESG](#) project. The aim of the project was to support the agencies and national authorities of Albania, the Czech Republic, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro and Slovakia in setting up national quality assurance systems in accordance with ESG. The support was based on mutual counselling, joint workshops and staff exchanges. The evaluation of the project is part of the [Action-plan-for-the-external-review-of-SAAHE material](#). Its logical consequence was the launch of the Agency's accession process to ENQA and EQAR.

The Agency has strengthened its membership in the [V4QA format — the Forum for Quality Assurance of Higher Education in V4 countries](#). The main objectives of the Forum are the regular exchange of experience in the field of quality assurance, the development of an international network of experts and the exchange of reviewers and staff of V4 agencies. On 13 and 14 October 2022, the Agency organised a meeting of partners in Bratislava under the auspices of the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic. The main topics concerned the membership of the agencies in ENQA and EQAR, cooperation on the development of quality assurance policies in higher education and exchange of information (e.g. consultation of registers). A mutual exchange of reviewers of the different agencies was also agreed.

In 2022, reviewers from the Czech Republic were involved in the Agency's accreditation activities from V4QA countries. In addition to V4 partners, the Agency established cooperation with the SQAA (Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) in 2022. SQAA assessors will be part of the working groups when assessing the conformity of internal systems as early as 2023.

The Agency's staff worked with partner agencies in the field of education. The staff undertook two visits to the partner agencies, including participation in the assessment (AQAS — Agentur zur

Qualitätssicherung an Hochschulen, Cologne; NAÚ — Národní akreditační úřad, Prague). The SEQA-ESG project participated in two workshops organised by ENQA and ACQAHE (Montenegro) and ENQA and MFHEA (Malta).

In 2022, the Agency joined the CoARA (Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment) agreement “The Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment”, which aims to change the approach of evaluating outputs of creative activities towards qualitative evaluation. He is a [member](#) of ENAI (European Network for Academic Integrity). The aim is to transfer European principles and experience with the development of academic integrity to the higher education environment in the Slovak Republic. In 2022, the main focus of the activity was the launch of an interactive portal to support victims and other people who suffered from misbehaviour and dubious practices in research and education.

The Agency shall involve foreign experts in the design and evaluation of the Agency’s policies and procedures, in order to harmonise external quality assurance procedures and outputs with foreign standards and to enhance its integrity and impartiality. Since 2021, one of the important structures of the Agency’s internal system has been the International Consultation Board. Its members are foreign experts who provide the Agency with expert advice and advice on policies and good practices of external quality assurance in higher education. The International Consultative Council was supplemented by an additional member in 2022. Professor Gerald Groshek, Ph.D. of the University of Redlands, California. Other members include Dr. Mark Jones (University of Brighton) and Dr. Achim Hopbach (International Higher Education Consultant, Austria). In 2022, Board members were closely involved in the process of elaborating the self-assessment report and preparing the Agency for the ENQA review process.

Reflection and suggestions:

In 2022, the Agency successfully involved SEQA — ESG in the activities of the final phase of the SEQA project. Its logical outcome and a sign of effective participation was the request of the Agency’s assessment by the ENQA panel, the preparation of a self-assessment report and the signing of a tripartite assessment agreement between the Agency, ENQA and EQAR. The Agency has made progress in building partnerships with agencies participating in the SEQA-ESG project and members of the VAQA Forum. In 2023, partnerships will need to be further deepened and capitalised on concrete results, in particular in exchange and training of assessors.

The Agency’s tasks in the field of international cooperation and partnerships shall be to:

- *Prepare and successfully complete the ENQA on-site assessment (3/2023).*
- *Apply for membership in ENQA.*
- *Apply for enrolment in EQAR.*
- *Actively participate in working groups and projects ENQA or EQAR.*
- *Further develop the cooperation of the VAQA Forum (joint events and activities).*
- *Initiate cooperation with other agencies associated in ENQA and EQAR.*

In 2022, the Agency worked with stakeholders’ representatives to develop external quality assurance policies and involved them in the assessment work. Selected stakeholders within the scope of Sections 6 to 10 of the Quality Assurance Act are responsible for the selection and nomination of members of the Agency’s bodies. There were no changes in the nominations in 2022. After the termination of the term of office of the Chairman of the Appeals Board, MŠVVaŠ SR did not appoint a new member at the time of processing the report.

In addition to experts in the relevant field of study, students and practitioners [shall be members of the working groups of the Agency when considering study programmes or internal systems, in accordance with the Principles for inclusion in the list of assessors](#). In 2022, the Executive Board appointed 3 student assessors and 3 representatives to working groups for study programme assessment procedures (3 proceedings). Other proceedings were mainly related to acts of harmonisation of internal systems and were mainly staffed by the Agency's staff or experts in the field.

Stakeholders were involved in drafting and commenting on the Agency's internal documents and procedures. In 2022, a public comment and approval of the amendment to the Tariff List took place. The amendment did not change its philosophy or the structure of the items. During the period for public comments (2.6.2022-2 2.7.2022), the Agency received comments from 5 entities. The majority did not relate to the tariff, but to the requirements for reimbursement of the cost of accreditation by the Ministry. A complete evaluation of the comments was submitted to the Ministry together with the application for approval of the tariff in tabular form. The Ministry approved the amendment of the schedule of 30.8.2022.

Stakeholder representatives were involved in preparing and commenting on the Agency's self-assessment report (SAR). A Domestic Consultation Board was involved in the preparation of the SAR², which provided a first independent view of the draft document. Feedback from home consultants made it possible to create a more consistent document and eliminate problematic or insufficiently understandable parts. These included, in particular, a closer link between the document and SWOT analysis, a clearer reflection of the shortcomings identified and more concrete proposals for amending them. The Slovak Rector's Conference (prof. Ing. Rudolf Kropil President), the Council of Higher Education (doc. RNDr. Martin Putala, PhD. Chairman), Student Council of Higher Education (consultation with President Filip Šuran), Alliance of Sectoral Councils (Lucia Lednárová Dítětová) and others.

Valuable comments on the SAR were provided by the SAAVS International Consultative Council. Given the fact that its members are experts working directly with the self-assessment reports of the Accreditation Agencies, the incorporation of their comments has significantly contributed to the higher quality and probative value of the report. They also drew attention to possible contextual and terminological misunderstandings that could arise in the assessment by the International Assessment Panel.

Stakeholders were also closely involved in the methodological preparation of the application for conformity assessment of internal systems and how it was submitted in the SAAVS IS. The basic documents (application and manual for internal evaluation report) were commented by members of the Domestic Consultation Board and subsequently by representatives of selected universities (UK, UNIPO, UNIZA, UMB, UPJŠ, Academy of Performing Arts, SU, TUZVO, EUBA, STU). The selected schools were involved in the testing of the application and the attachments of the application in IS SAAVS.

In 2022, the Agency cooperated with stakeholders' representatives and other areas related to quality assurance in higher education. The Agency cooperated with the state authorities (the Government Office, the National Council of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic) on the OECD project "Improving Higher Education in the Slovak Republic", contributed to the

² Composition of the Consultation Board: Prof. PhDr. Olga Orgoňová, CSc.; Prof. RNDr. Vladimír Ira, CSc.; Prof. RNDr. Oto Hudec, CSc.; Prof. MUDr. Dušan Meško PhD.; Dr.h.c. Prof. Ing. Tatiana Čorejová, Ph.D.; Prof. Ing. Ján Szolgay, PhD; BC. Matej Gajdoš (student)

implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (particularly in Component 8 and Component 7), participated in the preparation of an amendment to the Higher Education Act and amendments to the Law on Quality Assurance and amendments to the Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic on the system of study fields. Participated in a number of activities organised by ENQA, EQAR (participation in a seminar for agencies planning to undergo an assessment in 2022-2023, actively participated in the SEQA-ESG project, representatives participated in the ENQA General Assembly in Stockholm and ENQA Members' 2022 Forum in Cardiff, EQAF 2022 in Timisoara, participated in the ENQA Academic Integrity Working Group).

A detailed overview of the main topics of cooperation from stakeholders' representatives is included in [Annex 7](#) of the report.

The finalisation of the documentation and the internal evaluation report identified a potential barrier to the inclusion of the Agency in the European quality assurance structures (ENQA and EQAR), one of the main objectives of the adoption of the law on quality assurance and management efforts of the Agency since its inception. This was a finding that the Commission of the European Register of Accreditation Agencies (EQAR) also rejects applications due to insufficient or limited participation of students in the decision-making body. Although students represented by the Student Council of Higher Education of the Slovak Republic may nominate two persons to the Executive Board of the Agency under the Quality Assurance Act, the Act does not guarantee that it is to be a person with the status of a student. As a result, a person with student status is absent from the Agency's Executive Board. As EQAR states in a recital that agencies can proactively propose changes to the legislative set-up if national legislation prevents it, the Agency has examined the possibility of legislative adjustment. The Agency's letter of 21.10. In 2022, Minister J. Horecký was informed of this possible obstacle, while the Agency also offered him a solution in the form of a simple proposal for amendments to the Quality Assurance Act. The proposal made it possible to align the nominations of students to the Executive Board on the regular dates of the change of part of its members in accordance with the applicable law. He did not interfere with the delicate balance of the parties, he did not interfere with the nomination powers of the Student Council of Higher Education of the Slovak Republic to nominate two members. However, this proposal has not entered into the legislative process and the state of play remains. The Agency therefore intends to continue its efforts to optimise the involvement of stakeholders in all activities of the Agency, including in the future. He is also interested in a broader discussion with students about meaningful and direct involvement of students in the Agency's decision-making.

Reflection and suggestions:

In 2022, the Agency involved stakeholders' representatives in its activities (in the development and evaluation of internal procedures, working groups, etc.) and worked with partners to develop legislation, prepare and implement the Recovery and Resilience Plan, inform the public and so on. It is aware of some margins at the level of external quality assurance policies and procedures, while maintaining the regularity and continuity of cooperation. In 2023, cooperation will need to be systematised in particular with student representatives (mainly SVŠ) and employers' representatives (mainly ASR and RUZ). Improvement is also needed in the acquisition and management of student assessors and assessors from practice.

Therefore, the key tasks of the Agency in developing cooperation with partner agencies in 2023 will be:

- *Deepen and systematise cooperation with student representatives (ŠRVŠ), especially in the acquisition and management of student assessors.*

- *Deepen and systematise cooperation with employers' representatives (ASR, RÚZ), especially in the acquisition of practitioners.*
- *Review and prepare the conditions for issuing digitally verifiable accreditations and diplomas in cooperation with EQAR.*
- *Extend cooperation with the Alliance of Sectoral Councils to the area of better use of the professional and qualification system in internal and external quality assurance of higher education.*
- *Modify the strategy for communication with stakeholders and the public on social networks — develop an account on Twiteri.*

The main tool for internal cooperation and coordination between the Agency's departments and staff is the consultation of the Agency's management. It takes place every week on Monday. Subsequently, the different services of the Agency organise their own coordination meetings. In coordinating and performing internal tasks, Office 365 tools, in particular MS TEAMS (for fast communication, as well as online meetings) and OneDrive (when sharing internal procedures and work documents) and Outlook (in addition to external communication when planning agency activities in a shared calendar), play an important role. The participation of individual departments, in accreditation processes (from receipt of the application to receipt of the decision), is mainly managed by the "workflow" of the relevant application (or procedure) in the Agency's Information System (IS SAAVS). In 2022, further steps were taken to link information systems and automated transmission of information between SAAVS IS and AVIS and VEMA. Cooperation between the Accreditation Activities Unit and the Economics and Operations Unit has been simplified.

Reflection and suggestions:

In 2023, it will be necessary to further increase the connectivity and compatibility of the Agency's IT systems in order to facilitate cooperation between departments.

With a view to expanding the Agency's agenda, develop rules for the creation, distribution, sharing of internal and external documentation and their changes.

7. Improvement

Continuous improvement policy (Internal Regulation 1/2022).

Improvement is a key principle of the Agency's work. In relation to its implementation, the Agency shall:

- *systematically monitors the development trends of higher education systems and quality assurance systems (thematic analyses) and points to good practice with a view to developing a quality culture of higher education;*
- *it shall regularly adapt and innovate the standards and procedures for internal and external quality assurance and make recommendations for innovation to stakeholders so that the synergy of these efforts is to improve quality and strengthen the status and recognition of universities.*
- *develops a mechanism of internal and external feedback in order to continuously improve its activities;*
- *it regularly monitors, evaluates and revises the policies, procedures and processes of the Agency's internal system with the involvement of stakeholders.*

7.1. Analysis of the higher education environment

In line with the policy of continuous improvement, the Agency shall monitor the development trends of higher education systems and quality assurance systems. In 2022, it produced and published two thematic reports.

[Summary report on the findings of the Student Opinion Survey – Academic Quarter Hour](#) summarises the most important findings from the student satisfaction survey conducted since 30. 4 to 31. 5. 2021. The specific conclusions of the survey and the reports will be provided in 2023 to the working groups in preparation for the assessment of the internal higher education system.

The report [“The most serious conclusions from the first accreditations of study programmes”](#) contains an evaluation of the accreditations of study programmes requested by universities in March 2021. Thematic analysis focusing on the most common or most serious problems of higher education institutions resulting from 63 procedures carried out by the Agency on the basis of applications from universities for accreditation of a study programme carried out in the period March 2021-March 2022. When assessing the conformity of the internal university system in 2023, the working groups will be familiar with the results of the accreditation of study programmes depending on the workplace considered.

The work group survey on the assessment of proposals for new curricula in 2021 and 2022 included an indication of the examples of good practice they identified in the assessment of the application documents and because during the on-the-spot assessment. Overall, the Working Groups indicated 434 examples of good practice in the evaluation reports. In addition, when assessing compliance in standard 4 “Learning, teaching and evaluation” and standard 8 “Resources of the study programme”.

Štandard	Názov štandardu	Počet zistení dobrej praxe
SP 4	Učenie sa, vyučovanie a hodnotenie orientované na študenta	95
SP 8	Zdroje na zabezpečenie študijného programu a podporu študentov	90
SP 2	Návrh nového študijného programu	69
SP 6	Učitelia študijného programu	46
SP 7	Tvorivá činnosť vysokej školy	46
SP 9	Zhromažďovanie a spracovanie informácií o študijnom programe	31
SP 5	Prijímacie konanie, priebeh štúdia, uznávanie vzdelania a udeľovanie	25
SP 3	Schvaľovanie študijného programu	16
SP 11	Zverejňovanie informácií o študijnom programe	12
SP 10	Priebežné monitorovanie, periodické hodnotenie a periodické	4

Based on the results of feedback on study programme assessment activities, the Agency will proceed to a modification of the good practice procedure in 2023. The problem was dissatisfaction related to the unbalanced views of members of the community (both assessors and assessed) to identify good practice. Good practice has been defined as finding an exceptional procedure or outcome worth following. This situation was mainly due to the immaturity of the overall assessment system according to ESG requirements in Slovakia. The new procedure will be part of a blanket assessment of the internal systems of all Slovak universities, where it will be possible to better distinguish exceptional practices and results.

Reflection and suggestions:

Further progress in higher education analyses based on the Agency's assessment results is conditional on the gradual implementation of external quality assurance services. In the context of that, the Agency updated the Roadmap for Thematic Analysis by 2025 in 2022. The aim is to work systematically with the findings and to present them more convincingly, could contribute to the faster improvement of higher education and to the empowerment and prestige of the Agency.

In 2023, it will be possible to carry out one thematic analysis aimed at evaluating the structure of internal higher education systems on the basis of submitted requests from universities and internal evaluation reports on the implementation of internal systems, in the context of the difficult preparation of the documentation for working groups assessing the internal system of higher education institutions. At the same time, in the second and third quarters of 2023, the preparation of a survey of the views of students of Stage III, followed by data collection in the last quarter of 2023, will be carried out. The evaluation and thematic report of the survey will be prepared and published in the first quarter of 2024.

In the field of indication and dissemination of good practice, the Agency shall proceed to modify the procedure for indicating good practice during the assessments, in order to increase the 'reportability' of the findings.

7.2. Monitoring and improvement of internal quality assurance standards

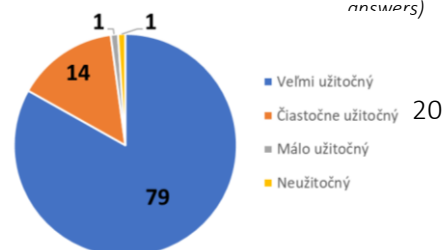
One of the key competences of the Agency is to develop, monitor and innovate standards [for internal quality assurance \(Study Programme Standards, Internal System Standards, Standards for habilitation and Inauguration Procedure\)](#). The Agency shall monitor the effectiveness of the implementation of the standards in order to optimise them on an ongoing basis. In 2022, the most frequent findings, shortcomings and examples of good practice in the implementation of the standards for the study programme were evaluated on the basis of the evaluation reports of the accreditations of curricula in the ongoing years 2021 and 2022. In the assessment of 177 applications for accreditation of a study programme, in addition shortcomings were identified in Article 2 of the standards for the study programme (95 findings), Article 6 (25 findings) and subsequently Article 4 (16 findings). Detailed results are published in the [thematic report "Conclusions from the first accreditations of study programmes"](#).

Good practice was most often indicated in the assessment of Article 4 of the Standards.

During the year, the Agency carried out activities related to the smooth implementation of internal system standards and standards for habilitation and inauguration procedures in higher education settings and the preparation of requests for conformity assessment of the internal system. Universities and stakeholder representatives were given the opportunity to ask questions on the interpretation of the requirements of the standards through an online request on the Agency's website. Standards 6 (teachers) and 7 for study programme (creative activities) were among the most problematic standards in terms of interpreting requirements according to the number and frequency of questions sent in 2022.

2 events were organised to better understand the internal system standards and standards for habilitation and inauguration proceedings. The SQAf 2022 conference entitled "[The Future of Quality Assurance in Higher Education](#)" was intended for persons responsible for the internal system of the higher education institution (57 participants). In addition, there was a webinar entitled "[Compliance of habilitation and inauguration procedures with standards for habilitation and](#)

Usefulness of the above events
according to participants' feedback (number of answers)



[inauguration proceedings](#)” (452 participants). The webinar was intended for persons responsible for the internal quality assurance system, persons providing personnel for habilitation and inauguration procedures, members of scientific councils, university teachers, SAAVS reviewers.

The majority of participants who received feedback found the organised events useful (96, or around 19 % of participants). Two other webinars were dedicated to the submission of requests for the conformity assessment of the internal system ([more in section xx of the report](#)).

Reflection and suggestions:

The first experience of implementing standards for study programmes could be evaluated in 2022. These were used by universities in the process of harmonisation of internal systems and enabled the Agency to optimise the activities related to interpretation of standards. The success of the implementation of the standards at universities can be evaluated following an assessment of the internal systems in 2023 and 2024. Other tasks related to the development of internal quality assurance standards arise from the amendment of the Higher Education Act and the Law on Quality Assurance. They will require a change in standards, in particular in relation to the amendment of Section 53a of the Higher Education Act (on teacher study programmes and programmes aimed at the education and non-formal education of children and pupils) and Section 76 (on the acquisition of scientific and pedagogical degrees and artistic-pedagogical degrees “docent” and “professor”).

Therefore, the Agency’s key tasks for improving standards in 2023 will be:

- *further monitor and evaluate the level of compliance of the Agency’s individual standards on the basis of the applications submitted and the application documents and the results of the conformity assessment of the internal systems.*
- *develop, in cooperation with stakeholders’ representatives, draft standards for teacher study programmes and programmes focusing on the education and non-formal education of children and pupils, their public comments and approval.*
- *in cooperation with stakeholders, revise the standards for habilitation and inauguration procedures, offer them for public comments and approval (deadlines to coordinate with the requirement to direct applications for accreditation of inaugural procedures and accreditation of habilitation procedures after granting rights to create study programmes).*

7.3. Monitoring and improvement of external quality assurance procedures and processes

The Agency, in cooperation with stakeholders, monitors and improves the external quality assurance activities already in place and develops and implements additional external quality assurance services and tools within the scope of the Quality Assurance Act.

7.3.1. Feedback on external quality assurance activities

In order to optimise external quality assurance services (accreditation activities), in accordance with Article 8 of the Regulation, the Internal Quality Assurance System develops a system of internal and external feedback from stakeholders. The subject of the feedback survey in 2022 was the accreditation procedures for study programmes on the basis of applications from universities in accordance with Section 30 of the Quality Assurance Act.

Type of Feedback	The method	The term
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I. Feedback by representatives of the management of the university on granting accreditation of study programme pursuant to § 30	Collection of views in the form of structured interviews	2-6/2022
II. Feedback from persons responsible for the study programme	Online questionnaire survey (automatic transmission from SAAVS IS to persons who have been listed as ORMs in the applications)	2-4/2022
III. Feedback from reviewers (WG members)	Online questionnaire survey (automatic transmission to IS SAAVS working group members)	12/2021-4/2022
IV. Internal evaluation of accreditation processes by Agency staff	Brainstorming among the staff of the Accreditation Activities Unit	6/2022

The survey of views among representatives of university management was conducted in the form of partially structured interviews with representatives of the university management who were responsible or participated in the process of applying for accreditation of the study programme and participated in the assessment process on behalf of the management of the university. Interviews were conducted between 7.2.2022 and 31.5.2022. 14 interviews were conducted. The aim of the interview was to obtain the opinion of responsible respondents on the process of granting accreditation of study programmes.

The most common positive statements	The most common negative statements (deficiencies)
<p><i>Correctness with the Agency's side</i></p> <p><i>Change of approach to assessment — interest in the content of the programme</i></p> <p><i>Involvement of stakeholders</i></p> <p><i>Ease of application in SAAVS IS</i></p> <p><i>Good awareness of applicants</i></p> <p><i>Good support with the Accreditation Activities Unit</i></p> <p><i>Timely and accurate information on the organisation of the assessment</i></p> <p><i>Good organisation of on-site assessments</i></p> <p><i>Correctness of the working group</i></p> <p><i>Expertise of the working group</i></p> <p><i>Clear content and structure of the report</i></p> <p><i>Providing recommendations</i></p> <p><i>Opportunity to comment on the report</i></p>	<p><i>Duration of proceedings</i></p> <p><i>Lack of time to prepare</i></p> <p><i>Scope of application documents</i></p> <p><i>Problematic Invitation of Stakeholders</i></p> <p><i>Coordination of on-the-spot assessments in the division of working groups</i></p> <p><i>Composition of the working group from the point of view of the agenda</i></p> <p><i>Unpreparedness of some members of the working group</i></p> <p><i>Compatibility of foreign reviewers (especially leg requirements)</i></p> <p><i>Possible threats to impartiality (e.g. in "small" fields of study)</i></p> <p><i>Lack of response to the university's opinion on the report</i></p> <p><i>Ambiguous evaluation of creative activities</i></p> <p><i>Problematic identification of good practices</i></p> <p><i>Speed of entry in the register</i></p>

The survey of views among persons responsible for study programmes (OSG) was carried out each time after the completion of the procedure for granting accreditation of study programmes in the form of a questionnaire survey (combination of open and closed questions) between 21.2.2022 and 1.5.2022. A graphical evaluation of the survey is included in [Annex 8 of the report](#).

38 out of 63 interviewed SPCs were involved in the survey. They replied to 53 % (42) of the 79 questionnaires sent. In all examined aspects of the assessment (application, organisation of the assessment, work of the working group, structure and content of the evaluation report, adoption and transmission of decisions) 74 % and more of the responses were expressed by the OGMS that they are "very satisfied" or "rather satisfied". The PMIs were most satisfied with the organisation of the on-the-spot assessment (37 statements "rather satisfied" or "very satisfied", 94 %) and with the adoption and

delivery of decisions (38 statements “rather satisfied” or “very satisfied”, 95 %). Dissatisfaction was declared with the preparation of the application documents (10 replies “rather dissatisfied”, 1 “very dissatisfied”) and with the content of the evaluation report (4 replies “rather dissatisfied”, 2 replies “very dissatisfied”). In open questions, the OSIs provided suggestions on the questioned aspects of the proceedings (in total, 136 recommendations were made).

The most common proposals from the OMS on individual aspects of the procedure in open questions:

- Simplify the application documents (particularly with the simultaneous submission of several programmes in parallel).
- Streamline the progress and shorten the duration of the assessment.
- Better adapt the composition and expertise of the members of the working group to the subject of the study programme.
- Improve the comparability of the conclusions of the working groups for the same or similar findings (e.g. creative activities).
- Provide the Agency’s feedback on the College’s opinion on the evaluation report.
- Improve the explanatory elements of the evaluation report, in particular in the event of shortcomings identified or the assessment of creative activities.
- Speeding up decision-making.

The survey of views among the members of the working groups took place after the end of the relevant procedure in the form of a questionnaire survey between 12.12.2021 and 31.3. 2022. A graphical evaluation of the survey is included in [Annex 8 of the report](#). 118 of the 247 interviewed evaluators participated in the survey and produced 145 (45 %) of the 324 questionnaires sent. The highest return (61 %) was recorded by the chairs of the working groups, the lowest from foreign reviewers (41 %). For all questioned aspects of the assessment (preparation of the working group, content of the application and application documents, organisation of the assessment, composition and work of the working group, process and structure of the evaluation report), 94 % or more of the evaluations were “very satisfied” or “rather satisfied”. The highest dissatisfaction among the members of the working groups was found in the context of the evaluation report process (9 replies “rather dissatisfied” or “unsatisfied”) and the quality of the application documents (9 replies “rather dissatisfied”).

The reviewers in the open questions provided comments on the questioned aspects of the proceedings (in total, they made 328 recommendations).

The most common suggestions on the various aspects of the procedure:

- Better preparation and training of PS.
- Streamline the work of a member of the working group in IS SAAVS (in particular clarification of the notification).
- Simplify the documentation and access to the assessment documents in SAAVS IS.
- Streamline the content and progress of the assessment.
- Optimise the schedule of work for on-site assessment.
- Better define the roles of PS members in relation to expertise on the agenda.
- Independent support for foreign reviewers.
- *Streamline the cooperation of the members of the working group.*
- *Optimise the process of processing and translating the Working Party’s evaluation report.*

The final phase of collecting views on the assessment activities was an internal evaluation of the accreditation processes by the Agency's staff. Proposals have been formulated to improve accreditation activities (June 2022) and summarised in final actions (August 2022):

1. Extend the list of reviewers to foreign reviewers from V4 partner countries with an emphasis on ESG oriented persons and external quality assurance of higher education. To target experienced foreign reviewers. Create trade union panels within the evaluators' list to ensure equality of evaluation within the department.
2. Establish the position of secretary of the working group in relation to the reduction of administrative burden on the Chair.
3. Shorten the time limits for setting up a working group. Obtain prior consent from reviewers to participate in the working group before approving the composition of the working group in the Agency's Executive Board.
4. Improve the education system of assessors and assessment training.
5. Adjust the course and number of introductory briefings to ensure a better readiness of the assessment working group (focus on the assessment of the application documents and the preparation of the assessment question scenario)
6. Improve the access and quality of assessment documents and simplify the communication system with the SAAVS IS Working Group.
7. Simplify the application for accreditation of a study programme. Simplify the internal evaluation report of the study programme, making it possible to process and submit a single study programme report for different language mutations or forms.
8. Increase the flexibility of the working group's work on on-the-spot assessments.
9. Revise the methodology for evaluating standards.
10. Prepare sample questions for individual standards and members of the working group.
11. Introduce an act of factual commenting on the draft assessment report before its finalisation by the Working Party.
12. Submit a draft decision on the request, together with a justification for the Executive Board's deliberations. Invite the Chair of the Working Group to the Executive Board's deliberations.

7.3.2. Complaints and appeals

The Agency's priority is to carefully examine complaints received under [the Complaints Directive](#) and take appropriate measures for improvement. In 2022, one complaint was received against the Agency's action. The complaint was directed against the Agency's or Executive Board's activities regarding the withdrawal of accreditation of habilitation and inauguration proceedings. The complainant argued that the rule of law was incorrectly applied in the resolution of the Executive Board. Since the university itself requested the withdrawal of the related accreditation of the relevant habilitation procedure and inauguration procedure, the complaint was assessed as unfounded. The complainant subsequently lodged a complaint against the handling of the complaint (means of redress) which will be dealt with and investigated in 2023.

A party to proceedings may object to decisions of the Agency pursuant to Section 9 of the Quality Assurance Act and to the [Rules of Procedure of the Board of Appeal](#). In 2022, the Agency did not receive objections to the Agency's decisions. The Board of Appeal ruled on the objections raised in the previous period. In one case, it decided on the objection to the SAAVŠ decision rejecting the application for accreditation of the study programme. Upheld the objection (appeal), annulled the

Agency's decision and referred the case back to the Agency for a new procedure and decision. Furthermore, the Board of Appeal ruled on the objection raised concerning the suspension of study programmes. In this case too, the Board of Appeal upheld the College and annulled the Agency's decision and referred the case back to a new procedure and decision.

7.3.3. Development and improvement of external quality assurance processes

Based on the evaluation of the proceedings in 2021 and 2022 and the results of the feedback, the [Standard Evaluation Methodology](https://saavs.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Methodology-for-evaluation-of-standards-as-amended-on-22-September-2022.pdf) <https://saavs.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Methodology-for-evaluation-of-standards-as-amended-on-22-September-2022.pdf> (effective from 22.9.) has been revised and modified. 2022). In addition to the revision of the study programme assessment procedures, the adaptation was aimed at aligning some of the provisions of the methodology with legislative changes, clarifying and simplifying working groups' procedures in assessing internal systems, and clearly defining the procedures for assessing the compliance of learning outcomes with the National Qualifications Framework. At the same time, too fragmented assessment criteria have been aggregated in order to increase the efficiency of the assessment. In 2022, the Agency also proposed a change to the Tariff of Fees, carried out its public comments and, after approval of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, published the schedule (with effect on 8.9.2022). The existing rates have been indexed and some fees based on the amendments to the Higher Education Act and the Law on Quality Assurance have been added.

In the first quarter of 2022, the Agency focused on the completion and evaluation of procedures for accreditation of study programmes received by the Agency by 31.3.2021 on the basis of Section 36(2) of the Quality Assurance Act. At 31.2.2022, it assessed 177 applications for accreditation of study programmes. After considering these requests, the Agency's Executive Board decided to grant 160 accreditations of the study programme; 17 applications were rejected on the ground that the party did not meet the standards for the study programme. The detailed evaluation of the application shall include the report [Analysis of the findings of the evaluation reports of the working groups in the assessment of applications for accreditation of the study programme](#). The purpose of the analysis was to enable higher education institutions to avoid identified shortcomings or to apply examples of good practice. The Agency applies the findings in the interpretation of the standards, emphasising the most problematic requirements according to the results of the analysis.

In 2022, applications relating to the harmonisation of internal higher education systems were received and dealt with mainly by the Agency (2 proposals for modification of the study programme; 467 requests for prior approval to modify the study programme; 154 requests for changes to study programme data; 143 requests for withdrawal of accreditation of habilitation and inauguration procedures). As a rule, these requests (except for 2 study programme modifications) did not require the appointment of a working group and were examined and processed by the Agency's staff.

The Agency launched 2 own-initiative procedures in 2022. Both related to the verification of shortcomings in habilitation and inauguration procedures. The Agency decided to withdraw 1 of the right to conduct habilitation and inauguration proceedings. One procedure for the accreditation of a study programme under Section 30 of the Quality Assurance Act was reopened in relation to the decisions of the Appeals Board, which upheld the objection of the university and referred the case back to the re-execution.

In 2022, the Agency received 2 applications for accreditation of a study programme (they are being dealt with by the deadline for processing the report).

The amendment to the Higher Education Act³ created an obligation for the Agency to establish and implement a procedure for examining proposals for the award of the title of professor (according to the Internal Regulation No.2/2022 on the method of screening proposals for the award of the title of professor). 60 proposals for appointment as professors were forwarded by the Ministry to the Agency in 2022 for examination. By the deadline for processing the report, the Agency completed the screening of 35 proposals on which it provided comments to the Ministry.

In 2022, the Agency continued to modify existing and implement the new assessment processes. In connection with the amendment to Section 2(h) of the Quality Assurance Act, the request for prior approval for the modification of the study programme and the [related guidance for higher education institutions](#) was updated. Further steps have been taken to assess the conformity of internal systems under Section 24 of the Quality Assurance Act. A procedure for requesting the conformity assessment of the internal system has been established and consulted with stakeholders. Methodological support for applications has been prepared for universities: [Application guidelines](#), [Handbook for drawing up an internal evaluation report on the implementation of internal systems](#) and a [guide for applying for conformity assessment of the internal system in the Agency's information system](#). The Agency organised two online events for the submission of requests for the conformity assessment of the internal system. [Webinar on requests for conformity assessment of the internal system](#) (29.4.2022). The event was intended for persons responsible for the internal quality assurance system, those responsible for applying, university teachers and students and SAAVS reviewers. 373 persons participated (of which 338 university employees, 6 students, 28 assessors, 1 employer). [The joint consultation on the submission of a request for conformity assessment of the internal system in the SAAVS Information System](#) was addressed to the persons responsible for submitting the application (4.11.2022, 87 participants). In 2022, the conformity assessment processes of the internal system in the SAAVS Information System were further developed. In the module 'Submission of an application', the procedure for submitting and checking the application for conformity assessment of the internal system has been implemented. He was consulted with selected universities according to the type of academic information system (mainly AIS2, AIS, MAIS, etc.). The SAAVS IS in the module "Requests" implemented the process of creation and work of the working group in procedures on the conformity assessment of the internal system. Some steps have been taken to improve the user-friendliness of the information system (e.g. simple change of language of user interfaces, optimisation of notifications).

For better organisation and availability of on-site assessments, she procured a motor vehicle.

Reflection and suggestions:

The results of the monitoring and feedback, as well as changes in legislation, required further changes to the accreditation procedures (in particular the methodology) in 2022. The changes were aimed at optimising the work of the working group, the consistency of evaluation reports, the consistency of the evaluation of creative activities, the assessment of compliance with the qualification framework and others. In addition to improving the processes already in place, the Agency devoted itself to preparing

³ Amendment to the Higher Education Act Section 76(8), according to which 'the Ministry of Education may submit an initiative to the Agency to verify the fulfilment of the conditions laid down in paragraph 7 and the conformity of the proposal for the grant of a scientific-pedagogical degree or an artistic-pedagogical degree professor with the legislation and standards for habilitation and inauguration proceedings'.

for the conformity assessment of internal systems. In this regard, the Agency's information system was also developed, improvements were made to increase its user-friendliness.

The priority of the Agency in 2023 will be to cope with the difficult process of assessing the conformity of the internal systems of Slovak universities. In addition, the Agency must prepare further assessment activities (in particular the assessment of corrective measures, the accreditation of habilitation procedures and inauguration procedures, the accreditation of teacher study programmes and programmes aimed at educating and non-formal education of children and pupils).

Building on the experience of the Board of Appeal's decision-making practice so far, it will be necessary to improve the expertise of members in the field of public law and practice in higher education. Another challenge will be to reduce the length of proceedings and to justify decisions in line with the ESG, without too much analogy with that of ordinary courts.

Therefore, the key tasks of the Agency in the development of accreditation procedures in 2023 will be:

- Conformity assessment of internal higher education systems according to the indicative assessment plan 2023-2024.
- Implement the procedure for receiving notice on the adjustment of standard study durations of study programmes in external form of study according to.
- Revise how to apply for accreditation of study programmes according to the results of the 2022 feedback.
- Prepare a feedback system on the conformity assessment activities of the internal system.
- In the Agency's information system, create the conditions for continuous monitoring of the status and quality of ongoing processes.
- Revise the internal procedures and related rules of the Agency according to the revision plan for 2023.
- Prepare and make available, by 1/2024 at the latest, the application for accreditation of habilitation and inauguration procedures so that the Agency is ready to receive applications for accreditation of inaugural and habilitation procedures from schools with the right to create study programmes (and by 31 April 2024 at the latest to decide on the granting of accreditation of habilitation procedures and inauguration procedures).
- Prepare an application for accreditation of teacher study programmes and programmes aimed at the education and non-formal education of children and pupils.
- Accelerate the decision-making of the Appeals Board and improve the reasoning of its decisions.

7.3.4. Development and revision of internal system policies and procedures

The Agency shall regularly monitor, evaluate and revise the policies and procedures of the Agency's internal system. Based on the results of feedback, changes in legislation or changes to internal processes, the Agency's Executive Board issued or amended the following internal system procedures in 2022:

- [The methodology for evaluating standards <https://saavs.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Methodology-for-evaluation-of-standards-as-amended-on-22-September-2022.pdf>](https://saavs.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Methodology-for-evaluation-of-standards-as-amended-on-22-September-2022.pdf) has been effective as of 22 September 2022.
- [The schedule of fees](#) (public comments from 2.6.2022 to 2.7.2022, approved by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic approved the amendment of the schedule of 30.8.2022).
- [Internal Regulation No.1/2022 — Internal Quality Assurance System for SAAVŠ activities](#) (approved on 24 February 2022).

- Internal Rule 3/2023 - [Directive on the remuneration of members of the SAAVŠ Working Groups and on the reimbursement of related incidental expenses](#) (approved as of 20 October 2022).
- Internal Regulation No 2/2022 - [on how to examine proposals for the award of a scientific-pedagogical or artistic-pedagogical title "Professor" of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education](#) (approved on 19 May 2022)

Reflection and suggestions

According to the results of the evaluation of the internal system and legislative changes, the following rules and guidelines will need to be issued or amended in 2023:

- *Directive on the Use of a Service Vehicle SAAVŠ*
- *Working rules*
- *Directive on the establishment of procedures for public procurement of the contracting authority of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education*
- *Rule Regulating conflicts of interest of members of collective bodies, members of working groups of the Executive Board and employees of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education,*
- *Economic regulations relating to bookkeeping and financial control;*
- *A handbook for working groups when assessing the conformity of the internal system.*

Conclusion

In 2022, the Agency defined its internal system and defined the frequency, procedures and scope of its evaluation. In accordance with Article 8 of Internal Regulation 1/2022, once every 5 years, an external evaluation of the internal system is carried out and a self-assessment report is drawn up according to ENQA and EQAR. As a follow-up to this evaluation cycle, it carries out an annual evaluation of the internal system and aims to evaluate progress in fulfilling the mission and policies of the internal system on the basis of the implementation of the annual work plans, the results of the ties, the review of related processes.

The first extraordinary evaluation of the internal system follows the findings and conclusions [of the self-assessment report](#) for the period 2020 to 10/2022, complements and details the findings for the period 1/2022 to 12/2022 and translates proposals for measures for 2023, with a view to 2024.

The first report defines the scope, structure and format of the annual evaluation of the internal system. The scope and content of the evaluation are limited by the maturity and stability of internal system procedures and processes. The Agency continues to implement accreditation activities within the scope of the legislation in force and in this context permanently complements and regulates internal system procedures and processes. Instability is also caused by an uneven load on the system, often by impact actions, with no or very low repeatability. In view of the above specificities, it will be necessary to focus on developing more universal monitoring and feedback procedures and on better planning of evaluation activities, in particular continuous data collection. It will also be necessary to establish an administrative, low-impact system of indicators for monitoring and evaluating, in particular, replicable accreditation activities.

Recommendations and proposals for further development and improvement of the internal system policies, processes and procedures set out in the text of the report will be part of the Agency's work plan for 2023 with a view to 2024.

Annex 1. Evaluation [of the SAAHE Action Plan 2022](#)

The area	Indication of activity/activity	Implementation in 2022
1. List of reviewers	1.1 Extension of the list of assessors to foreign reviewers with an emphasis on ESG oriented persons and external quality assurance of higher education	At 31.12. entry of 30 reviewers of internal system experts in the list of reviewers.
	1.2 Extension of the list of assessors to include new assessors from students, practice representatives and trade union experts lacking sufficient assessors	As of 31.12. enrolment of 17 student assessors and 24 practitioners in the list of assessors.
2. Training of assessors	2.1 Execution of online evaluators' training for the assessment of the internal system	As of 31.12.2022, 11 online training sessions were held exclusively for the reviewers.
3. Information system	3.1 Improving access to assessment documents in SAAVŠ IS and working environment for the work of the working group	Gradual customisation of the SAAVŠ IS procedures to assess the conformity of internal systems — ongoing.
4. Thematic analyses	4.1 Establishment of the thematic analysis "Principal conclusions from the first accreditations of study programmes"	The thematic report was approved by the SAAVŠ Executive Board on 8.12. 2022.
5. Entry to ENQA, EQAR	5.1 Sending a self-assessment report to ENQA	SAR sent to ENQA 30.11.2022.
6. Assessment of internal systems	6.1 Preliminary formation of working groups 6.2 Obtaining prior consents from reviewers to participate in the work of the working group	As of 31 December 2022, drafts of 33 working groups were prepared for discussion and approval. Key members preliminarily expressed their interest in participating in the working group.
7. International Events	7.1 Preparation of the "V4 Forum" event 7.2 Event "V4 Forum"	The event realised 13. and 14.10.2022.
9. Adaptation of Directives	9. Modification of the Remuneration Directive for Working Group Members	Internal Regulation No 3/2022 approved by the Executive Board on 20 October 2022

Annex 2. Draft indicators to monitor the Agency's strategy 2022-2027

The area	Strategic objective 2022-2027	Strategy Monitoring Indicators	
1. Accreditation activities	Objective 1.1: Develop the Agency's accreditation standards	1.1.1.	Compliance of standards with ESG (ENQA findings, EQAR for individual standards).
		1.1.2.	Most often unfulfilled standards.
		1.1.3.	The most problematic standards with a view to clarity, equity or integrity of the assessment (according to the results of stakeholder feedback, analysis of the results of the assessment).
	Objective 1.2: Develop the Agency's accreditation procedures	Compliance of procedures with stakeholder requirements:	
		1.2.1.	Compliance of procedures with ESG — findings of ENQA, EQAR of external quality assurance.
		1.2.2.	Compliance of procedures with the requirements of higher education regulations (results of commenting on methodology and scale)
		1.2.3.	Difficulty of preparing for assessment and assessment by HE (results of applicants' feedback).
		Effectiveness of accreditation procedures:	
		1.2.4.	The state of development of proceedings in the reporting period by type.
		1.2.5.	Duration and observance of time limits.
		1.2.6.	Economic sustainability of the assessment (financial coverage of the costs of assessing applications).
		Integrity and quality of accreditation procedures:	
		1.2.7.	Stakeholder satisfaction with the assessment (results of feedback from applicants, assessors, responsible persons).
		1.2.8.	Number of findings/reports of conflict of interest in the process of preparation for the assessment.
		1.2.9.	Number of indicated threats of conflict of interest/impairment of impartiality in or after the assessment process.
		1.2.10.	Number of findings/reports of breaches of SAAVS ethical principles (feedback, complaints, appeals).
	1.2.11.	Findings of discriminatory conduct with the parties of the members of the working groups, staff or members of the bodies of the Agency (feedback, complaints, appeals).	
	1.2.12.	Number of complaints by status and results of assessment and resolution.	
	1.2.13.	Number and results of appeals against the outcome of the assessment and resolution.	
	Improvement of internal systems		
	1.2.14.	Effectiveness of corrective measures (share of escalated measures, share of repeatedly identified deficiencies).	
	1.2.15.	Improvement of VSK (trends of compliance of VPS, SO and HI and IK with standards, development of key indicators of HEIs).	
	1.2.16.	Student satisfaction (results of student satisfaction survey).	

	Objective 1.3: Develop the professionalism and competence of the members of the bodies, working groups and staff	1.3.1. Fluctuation of agency staff. Coverage of individual assessment areas by assessors:	
		1.3.2. Coverage of individual fields of study (number of domestic and foreign assessors in the field).	
		1.3.3. Availability and involvement of practitioners.	
		1.3.4. Availability and involvement of student assessors.	
		1.3.5. Availability and involvement of HR experts. Development and training of reviewers, working groups, members of the bodies:	
		1.3.6. Participation of reviewers, employees in trainings and trainings (number and share per category of participants).	
		1.3.7. Results of knowledge verification.	
		1.3.8. Satisfaction with the evaluator's preparation for the assessment (examination feedback).	
		1.3.9. The results of the evaluation of the assessor's work.	
		1.3.10. Satisfaction of applicants with the work of the working group (results of feedback).	
2. International cooperation	Objective 2.1: Increase the involvement of foreign experts in the Agency's activities	1.1.1. Coverage of individual study fields by foreign reviewers 1.1.2. Degree of involvement of foreign reviewers in working groups 1.1.3. The degree of involvement of the members of the International Consultation Board in the Agency's work.	
	Objective 2.2: Develop cooperation with partner agencies abroad.	2.2.1. Number and extent of cooperation with partner agencies abroad.	
	Objective 2.3: Achieve full membership of the Agency in ENQA and enrolment of the Agency in EQAR.	2.3.1. Acquisition and maintenance of SAAVS membership in ENQA 2.3.2. Registration and maintenance of SAAVS in the EQAR list 2.3.3. Results of other ENQA and EQAR review 2.3.4. Participation in ENQA and EQAR events and projects.	
3. Culture of quality	Objective 3.1: Develop cooperation with stakeholders (KICs)	3.1.1. Scope of cooperation and stakeholder involvement in the development of higher education quality assurance policies and practices (by category of KICs) 3.1.2. Involvement of stakeholders in feedback on SAAVS activities	
	Objective 3.2: Establish and develop a system for disseminating good practices in higher education quality assurance	3.2.1. Establish a system for disclosing good practices if exceptional follow-up to good practices or results.	
	Objective 3.3: Carry out analyses of the higher education system based on the Agency's findings and present their results through thematic reports.	3.3.1. Regular preparation and publication of thematic analyses in accordance with the roadmap.	

Annex 3. Indicative timetable for the conformity assessment of internal systems 2023-2024

	Activity	ZDP.	2023												2024			
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Completeness of requests	Check the completeness of requests for conformity assessment of the internal system	THE OATH																
	Sending of calls for payment of fees	THE OATH																
	Control of payment of fees	OEP																
Creation of working groups	Creation of working groups	THE OATH																
	Obtaining the consent of reviewers to participate in the working group	THE OATH																
	Submission of proposals for the composition of working groups to the Executive Board	THE OATH																
	Approval of the composition of the working group	VR																
	Communication on the composition of the Working Groups of the College	THE OATH																
	Objections of the College to the bias of a member of the working group	YOU																
	Preparation, signing and publication of warrant contracts	OEP																
	Training of assessors	OAC																
Assessment	Introductory briefings of working groups	THE OATH																
	Consideration of application documents by working groups	PS																
	On-site assessments	PS																
	Processing of evaluation reports by the Working Party	PS																
	Checking and factual comments on evaluation reports	THE OATH																
	Finalisation of the evaluation report	PS																
	Sending an assessment report to the College	THE OATH																
	Opinion of the College on the evaluation report	YOU																
The Rosary-Distribution	Presentation of the evaluation report and input for the CoR's assessment	THE OATH																
	Decision of the Executive Board on the conformity of the internal system	VR																
	Sending decisions to universities	THE OATH																
Corrective measures	Implementation of corrective measures in line with the CoR decision	YOU																
	Verification of corrective measures as decided by the CoR	OAC/PS																

Annex 4: Evaluation of the schedule of tasks related to ENQA admission and enrolment in EQAR

Activities 2022	
Approval of the curriculum and procedure for drawing up a self-assessment report (hereinafter SAR) for the external assessment of the compliance of the Agency's activities with the ESG in relation to the application for ENQA membership and enrolment in EQAR by the Executive Board.	03.02.2022 CoR Resolution 41/24
ENQA — Review request letter (ENQA Douglas Blackstock)	28.02.2022
ENQA — Certificate of eligibility of SAAVS to apply for membership (ENQA Goran Dakovic)	03.03.2022
EQAR — Acceptance and acceptance of the "ENQA Coordinated Review" (Colin Tück)	05.03.2022
Invitation to enter an online application in EQAR after approval of ToR (4.10.2022).	
The first SAR proposal has been completed.	May 2022
Consultation with KICs (reflected in SAR Chapter.7 Opinions of Stakeholders). SAR sent:	June — September 2022
- Consultative Board of SAAVS — Prof. PhDr. Oľga Orgoňová, CSc., Prof. RNDr. Vladimír Ira, CSc., Prof. RNDr. Oto Hudec, CSc., Prof. MUDr. Dušan Meško PhD., Dr.h.c. Prof. Ing. Tatiana Čorejová, Ph.D., Prof. Ing. Ján Szolgay, Bc. Matej Gajdoš	comments incorporated 15.6.2022
- Slovak Rector's Conference — Prof. Ing. Rudolf Kropil President	30.06.2022
- Council of universities — doc. RNDr. Martin Putala, PhD. Chairman	30.06.2022
- Student Council of Universities — Consultation with the President	26.08.2022
- Alliance of Sectoral Councils (SAR proposal sent on 11.8.2022 — Lucia Lednárová Dítětová)	05.09.2022
- International Consultative Council (proposal sent on 11.8.2022 — Dr. Mark Jones, Dr. Achim Hopbach)	
Approval of SAR by SAAVS Executive Board	20.10.2022 CoR Resolution 51/2022
Signature of contract with ENQA, signature of tripartite ToR, fee paid	18.11.2022
SAR sent by ENQA	30.11.2022

Tasks 2023	
ENQA — Delivery of the Working Group proposal (without identified conflict of interest)	06.01.2023
ENQA — Delivery of a comment on SAR	09.01.2023
Processing of ENQA comments and sending the final version of SAR Publication on the website	18.01.2023
Online meeting with an agency worker	17.3.2023
Site visit (visit on site)	28.-31.3.2023
Deciding on an application for membership of ENQA	Autumn 2023
Deciding on an application for enrolment in EQAR	Autumn 2023

Annex 5. Overview of changes to legislation and binding external documents 2022

Legislation of the Slovak Republic	Action 2022	Tasks 2023
Amendment to Act No 137/2022 amending Act No 131/2002 on universities Section 53a Teaching and non-formal education programmes for children and pupils	Participation in the working group of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic on the creation of Decree No 244/2019 on the system of study fields.	Develop draft standards for teacher study programmes.
§ 77 Establishment of posts of university teachers and professors and associate professors — the Agency shall assess the compliance of the minimum criteria with the standards.	—	A draft of the minimum criteria is expected.
§ 76 Scientific and pedagogical degrees “docent” and “professor” (1) ‘accreditation of habilitation procedures in the relevant field of habilitation and inaugural proceedings’ and ‘accreditation of inauguration proceedings in the relevant field of habilitation and inaugural proceedings’ (8) Incentives to verify the fulfilment of the conditions for the award of the title.	Processing of Internal Regulation No 2/2022 on the method of examining proposals for the award of the title of professor. Staffing and starting the process.	Continue the screening of proposals for the award of titles in the scope commissioned by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic.
Related amendments to Act No. 269/2018 Coll. on Quality Assurance § 2 Definitions — h) by modifying the study programme. addition or deletion of compulsory subjects or optional subjects, change of conditions to proper	Amendment of the request for prior consent to the modification of the study programme.	
§ 4, b) The Agency provides the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic with information on facts suggesting academic fraud or participation in academic fraud.		Incorporate into the Agency’s procedures for the assessment of internal quality assurance systems pursuant to §24 of Act No 269/2018.
§ 4, g) the Agency produces — analyses of the development of the higher education system in the Slovak Republic, including surveys among students, university employees, employers and other affected entities and analysis of internal evaluation reports related to internal systems.	Thematic report on the findings of the student opinion survey of 5.9.2022. Report “Conclusions from the first accreditations of study programmes” of 17.12.2022.	Analyses in line with the 2022-2025 Thematic Analysis and Reports Plan.
§ 8 Submission of a written reasoned objection of bias to a member of the working group.	Amendment of the Manual for Administration of Accreditation Procedures SAAVŠ from Notification of the composition of the WP College.	
§ 24 When assessing the internal system, the Agency also takes into account the fulfilment of standards for habilitation and inauguration proceedings.	Amendment to the Methodology for Evaluation of Standards of 22.9.2022, Art. 7.	
§ 30 (1) Accreditation of the study programme — it is required that the external educational institution meets the standards for the study programme...	No change — the requirement is part of VS 2.8.	
Section 31 Procedure for the accreditation of habilitation procedures and accreditation of inauguration procedures..... Article 40 (4) An application for accreditation of a habilitation procedure and an inaugural procedure submitted before 24 April 2022 shall be deemed to be an application for accreditation of the habilitation procedure		Draft amended standards for habilitation and inauguration proceedings.

and accreditation of the inaugural procedure in accordance with the regulations in force from 25 April 2022. (5) The right to conduct habilitation proceedings and inaugural proceedings..... maintained until 31 August 2024, unless the Agency decides to withdraw....		
40 (1)..... The College shall notify the Agency of the modification of the standard length within one month of its implementation.		Establish a procedure for the adoption of a communication on the modification of standard study periods of study programmes.

Annex 5/page 2

Amendments to Act No 311/2001 Coll.		Revision of the Staff Regulations
Amendment to Act No 663/2007 on minimum wages		Changes to wage regulations.
428/2022 Coll. and 251/2022 Coll. Act amending Act No 211/2000 on free access to information and amending certain acts	There is no need to modify internal legislation	
488/2022 Coll. Act amending and supplementing Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services.. supplementing Section 35a National System of Occupations and Section 35b Alliance of Sectoral Councils and Sector Councils.	—	Coordinate with ASR procedures for the development of evaluation standards.
Act 343/2015 on public procurement (change of procurement limits, obligation to use electronic platform...).	We are obliged to use https://eplatforma.vlada.gov.sk/	Revise Internal Regulation 5/2020 Directive on the establishment of procedures for public procurement of the contracting authority of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education

Other binding/related external documents	Measures 2021	Tasks 2023
<p>SR Recovery and Resilience Plan</p> <p>Component 8 Reform 3: A new approach to higher education accreditation. Q4 2022: “All universities will request a review of the internal quality assurance system for higher education in accordance with the new accreditation criteria — December 2022”.</p> <p>Component 7 Reform 2: Preparation and development of teachers for new content and form of teaching Q1 2022: Amendment of legislative frameworks — Act No. 131/2002 Coll., Decree No. 244/2019 Coll., Standards for Accreditation of University Study Programmes. Q3 2023: Implementation of new teaching programmes for primary and secondary education (faculties preparing teachers):</p>	<p>As of 31.12.2022, 33 universities submitted a request for an assessment of the conformity of the internal system.</p> <p>The standards for teacher programmes were not established due to non-compliance with the timetable when issuing the related binding regulations.</p>	<p>Elaboration of draft standards for teacher study programmes. Addition/modification of the methodology for evaluating standards.</p>
<p>EC, ENQA, 7.7.2022, Report “Bologna Process Commitments: a way forward. ENQA, ESU, 12.5.2022, Listen, Talk and Team-Up — Considerations for panel members in external quality assurance</p>	for the attention	
<p>EC 16.6.2022, Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability</p>	<p>Participation in the Quality Assurance of Micro-credentials survey. Participation in ENQA —</p>	<p>Participate in the preparation of related legislation — MŠVVaŠ SR.</p>

	Conference: "External QA of micro-credentials" 27.9.2022	
EC, EUA, 20.6.2022, "The Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment"	Signature of SAAVS 7.11.2022	Evaluate the obligations arising from the agreement.
EQAR 7.4.2022, Launch of verifiable credentials in DEQAR	-	In cooperation with EQAR, examine the conditions of use of digitally verifiable accreditation and diplomas in the Slovak Republic.
MŠVVaŠ SR — Periodic evaluation of research, development, artistic and other creative activities	—	Determine how the results of the periodic evaluation are used in internal and external quality assurance.

Annex 6. Overview of training and development activities of staff 2022

<i>Date</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>The organiser</i>	<i>Subject of training/event</i>
11.1.2022	Internal	THE OATH	Request for prior consent to the modification of the SO according to § 30.
25.1.2022	Internal	THE OATH	Amendments to SO data §39 of Act No 269/2018 Coll., repeal of Hal, §32a
16.2.2022	Externally	MAB	Universities in the DEQAR system — webinar MAB
25.2.2022	The public	SAAVS	Alignment of habilitation and inauguration procedures with standards for habilitation and inauguration proceedings
8.3.2022	Externally	ENQA	Micro was the final ENQA conference
9.3.2022	Externally	MAB	The European Universities Initiative — MAB
21.4.2022	Externally	EDOS-PEM s.r.o.	Seminar — Amendment to the ZFK Act
29.4.2022	The public	SAAVS	Requests for conformity assessment of the internal quality assurance system
2.5.2022	Externally	ENQA	SEQA-ESG — AQAS mobility
12.5.2022	Externally	ENQA	SEQA — ESG workshop on "Peer review experts" Montenegro
26.5.2022	The public	SAAVS	Conference SQAf — 2022 — Assessment of VS VS.
31.5.2022	Externally	ENQA	ENQA Seminar for agencies planning to undergo a review in 2022-2023.
21.6.2022	Externally	Proeko s.r.o.	Seminar Modern Registry Management
22.6.2022	Externally	ENQA	ENQA Members' Forum 2022
28.6.2022	Externally	ENQA	SEQA-ESG — "Involvement"- Mobility Malta
28.6.2022	Externally	Proeko s.r.o.	Seminar Low Value Contracts
14.7.2022	Internal	THE OATH	Preparation of Working Groups on Assessment of Internal Systems of HE — Case Studies
22.7.2022	Internal	THE OATH	Preparation of Working Groups on Assessment of Internal Systems of HE — Case Studies
29.7.2022	Externally	The MVVVA	Use of outputs of the project Sectorally controlled innovations — webinar
27.9.2022	Externally	ENQA	Webinar Micro-credentials and the role of external quality assurance
29.9.2022	Externally	A.V.I.S. s.r.o.	E-registration seminar
29.9.2022	Externally	Seminaria s.r.o.	Seminar — budgetary relations in the HR
5.10.2022	Externally	ENQA	EQAF 2022 Conference
13.10.2022	Internal	THE OATH	Basic principles for setting up working groups for the assessment of the AAR.
14.10.2022	Externally	Proeko s.r.o.	Seminar Law on Complaints
18.10.2022	Internal	THE OATH	Work with IS SAAVŠ when submitting an application for conformity assessment of the internal quality assurance system of the university pursuant to Section 24 of Act No. 269/2018 Coll.

25.10.2022	Externally	SAV	Conference “Open on Ethics and Economics of Scientific Publishing”
4.11.2022	The public	SAAVS	Submission of an application for conformity assessment of the internal quality assurance system in the SAAVŠ Information System.
9.11.2022	Externally	NAU	Visit to the assessment of the internal NAU system
17.11.2022	Externally	ENQA	EQAF — Timisoara, Romania
23.11.2022	Externally	ENQA	Final meeting for the SEQA-ESG project. On-line
15.12.2022	Internal	THE OATH	Standards for VS — Art. 7,8,9,10.
16.12.2022	Internal	THE OATH	Standards for VS — Art. 5,6.
9.12.2023	Internal	THE OATH	Standards for VS — Art. 3.4.

Annex 7. In particular, the areas of cooperation with stakeholders’ representatives in 2022

Government Office of the Slovak Republic

- Participation and evaluation of the OECD project “Improving Higher Education in the Slovak Republic”.
- Adoption of the Chairman of the Executive Board by the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic on the content of the accreditation reform and the recovery plan.
- Implementation of the recovery plan and related reform of higher education.
- Meetings of the Strategic Council for the Recovery Plan (component 7) on teacher training reform.

The National Council

- Discussions with MPs of the Education, Science, Youth and Sport Committee on the draft amendment to the Higher Education Act and the Law on Quality Assurance.

MŠVVaŠ SR

- Preparation of amendments to the Higher Education Act and related amendments to the Law on Quality Assurance.
- Discussion on the impact of the approved amendment to the Higher Education Act on the process of harmonisation of internal systems of higher education institutions.
- Preparation of an amendment to Decree No 244/2019 of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic on the system of study fields in the Slovak Republic and the creation of a new description of the field of study of Teaching and Pedagogical Sciences (participation in the working group).
- Meetings to implement the recovery plan, in particular component 8 and component 7.
- Revision and proposal of new registers of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, in particular the register of study fields, study programmes and habilitation and inauguration procedures.
- Commenting and approving the Agency’s procedures (Tariff List).

European Commission, Representations and Ambassadors

- Signature of CoARA EUA and EC “The Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment”.
- Discussions with ambassadors at the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic on the requirements for accreditation of study programmes in a foreign language.
- Visit of the German cultural and press attaché at the Agency for the accreditation of foreign language study programmes.
- Meeting with Polish Ambassador to Slovakia with accreditation of study programmes.

ENQA, EQAR — cooperation focused mainly on preparation for assessment and membership of ENAQ and EQAR.

- Participation in the ENQA seminar for agencies planning to undergo an assessment in 2022-2023.

Active participation in the SEQA-ESG project:

- Progress visit in SAAVŠ premises
- Workshop within the SEQA — ESG project on “Peer review experts”.
- Malta workshop on “Involvement”.
- Visit of representatives of ENQA and EQAR to the Agency (Progress visit).
- Mobility of AQAS Cologne.
- Mobility of Prague.
- SEQA-ESG final meeting and presentation of project outputs.

Participation in other ENQA and EQAR events, e.g.

- Participation of a representative of the Agency at the ENQA General Assembly in Stockholm and ENQA Members’ Forum 2022 in Cardiff.
- Participation in the European Quality Assurance Forum 2022, Timisoara.
- Work in the ENQA Academic Integrity Working Group.
- Conference on the results of the Microbol project.
- Micro-credentials and the role of external quality assurance.

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Cooperation with other agencies

- Meeting of representatives of V4QA agencies in Bratislava.
- Participation in Magyar Felsőoktatási Akkreditációs Bizottság (Universities in the DEQAR system, The European Universities Initiative).
- Working visit to the NAÚ (National Accreditation Authority for Higher Education of the Czech Republic) and participation in the assessment of the internal system with the NAÚ working group.
- Working visit to AQAS Cologne and participation in the assessment of the internal system with the NAÚ Working Group.
- Exchange of reviewers of V4QA countries and others.

Student Council of Higher Education

- Participation in the 2022 Academic Senate Convention.
- Participation in the summer school of student assessors in Budapest.
- Meetings on cooperation opportunities, in particular the participation of student assessors in working groups and the management of student assessors when enrolling on the list of assessors, discussion and commenting on the Agency’s self-assessment report.

Employers (APZ, RUZ, ASR)

- Mapping of applications of secondary and university graduates — discussion of the expert working group on mapping applications of secondary and university graduates (RUZ, ASR, MŠVVaŠ SR).
- Use of the outputs of the project sector-driven innovation and cooperation (ASR, MSPSVaR SR).
- Meetings with a representative of RÚZ on opportunities for cooperation in study programmes and creation of working groups and meetings on the topic of graduates.

Representations of universities

Participation in the Higher Education Council meetings — main topics:

- Information and discussions on the alignment of internal systems and preparation for their assessment.
- Draft criteria and procedure for the selection of a member of the Executive Board of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education

Participation in the meetings of the Slovak Rector's Conference — main topics:

- Quality assurance processes in universities.
- The impact of the amendment to Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on the internal system of the university.
- Joint meeting of the SRK and the Czech Republic in Prague, discussion related to the exchange of experience in external quality assurance of higher education.

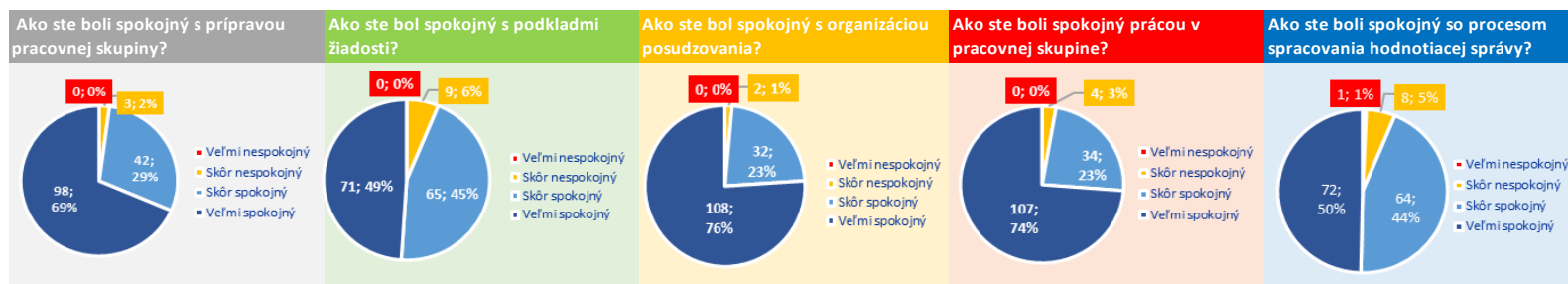
[Detailed overview of cooperation with stakeholders 2022.](#)

Annex 8. Feedback

Hodnotenie spätnej väzby 2022 (posudzovatelia, OZŠP)

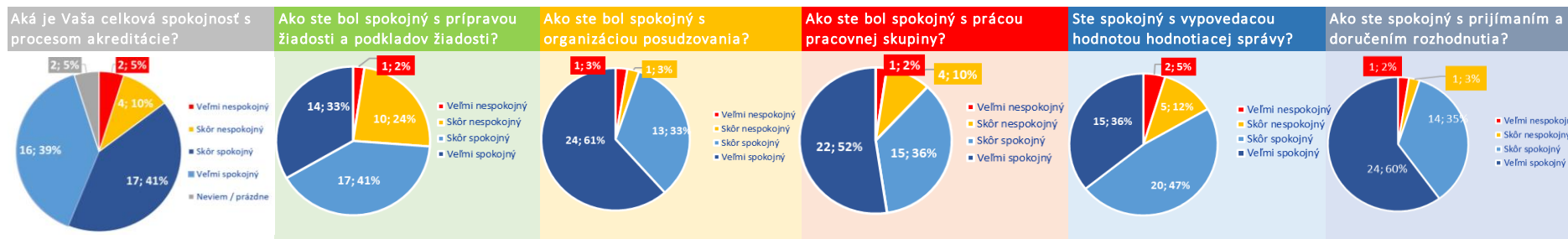
Spätná väzba posudzovateľov - zatvorené otázky - stav k 1.3.2022

	Vypracované	Z celkového počtu zaslaných	%		Vypracované	Z celkového počtu zaslaných	%
Vypracované dotazníky	145	324	45%	predsedovia - dotazníky	35	57	61%
Zapojení posudzovatelia	118	247	48%	študenti - dotazníky	20	40	50%
				zahraniční	7	17	41%
				českí posudzovatelia	27	57	47%



Spätná väzba OZŠP - zatvorené otázky - stav k 8.6.2022

	Vypracované dotazníky	Z celkového počtu zaslaných	%
Vypracované dotazníky	42	79	53%
Počet zapojených OZŠP	38	63	60%



Shortcircuits and definitions

AIS/MAIS	Academic Information System/Modular Academic Information System
AQAS	Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study Programmes
ASR	Alliance of Sectoral Councils
AVIS	Electronic registry management system
Coara	Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment
THE EACEA	European Education and Culture Executive Agency
ENAI	European Network for Academic Integrity
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
THE EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ESG	Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area education
THE EUBA	University of Economics in Bratislava
IS SAAVS	Information system of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education
IS SAAVS	Information system of the Agency
MABMagyar	Felsőoktatási Akkreditációs Bizottság
MŠVVaŠ SR	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic
THE NAU	National Accreditation Office of the Czech Republic
NR. SR	National Council of the Slovak Republic
THE OATH	Department of Accreditation Activities
OZSP	Person responsible for the study programme
OZSP	Person responsible for the study programme
THE RUZA	National Union of Employers
RVS	Council of Higher Education
SAAVS	Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (Agency)
SEQA ESG	Supporting European Quality Assurance Agencies in meeting standards and directives for Quality Assurance in EHEA
SPU	Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra
SQAA	Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
SQAF	Slovak Quality Assurance Forum
SRK	Slovak Rector's Conference
STU	Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava
ŠRVŠ	Student Council of Higher Education
TUZVO	Technical University in Zvolen
THE UK	Comenius University in Bratislava
UMB	Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica
UNIPO	University of Prešov
UNIZA	University of Žilina
UPJŠ	Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice
V4QA-Forum	Forum for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in V4 (Visegrad).
THE VEMA	Payroll and Personnel System
YOU'RE	Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava

Domestic Consultation Board — Prof. PhDr. Oľga Orgoňová, CSc., Prof. RNDr. Vladimír Ira, CSc., Prof. RNDr. Oto Hudec, CSc., Prof. MUDr. Dušan Meško PhD., Dr.h.c. Prof. Ing. Tatiana Čorejová, Ph.D., Prof. Ing. Ján Szolgay, PhD.,

BC. Matej Gajdoš (student).

International Consultation Council — Dr. Mark Jones, Dr. Achim Hopbach, Prof. Gerald Groshek Ph.D.

Internal training — organised by the Agency for staff, assessors, or members of the bodies of the Agency.

Public education — organised by the Stakeholder Agency, often with the participation of staff, assessors and members of the Agency's bodies.

External training — organised by a supplier external organisation.