



Annual Activity and Economy Report of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education 2022

Bratislava, May 2023

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FOREWORD

Dear readers,

we present to you the annual report of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education for 2022. This is the fourth year of operation of the Agency since its establishment; it was marked by the professional performance of legally defined activities. In addition to the accreditation procedures already in place initiated by submitted applications of higher education institutions, also own-initiative procedures continued. Some of them have attracted the attention of the wider public as well.

The year of 2022 was also marked by the preparation of the Agency and the setting up of its processes for systemic accreditation of higher education institutions, which will be an unrepeatable and in time concentrated task of a large scale, consisting of an assessment of the internal systems of all higher education institutions. We believe that the responsible approach we have devoted to the preparation will ensure the smooth running of this activity and will create the expected feedback for higher education institutions.

2022 was also an important year for us in the field of international activities, which focused mainly on fulfilling the ambition of becoming part of ENQA – the European Association for quality assurance in higher education. To achieve this goal, we have prepared a self-assessment report in which we have faithfully and critically assessed our activities so far and the degree of fulfilment of European principles and standards governing the quality assurance of higher education. To this end, we have also significantly strengthened cooperation with partners, stakeholders in the higher education process, and thus ensure that all interests are balanced.

All of these, as well as many other activities, were directed towards the implementation of the Agency's strategy. We believe that they have contributed to improving the culture of quality in higher education, thus meeting the expectations of partners and the public.

*Robert Redhammer
Chair of the Executive Board of the Agency*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (the “Agency”), which, on the basis of the Act, performs external quality assurance activities in higher education, fully fulfilled its mission in 2022. A significant part of the activities concerned preparation for systemic accreditation of higher education institutions, but also activities linked to the Agency’s ambition to become a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and to be registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

In 2022, the Agency continued to systematically exercise its competence in procedures at the request of higher education institutions, but also in proceedings on its own initiative. Its activities were also focused on the preparation and setting up of processes for the assessment of the internal system of higher education institutions with standards. This type of procedure has already been launched by the Agency at the end of 2022 and will take place at all higher education institutions, as they are expected to have fulfilled their legal obligation and asked the Agency to assess the compliance of their internal system with the standards by the end of 2022. In this context, the schedule of fees for the Agency’s acts has also been updated through the prescribed procedure.

In the context of the Agency’s stated ambition to become an ENQA member and to be registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education EQAR, the Agency requested an external assessment of its activities, in which a self-assessment report was drawn up and sent and further activities were carried out in preparation for the Agency’s assessment by an international team of assessors.

As part of its internal activities, the Agency produced two thematic reports, approved and implemented its internal quality system, amended several of its internal rules and modified its information system and procedures, which will be applied in the process of assessing the compliance of the internal quality assurance systems of universities with the standards.

The *Annual Report on the Activities and Management of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education for 2022* is the fulfilment of Section 4(2)(g)(3) of the Quality Assurance Act and contains all data within the meaning of Section 20(8) of this Act.

2. ABOUT THE AGENCY

2.1. Legal definition and mission

The Agency is a body governed by public law which carries out external quality assurance activities in higher education. It was established on 1 November 2018 by Act No 269/2018 on quality assurance in higher education and amending Act No 343/2015 on public procurement and amending certain acts, as amended (‘the Quality Assurance Act’) and has its seat in Bratislava.

The mission of the Agency is to contribute to the improvement of the quality of higher education in the Slovak Republic by means of external quality assurance according to the principles of ESG 2015 and in accordance with the expectations of stakeholders in education. The Agency provides universities with a professional and independent view of the quality of education and fosters a culture of quality. In particular, the Agency shall decide on matters

relating to the granting of authorisations to higher education institutions on the basis of their applications and shall also carry out other related tasks.

2.2. Structure and composition of the Agency's bodies in 2022

The Quality Assurance Act, Section 5 – Section 18, sets out in detail the method of election, appointment, terms of office, rights and obligations, remuneration and other details for the members of the Agency's organs. They are:

- a) Chair of the Executive Board,
- b) Vice-Chair of the Executive Board,
- c) Executive Board,
- d) Board of Appeal,
- e) Controller,
- f) Head of Office.

2.2.1. Chair and Vice-Chair of the Executive Board

The Chair of the Executive Board shall be the statutory body of the Agency, manage the Agency, act on its behalf and represent it externally. The Chair of the Executive Board shall be represented in his/her absence by the Vice-Chair of the Executive Board. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Executive Board shall be appointed and dismissed by the Minister for Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the "Minister"). In 2022, the following positions were held by:

Prof. Robert Redhammer, PhD., Chairman of the Executive Board,
Prof. RNDr. René Matlovič, PhD., LL.M., Vice-Chairman of the Executive Board.

2.2.2. Executive Board

The Executive Board shall have nine members, including the Chairperson and the Vice-Chair. The members of the Executive Board shall be appointed and dismissed by the Minister – two members on the proposal of the Council of Universities of the Slovak Republic and two members on the proposal of the Slovak Rector's Conference from persons who are internationally recognised experts in the field of their activities, two members on the proposal of the Student Council of Higher Education and two members on the proposal of representatives of employers. The 9th member shall be the Chairman of the Executive Board.

In 2022, Executive Board members were following:

Prof. Robert Redhammer, PhD., chair,
Prof. RNDr. René Matlovič, PhD., LL.M., vice-chair,
Prof. Július Horváth, PhD., member,
Prof. RNDr. František Kačík, PhD., member,
Ing. Viliam Kupec, PhD., member,
Mgr. art. Bálint Lovász, member,
Prof. PaedDr. Vladimír Patráš, CSc., member,
Prof. MUDr. Iveta Šimková, CSc., member,
Prof. JUDr. Ivan Šimovček, CSc., member.

The composition of the Executive Board remained unchanged in the course of 2022.

2.2.3. Board of Appeal

The Board of Appeal shall review the procedures of the Executive Board and the working groups of the Executive Board of the Agency on the basis of objections raised by a party to the proceedings on decisions or on the submissions of the Executive Board. The Board of Appeal shall, within the meaning of Section 20(8) of the Quality Assurance Act of five members and two alternates appointed and dismissed by the Minister on the basis of the results of the selection procedure.

In 2022, the composition of the Board of Appeal was as follows:

Dr.h.c. prof. doc. JUDr. Marek Šmid, PhD., chair – until 31. 5. 2022,

JUDr. Peter Štrpka, PhD., member,

JUDr. Marcel Jurko, PhD., member,

Mgr. Roman Oleksik, LL.M., member,

Prof. Ing. Jozef Mihok, PhD., member, chair - since 15. 12. 2022

Prof. JUDr. Margita Prokeinová, PhD., alternate member.

Appointment of Dr. h. c. prof. JUDr. Marek Šmida, Ph.D., to the post of dean of the faculty due to the incompatibility of his mandate on 31. 5. In 2022, membership of the Board of Appeal ceased. At its meeting on 15. 12. In 2022, the Appeals Board elected Prof. Jozef Mihok, PhD as its chairman. The selection procedure for the appointment of a new member of the Appeals Board, organised by the Ministry, had not been completed by the end of 2022.

2.2.4. Auditor

On the basis of the results of the selection procedure, the Controller shall be appointed for a term of office of four years and shall be dismissed by the Minister. In 2022, this position was held by **Ivan Hargaš**. **In accordance with the relevant provisions of the Quality Assurance Act, the Controller** commented on the financial statements and the Annual Activity and Management Report before submitting them for approval to the Executive Board.

2.2.5. Head of Office

In particular, the Head of the Office shall ensure the proper functioning of the Agency, including the administrative, technical, spatial and staffing of the Agency, and shall manage the Office of the Agency to the extent determined by the Chairperson of the Executive Board. The Head of the Office shall be appointed and dismissed by the President of the Executive Board on the basis of the results of the selection procedure. In 2022, the office head was held by Ing. **Dušan Faktor, PhD.**

2.3. Organisational structure and human resources

The performance of the Agency's responsibilities and the full provision of its activities shall be linked to the staffing of the Agency by qualified staff. As of 31 December 2022, the Agency registered a total of 26 permanent staff, of which 12 are women. Nine employees worked on a part-time basis. There was a total of 17 persons who carried out an activity on the basis of agreements outside the employment relationship (Agreement to perform service – 6 persons; employment agreement – 11 persons). In 2022, there was not a significant change in the Agency's staff compared to the previous period, with an average recalculated number of 26,035.

The basic structure of the Agency is already determined by the Act on Quality Assurance establishing the Agency's bodies and defining their rights, obligations and basic links. According to the applicable organizational rules, the Agency shall be divided into:

- Department of Accreditation Activities;
- the Analytical Unit,
- Economics and Operations Department,
- Legislative and legal department,
- Internal Quality Assurance Department of the Agency.

The main tasks, duties and responsibilities of the various departments are set out in the organizational rules; each section is headed by its head and is under the responsibility of the head of the office. The legislative and legal unit shall cooperate with other organisational units of the Agency according to the needs and instructions of the Chair of the Executive Board. The work of the Internal Quality Assurance Department shall be ensured by the Internal Quality Assurance Coordinator, appointed and dismissed by the Chair of the Executive Board.

2.4. Professional development of employees

The training and development of the Agency's staff is one of its priorities. The professional development of staff, the improvement and dissemination of their competences, knowledge and skills is particularly important in the area of the specific activities carried out by the Agency. Employees receive an offer of training from external contractors with the possibility of their direct participation, whether in-person or online, according to the requirements of daily practice and the needs of the colleagues themselves.

Each newly recruited employee undergoes compulsory initial training and then during the year he/she completes his/her knowledge in individual areas according to the job classification and description of his/her work activities. In addition to the initial training, the process of adaptation of the employee during the first months of his/her work in the organisation is also important. The Agency emphasises that every new staff member should have conditions that will help him/her to carry out his/her work in the best and most effective way possible.

Training for staff is provided by the Agency through internal staff or external contractors, according to the topic and content requirements of each area.

In 2022, the Agency's staff participated in 34 training activities (9 in-house trainings; 7 conferences, 3 mobiles, 14 webinars/seminars, workshops). 9 internal training sessions were organised for staff and had the opportunity to participate in 21 external training activities, including training activities organised by ENQA, EQAR or partner accreditation agencies (10 out of 21 external events). Agency staff also participated in all public events organised by the Agency for stakeholders (SQAF 2022 conference and three webinars).

Overview of the most important training activities of the Agency staff in 2022:

1. *Training of newly recruited staff, which focused mainly on:*

- occupational health and safety and fire protection – training was conducted by Ing. Eva Hlivová – bezp.sk;
- use of the registry management information system – employees of A.V.I.S.

2. *Training sessions focused mainly on:*

- Application for prior consent to the modification of the study programme pursuant to Section 30 – trainer Ing. A. Zacharová, PhD., MBA/PAR,
- Amendments to SO Section 39 of Act No 269/2018, repeal of Hal, Section 32a – trainer Ing. A. Zacharová, PhD., MBA/OAC,
- Universities in the DEQAR system – webinar MAB – MAB,
- Alignment of habilitation and inaugural procedures with standards for habilitation and inaugural proceedings – SAAVŠ,
- MICROBOL – Final Conference ENQA – ENQA,
- The European Universities Initiative – MAB
- Seminar – amendment to the Act on ZFK – EDOS – PEM, s.r.o.
- Requests for conformity assessment of the internal quality assurance system – SAAVŠ;
- SEQA-ESG – mobility AQAS – ENQA,
- Workshop within the SEQA – ESG project on “Peer review experts” Montenegro – ENQA
- SQAF Conference – 2022 – Assessment of the HEIs – trainers under SQAF programme;
- ENQA Seminar for agencies planning to undergo a review in 2022-2023. — ENQA,
- Seminar Modern registry administration – Proeko, s. r. o.,
- ENQA Members’ Forum 2022 – ENQA,
- SEQA-ESG – ‘Involvement’ – Mobility Malta – ENQA,
- Workshop Low Value Contracts – Proeko, s.r.o.,
- Preparation of working groups for the assessment of internal systems of universities – case studies – trainer Ing. A. Zacharová, PhD., MBA/OAR,
- Use of the outputs of the project Sectorally managed innovation – webinar – MŠVVaŠ,
- Webinar Micro-credentials and the role of external quality assurance – ENQA
- Seminar – budgetary relations in VS – Seminaria, s.r.o.,
- EQAF 2022 – ENQA
- Basic principles for setting up review panels for the assessment of the HEI – trainer- A. Zacharová, PhD., MBA/OAC,
- Seminar Law on Complaints – Proeko, s.r.o.,
- Working with SAAVŠ when submitting an application for an assessment of the compliance of the internal quality assurance system of HEIs pursuant to Section 24 of Act No 269/2018 – Ing. M. Džubáková, PhD/OIN,
- Conference Open on Ethics and Economics of Scientific Publishing – SAS,
- Submission of an application for compliance assessment of the internal quality assurance system in the SAAVŠ Information System – Ing. M. Džubáková, PhD., Ing. B. Steinmüller/SAR,
- Visit to the assessment of the internal NAU-NAU system;
- EQAF – Timisoara, Romania – ENQA,
- Closing meeting on the SEQA-ESG project, online – ENQA,
- Amendment to the Labour Code in practice from 1. 11. 2022 –

Poradca podnikateľa, spol. s r. o.,

- Standards for IS — art. 7,8,9,10 – Prof. Robert Redhammer, PhD.
- Standards for IS — art. 5.6 – Prof. Robert Redhammer, PhD.
- Standards for IS — art. 3.4 – Prof. Robert Redhammer, PhD.

2.5. The Agency's spatial and material equipment

The Agency is based in an administrative building on Námestie Slobody 11 in Bratislava, where it has rented office space and, in the course of 2022, it used the entire 5th floor, and part of the 1st and 3rd floor. In December 2022, the Agency took advantage of the possibility to use the empty part of the 3rd floor and to concentrate the entire team on two complete floors. As a result of this change, the total area of the leased area increased only marginally – from 483 m² to 520 m². The Agency has 9 parking spaces, 3 indoor and 6 outdoor spaces. All offices and meeting rooms are equipped with office furniture and IT infrastructure owned by the Agency. A total of 14 offices are available, of which 3 rooms are used by the management of the Agency (Chair, Vice-Chair and Head of Office) and 11 offices are available to other staff. The Agency also has 2 meeting rooms equipped with audio-visual technology and used for meetings of the Executive Board, the Appeals Board, external visits, training and working meetings. In the context of the increased use of online (or combined) meetings, audio-visual technology in one of the meeting rooms has been significantly upgraded. Staff on each floor are served by a kitchen equipped with daily appliances and sanitary facilities.

In the building on the ground floor there is a reception, which is provided and operated by the landlord. The reception serves all companies located in the office building. The surrounding area of the Agency's headquarters has very good civic amenities and accessibility from all directions, as it is located almost in the center of Bratislava.

As part of the equity investments, in 2022, the Agency procured a vehicle which it intends to use for staff business trips, in particular in the context of higher education institutions' accreditations.

3. CHANGES IN THE EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

The Agency shall regularly monitor, evaluate and adapt its processes and procedures. Based on the evaluation of feedback, processes and legislative changes, several internal system procedures were amended and adapted in 2022.

3.1. External legislative changes

The legislative environment in which the Agency operates is mainly formed by the Quality Assurance Act, which was amended in 2022, namely Act 137/2022 Coll. in force since 24 April 2022. In the context of that amendment, the scope of the analyses carried out by the Agency was extended to include surveys among students, university staff, employers and other stakeholders. Other modified areas include changes in the definition of adaptation of the study programme, the Department of Accreditation of Habilitation Procedures and Inaugural Procedures, and the enlargement of the Agency's activities subject to a fee. All these changes have been implemented by the Agency in its processes, procedures and internal legislation. In this context, we further note that the above-mentioned changes did not affect the Agency's independence or decision-making.

Act 137/2022 Coll. amended Act No 131/2002 on higher education institutions, as amended. This involved a broader intervention in the management and administration of higher education institutions, changes in the competence of the various bodies of the university, as well as changes in the way in which they were constituted. However, these changes did not affect the deadlines of higher education institutions to align the internal system with standards, although they may have had an impact on their activities and obligations in the alignment process.

3.2. Internal legislation of the Agency and its amendments

The Agency relies on a system of internal regulations and internal legislation in the exercise of its competence and the consistent exercise of its powers. By the end of 2022, it consisted of 33 directives, regulations and other types of standards governing the Agency's internal and external procedures. This internal legislation was also gradually adapted to new external and internal conditions throughout 2022. At the beginning of the year, the Agency approved *the Agency's Development Strategy* and subsequently adopted its internal quality assurance system. The amendment to the Act on Higher Education obliges the Agency to create and implement a procedure for the screening of proposals for the award of the title of professor. The Agency also decided to significantly adjust the remuneration of the members of the working groups in the context of the expected proceedings and in relation to the adopted schedule of fees.

In the course of 2022, the Agency's Executive Board adopted the following new internal rules:

Number	Title of the internal regulation	Date of approval by the Executive Board
no 1/2022	Internal system of quality assurance of SAAHE activities	approved on 24. 2. 2022
no 2/2022	The method of screening proposals for the award of the scientific, pedagogical or artistic-pedagogical title "professor"	approved on 19. 5. 2022
no 3/2022	Directive on the remuneration of members of the SAAHE Executive Board review panels and the reimbursement of related incidental expenses	approved on 20. 10. 2022

In the course of 2022, the Agency also amended the Internal Rules:

Number	Title of the internal regulation	Date of approval by the Executive Board
no 9/2019	Salary regulation SAAHE	approved on 25. 8. 2022

Amendment of the schedule of charges

In view of the need for more comprehensive account to be taken of the anticipated costs associated with the Agency's activities and in connection with the change in legislation in this area, the Agency implemented a change in the schedule of fees for the Agency's acts. Although its basic structure has not been changed, the original rates have been adjusted and some fees based on the amendments to the Higher Education Act and the Quality Assurance Act have been added. The proposal was approved under the Quality Assurance Act by the Executive Board on 28 April 2022 and after its public comment procedure from 2. 6. 2022 to 2. 7. 2022 approved by the Ministry on 30 August 2022.

Amendment of the Methodology for the Evaluation of Standards

In particular, based on the results of the feedback, the Agency decided to amend the methodology for the evaluation of standards in 2022. In addition to the revision of study programme assessment procedures, the modification aimed at aligning some provisions of the methodology with legislative changes, precisising and simplifying the procedures of review panels when assessing internal systems and clearly defining 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 its efficiency. The amendment to the methodology was discussed in the Executive Board at its meeting on 25 August 2022 and finally approved on 22 September 2022.

Guidelines and manuals

In the context of the preparation of processes for the assessment of the internal system of higher education institutions with standards, the Agency made this functionality available in its information system and published the instructions for applying for the assessment of the internal system in the SAAHE information system together with the Manual for the elaboration of the Self-Assessment Report. Through these steps, the Agency contributed to simplifying and automating processes on the part of HEIs and facilitated their further processing. All guidelines, instructions, and manuals are published on the Agency's website.

4. AGENCY REVIEWERS AND REVIEW PANELS

In 2022, the Agency monitored and evaluated the work of reviewers – members of the review panels. Monitoring and evaluation was carried out in the form of a survey in the Agency's

information system in order to obtain and record information on the activities of the members of the review panels during the assessment. The designated coordinator of the procedure provided an opinion on the work of the member of the review panel at the end of the assessment.

In 2022 it was evaluated activity working Groups in Accreditation Procedures study programmes completed

in 2021 and 2022. Coordinators provided an opinion on the work of 271 assessors. The level of preparedness for the assessment, the method of on-site assessment, the quality of the records and reports processed were assessed. For the chairs of the review panels, the organisation of the review panel was also evaluated.

The evaluation of the work of the review panels was also part of the applicant's feedback following the conclusion of the relevant procedure. The work of the review panels was discussed by those responsible for the study programme by means of a questionnaire survey. The results of monitoring and feedback have been used for changes in the organisation of review panels and the training of reviewers.

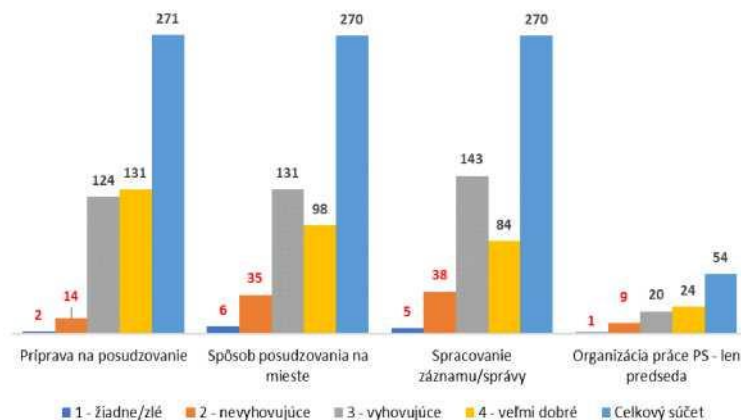
Based on the results of the feedback on the work of the review panels in the accreditation of study programmes and the structure of reviewers included in the list of reviewers in 2022, there was a change in the acquisition process

of the reviewers. Agency identified under-covered assessment areas and candidates were targeted mainly among significant experts in the relevant field. At its meetings in 2022, the Executive Board approved the listing of 104 reviewers on the list of reviewers (of which 66 foreign reviewers, 30 approved reviewers have the competence to assess the internal system, 70 reviewers may act as expert in a field of study. 24 professional experts have also been added to the list of reviewers, including 10 active artists or active scientists and 17 student reviewers.

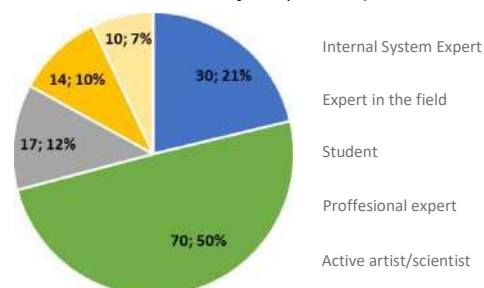
In 2022, the Executive Board approved the removal of 41 reviewers. The most common reason was the incompatibility with the current position in the workplace and the disappearance of compliance with the requirements of the reviewers (in particular the completion of the student's studies). For individual reviewers, the Agency records the expert focus of the reviewer, his/her profile (higher education teacher, professional expert, internal system expert, student, etc.) and other data on the professional activity of the reviewer. Based on the evaluation of these data, it may propose a reviewer to a review panel to assess a particular activity of the HEI. A total of 103 review panels have been set up by 2022.

The Agency shall regularly publish and update a list of persons included in the list of reviewers on its website.

Hodnotenie práce pracovných skupín 2022



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



5. MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

12 meetings of the Executive Board took place in 2022, with 3 meetings held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The date of the proceedings and the brief content of each meeting are given in the following overview.

41. meeting of the Executive Board 3. 2. 2022

The first meeting of the Executive Board in 2022 was opened by the Chair of the Executive Board, Prof. Redhammer, with the online participation of all members of the Executive Board. The main points of the meeting included granting the Agency's prior approval to modify the study programme, requesting changes to study programme data or applying for their accreditation. This Executive Board meeting endorsed the SAAHE Strategic Plan 2022-2026, as well as the 2022 Action Plan with a view to 2023 and a roadmap for thematic analyses and reports for 2022-2024. At the same time, the draft budget for 2022 and the draft procurement plan for 2022 were approved. The curriculum and procedure for drawing up a self-assessment report (SAR) for the application for ENQA membership and enrolment in the EQAR have also been approved.

42. meeting of the Executive Board 24. 2. 2022

The Executive Board was presented at the on-line meeting with proposals for modifications of study programmes, requests for changes to study programme data, applications for accreditation of the study programme and prior approvals for the modification of the study programme. It was informed about the procedures initiated on its own initiative and the implementation of feedback on accreditation of study programmes. The Executive Board approved the Development Strategy 2022-2027, the draft regulation for the Agency's internal quality assurance system and the draft 2021 accounts. The analytical department presented the preparation of the outputs of the student satisfaction survey, the so-called frequency tables, and the Executive Board took note of the information on the ongoing work on these outputs.

43. meeting of the Executive Board 17. 3. 2022

The meeting was held in a hybrid manner with the presence of 7 members of the Executive Board, of which 2 were online. At the beginning of the meeting, the members of the Executive Board addressed the formulation of an opinion on the Executive Board's statement on the mediaised criticism of its activities. During the meeting, 4 persons were approved for inclusion on the list of reviewers and 3 persons were removed from the list. Proposals were also submitted to the Executive Board for modifications of study programmes, requests to change study programme data and requests to cancel the accreditation of habilitation and inaugural procedures. At the same time, information about the ENQA Agency Review Process was presented to the Executive Board and continued work within the framework of the implementation of feedback on accreditation of study programmes.

44. meeting of the Executive Board. 4. 2022

At this meeting, which took place in an in-person format, the Executive Board continued to decide on the assessment of the capacity of higher education institutions to carry out the relevant study programmes and to approve the composition of the working groups for the

various types of proceedings. The Executive Board included 15 candidates on the list of assessors and removed 6 from the list. At the same time, during the meeting, the Chair of the Executive Board presented a template for the request for regular assessment of the internal system of higher education institutions to be submitted by universities. The Executive Board approved the draft amendment to the schedule of fees for acts of SAAVŠ for public comments, approved the draft annual activity and management report of SAAVŠ for 2021, as well as the substantive evaluation and financial statement of the funds provided for 2021. At the end of the meeting, the Executive Board was informed of the amendment to Act No 131/2002 and Act No 269/2018.

45. meeting of the Executive Board 19. 5. 2022

In order to assess the activities of higher education institutions, the Executive Board, in its meeting, mainly approved proposals for the composition of the working groups of the Executive Board. Further requests were submitted to it to change the data of study programmes and took a further decision concerning the verification of the results of the measures taken by the higher education institution in relation to the study programmes, for which, in the context of their implementation, the university was obliged to report to the Ministry of Education on the outcome of the measures taken to remedy shortcomings in accordance with the applicable regulations; there was also a discussion on the complaint sent to the Agency. By decision of the Executive Board, 32 candidates were included in the list of assessors, and 1 judge was removed from the list. At this meeting of the Executive Board, an internal regulation was adopted on the method of screening proposals for the award of scientific-pedagogical or artistic-pedagogical titles "professor". The Chair further informed the members of the Executive Board about the state of play of the ENQA Agency Review Process.

46. meeting of the Executive Board 16. 6. 2022

The 46th meeting of the Executive Board approved proposals for the composition of the working groups of the Executive Board for procedures on the accreditation of university study programmes. The Executive Board was briefly presented with an agenda item relating to proceedings on its own initiative, while the Executive Board approved proposals for modifications of study programmes and accepted requests for changes to data on study programmes. The Executive Board included additional candidates on the list of assessors. At the same time, the Executive Board initiated a discussion on the preparation of the draft SAAVŠ self-assessment report in the framework of the ENQA Agency Review Process.

47. meeting of the Executive Board 20. 7. 2022

At this meeting, the Executive Board approved the composition of the working groups, assessed reports on the outcome of the measures taken by universities and decided on compliance with the regulations and criteria issued under the applicable regulations, whether it gave approvals to the submitted proposals for modifications of study programmes. It also accepted requests to cancel the accreditation of habilitation and inaugural proceedings. Discussions continued in the framework of the own-initiative procedure and 9 candidates were added to the list of assessors by a decision of the Executive Board and 2 assessors were removed. Comments on the proposal to amend the schedule of fees for acts of SAAVŠ were also evaluated before its submission for approval by the MŠVVaŠ SR, which was subsequently approved by the Executive Board.

48. meeting of the Executive Board. 8. 2022

At this meeting, the Executive Board focused in particular on deciding on the verification of the results of measures taken by higher education institutions in relation to study programmes, where, in the context of their implementation, the higher education institution was obliged to report to the Ministry on the outcome of the measures taken to remedy shortcomings in accordance with the applicable regulations. The Executive Board also gave approvals to modifications of study programmes and took note of requests for changes to the study programme data. She also decided on applications to cancel the accreditation of habilitation and inaugural proceedings. An evaluation of the feedback and experience with the Agency's accreditation activities and draft measures to improve them were presented to the Executive Board. The Executive Board discussed the modification of the methodology for the evaluation of standards and approved the proposal to amend the internal regulation – the wage regulation. At the same time, the third thematic report entitled “Summisation of the results of the survey of the views of university students” (Academic Quarter Hour) was approved. The Executive Board also discussed the current state of play in the screening of proposals for the award of the scientific-pedagogical or artistic-pedagogical title “professor”.

49. meeting of the Executive Board 30. 8. 2022

This extraordinary meeting of the Executive Board included deciding on requests to change study programme data and requests to cancel the accreditation of habilitation and inaugural proceedings.

50. meeting of the Executive Board 22. 9. 2022

In particular, the Executive Board addressed the approval of applications for accreditation of habilitation and inaugural procedures and approved 15 proposals for inclusion in the list of reviewers and 3 proposals for delisting. The Executive Board finally approved the proposal to amend the methodology for the evaluation of standards and discussed in detail the SAAVŠ self-assessment report. The Executive Board approved an amendment to the 2022 budget as well as an update of the SAAVS Action Plan for 2022.

51. meeting of the Executive Board 20. 10. 2022

At that meeting, the Executive Board approved proposals for the composition of the Executive Board's working groups and approved 9 proposals for inclusion on the list of reviewers and 2 proposals for delisting. The Executive Board approved the text of the SAAVŠ self-assessment report and discussed the process of screening proposals for the award of the scientific-pedagogical or artistic-pedagogical title “professor”. She also dealt with own-initiative proceedings at three universities. At the end of the meeting, the Executive Board approved the Directive on the remuneration of members of the SAAVŠ working groups and the reimbursement of related ancillary expenses.

52. meeting of the Executive Board. 12. 2022

At this meeting, the Executive Board took note of the requests to revoke the accreditation of habilitation and inaugural proceedings and approved the proposal for inclusion and removal

from the list of assessors. The Executive Board approved the fourth thematic report – Conclusions from the first accreditations of study programmes. To a large extent, the Executive Board was also informed about applications and preparation of the assessment of the internal systems of higher education institutions. At the same time, a document was presented to the Executive Board informing about the list of legal entities whose evaluation reports are automatically recognised by the Agency and subsequently published on the Agency's website. The Chair of the Executive Board also informed about the ENQA Agency Review Process and the state of play in the preparations. At the end of the last meeting of the Executive Board in 2022, the Executive Board approved the calendar of meetings for 2023.

The resolutions adopted by the Executive Board for 2022 are published on the Agency's website.

6. EXERCISE OF THE AGENCY'S RESPONSIBILITIES

According to the Act on Quality Assurance, the performance of the Agency's responsibilities is ensured primarily through procedures that start on the basis of an application from a HEI, or on the Agency's own initiative. In 2022, the Agency carried out proceedings in the following areas.

6.1. Procedures for granting accreditation of new study programmes

The Act on Quality Assurance allows HEIs to submit applications to the Agency for accreditation of new study programmes in the field of study and the level at which they are not yet authorised to carry out study programmes. In 2022, HEIs submitted 3 such applications: two in sociology and social anthropology (1st and 2nd level) and 1 in economics and management (level 3). These procedures have not yet been completed at the end of 2022.

In 2022, the Agency decided on 18 higher education applications submitted in 2021, one of which was an application for accreditation of a joint study programme. In 16 cases, the Agency decided to grant accreditation of a new study programme and in two cases the Agency decided to reject the application of the HEI or not to grant accreditation of the study programme on the grounds that the study programme did not meet the standards for the study programme. For the purposes of reviewing applications from HEI for the accreditation of study programmes, the Executive Board formed at least five review panels of persons on the list of reviewers; at least one member of the review panel had the status of student at the time of the assessment.

6.2. Internal system assessment procedures

HEIs were obliged to bring their internal system in line with the Law on Quality Assurance and Standards for the Internal System within 24 months of their entry into force and were obliged to inform the Agency thereof without delay. All colleges have fulfilled this duty.

Following the alignment, higher education institutions were required to ask the Agency for a first assessment of the internal system by 31 December 2022. All 33 universities fulfilled this obligation by the deadline and asked the Agency to assess their internal system.

By the end of 2022, one procedure for the assessment of the internal quality assurance system was launched by the receipt of a complete application, including the payment of a fee.

6.3. Other proceedings and decisions of the Agency

6.3.1. Proposals for modification of university study programmes

If according to §35(7) of the Quality Assurance Act, Minister of Education after prior observations

of the Accreditation Committee on the outcome of the adopted measures taken by the university to remedy shortcomings in relation to the implementation of study programmes decided to grant the right with a time limit, to renew the right with a time limit or to suspend the granted right to carry out the study programme in question, the university under the transitional provisions of the Law on Quality Assurance was obliged to submit to the Agency within a specified period a proposal for modification of the study programme or a notification of its cancellation.

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

The Agency shall give its approval to the submitted proposal for modification of the curriculum if the proposed amendment creates a precondition for meeting the standards for the study programme. The university will then modify the study programme at the latest from the following academic year, of which it shall immediately inform the Agency and the Agency shall verify this fact in the register of study programmes within 30 days of notification of the university.

In 2022, two proposals for modifications of study programmes were submitted to the Agency in accordance with the provisions of § 35(7) of the Quality Assurance Act. The agency also continued in the assessment of the two draft modifications submitted in 2021. In three cases, the Agency gave its consent to the proposed modifications submitted. In one case, the Agency noted that the proposed amendment of the study programme of the university does not create a precondition for meeting the standards for the study programme and the university subsequently cancelled the study programme.

6.3.2. Actions on the Agency's own initiative

Under the transitional provisions of the Quality Assurance Act, the Agency may initiate proceedings on its own initiative, up until the time when Higher Education Institution has submitted an application for the assessment of the internal system and if it has reasonable grounds to suspect that the higher education institution does not comply with the legislation or its internal rules. The Agency launched 2 procedures on the basis of Section 35(14) of the Quality Assurance Act.

6.3.3. Requests for prior approval to modify the new study programme

In the event that the HEI is not entitled to modify the relevant study programme and intends to modify it, it is obliged to ask the Agency for approval with its modification pursuant to Section 30(9) of the Quality Assurance Act.

In the application for prior approval, the higher school briefly states the characteristics of the study programme modification within the meaning of Section 2(h) of the Quality Assurance Act:

- addition or cancellation of compulsory courses or optional courses;

- a change in the conditions for the proper completion of studies; or
- modification of the information sheet of the compulsory course or of the optional course, except
 1. updates on the teaching staff,
 2. recommended literature and
 3. type, scope and methods of educational activities

and the expected impact of the study programme modification on meeting the related standards for the study programme.

In 2022, HEIs submitted 507 applications to the Agency for prior approval to modify the study programme. Subject to prior approval by the Agency, higher education institutions may make adjustments to the respective study programme. However, the granting of the approval of the Agency does not imply confirmation of compliance of the study programmes with the standards for the study programme. With reference to the relevant provisions of the Act on Quality Assurance and the standards for the study programme, the HEI was obliged to align the study programmes carried out with the standards for the study programme by 1 September 2022.

6.3.4. Requests to change study programme data

On the basis of Section 39 of the Act on Quality Assurance, during the period from 1 January 2022, the Agency was authorised, at the request of the higher education institution, at the time of submission of the first information by the HEI, that it had aligned its internal system with the internal system standards, but no later than 31 August 2022, to enter in the register of study programmes changes to the data on study programmes, if these changes resulted from the need to align study programmes with the standards for the study programme. The Agency was authorised to register:

- a change in a field of study or a combination of two fields of study in which a university degree is obtained by completing the study programme, if this change is justified in connection with the transformation of the system of study fields;
- change the place of provision of the study programme to a different location than the seat of a university or faculty to a place at the headquarters of a HEI or faculty;
- change of the name of the HEI or faculty at which the study programme takes place – change the name of the study programme, if the new name better describes the content of the education. Universities submitted a total of 154 requests to change data, out of which 7 applications concerned changes in the field of study, 16 requests to change the place of provision of the study programme and 133 applications were submitted to change the name of the study programme, 2 applications were simultaneously for changing the study field and change the name of the study programme. No request to change the name of the school or faculty has been submitted.

6.3.5. Requests to cancel the accreditation of the habilitation procedure and to cancel the accreditation of the inauguration procedure

At the request of the HEIs, the Agency cancelled 145 accreditations for habilitation and inauguration procedures in 2022.

6.3.6. Verification of the results of the actions taken

In 2022, in the area of accreditation, the Agency also dealt with the verification of the results of actions taken by universities in relation to weaknesses reported by the Accreditation

Commission in its previous accreditation observations. It concerned the assessment of the capacity of the higher education institution to carry out the relevant study programme or habilitation procedure and the procedure for the appointment of professors ('the inauguration procedure'), which resulted from the conclusions of the accreditation under the previous legislation. Due to the adoption of the Law on Quality Assurance and the transition of rights and obligations from the Accreditation Commission to the Agency as of 1 January 2020, the results of the measures taken by higher education institutions to remedy deficiencies pursuant to the transitional provision of Section 35(6) of the Quality Assurance Act are verified by the Agency at the previous request of the Ministry of Education, to which the higher education institutions send reports on the measures taken to remedy the deficiencies.

The university was obliged to report to the Ministry on the measures taken to remedy shortcomings (hereinafter referred to as "the report") according to the regulations in force until 31 October 2018 due to non-compliance with one of the criteria or at the same time several accreditation criteria for higher education study programmes. The outcome of the measures taken by the higher education institution to remedy the deficiencies was verified by the Agency against the criteria issued under the rules in force until 31 October 2018.

In 2022, the Ministry of Education forwarded to the Agency 3 Higher Education Administrations from the previous accreditation period. Out of the total number of reports received by the Agency, 2 reports concerned the correction of shortcomings in relation to the implementation of study programmes and 1 related to the correction of shortcomings in relation to the implementation of the habilitation procedure and the inaugural procedure.

In 2022, the Agency assessed 2 reports addressing shortcomings in relation to the implementation of study programmes. The reason for reporting to universities in relation to the implementation of study programmes assessed by the Agency was the failure to meet the criterion of KSP-A6 *Quality Guarantee and the development of the study programme*.

After verifying the outcome of the measures taken by the higher education institutions, the Agency concluded in relation to the implementation of 2 study programmes that the university meets the relevant accreditation criteria once the measures have been taken. The Agency subsequently marked the abolition of the time limit in the register of study programmes if the obligation of the higher education institution arose due to the temporal limitation of the rights, and reinstated the granted right if the obligation of the higher education institution arose due to the suspension of the granted right.

In 2022, the Agency also assessed 1 report on addressing shortcomings in relation to the implementation of the habilitation procedure and the inaugural procedure. When verifying the results of the measures taken by universities in relation to the performance of habilitation procedures and inaugural procedures, the Agency used criteria for assessing the capacity of the higher education institution to carry out habilitation and inaugural proceedings.

After verifying the outcome of the measures taken by the higher education institutions in relation to the carrying out of habilitation procedures and inauguration proceedings of universities, the Agency noted that the university met the relevant accreditation criteria after the adoption of the measures and subsequently indicated in the register of study disciplines the abolition of the time limit.

The reason for the submission of this report was the failure to comply with the KHKV-A5 criterion *guaranteeing the quality of the performance of the habilitation procedure and the procedure for the appointment of professors* (the level of sponsors and co-guarantors of the habilitation procedure and the procedure for the appointment of professors).

In order to verify the measures taken by the higher education institution and to assess proposals for adaptation of study programmes, the Executive Board formed three-member

working groups from the persons on the list of reviewers.

7. THE WORK OF THE BOARD OF APPEAL

In 2022, the Agency received 4 objections to the Agency's decisions (in one procedure). The Appeals Commission had two meetings, namely the meeting of 10 and 24 February 2022 (continuation) and the meeting of 15 and 22 December 2022 (continuation). At its first meeting in 2022, it decided on objections raised in the previous period. In one case, it decided on an objection to the Agency's decision to reject an application for accreditation of a study programme. It upheld the objection (appeal), annulled the Agency's decision and referred the case back to the Agency for a new procedure and decision.

At its second meeting, the Board of Appeal decided on the objection raised concerning the suspension of study programmes. In this case too, the Board of Appeal upheld the College, annulled the Agency's decision and referred the case back for a new procedure and decision.

The resolutions of the Board of Appeal are published on the Agency's website.

8. THEMATIC REPORTS OF THE AGENCY

In 2022, on the basis of Section 4(2)(g)(2) of the Quality Assurance Act and in relation to the approved Plan of Thematic Analysis and Reports 2022-2025, the Agency produced and published 2 thematic reports.

The first was a *summary report of the findings of the student opinion survey – Academic Quarter Hour*, which summarises the most serious findings from a student satisfaction survey conducted since 30. 4 to 31. 5. 2021. In 2023, specific conclusions of the survey and input will be provided to the working groups in preparation for the assessment of the internal system of a particular university.

The second published report was the report *Conclusions from the first accreditations of study programmes*, containing the evaluation of the accreditations of study programmes applied for by universities. The report focuses on the most common or most serious problems for universities in implementing the standards for the study programme, based on the evaluation reports of the accreditations of study programmes carried out by the Agency between March 2021 and March 2022.

Both thematic reports are published on the Agency's website.

9. COOPERATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Also in 2022, the Agency paid great attention to cooperation with stakeholders. The main areas of cooperation concerned the amendment of the Act on Higher Education and the related amendment to the Law on Quality Assurance (effective from April 2022), cooperation and the unification of views on quality assurance issues in higher education, but in particular the Agency's activities in the context of preparation for the assessment and membership of ENQA and EQAR.

The Agency had intensive relations with stakeholders, in particular with the Ministry. In addition to the new legislation, the subject of the negotiations was the preparation of an

amendment to the Decree on the system of study disciplines, discussions on the revision and proposal of new registers of the Ministry, the implementation of the restoration plan, as well as the process of commenting on the fee scale of the agency.

The cooperation of the Agency with stakeholders representing representatives of universities – Slovak Rector’s Conference, Council of Higher Education and Student Council of Higher Educations was also important. In this case, the subject of negotiations were mainly the consequences of the new legislation on the process of harmonisation of internal systems of higher education institutions, the upcoming processes of the Agency, the involvement of student assessors and their training, and the problems of universities with the implementation of quality assurance processes. The Agency’s representatives were also regular guests at the assemblies and conferences organised by the above-mentioned representations of universities, which deepened mutual discussion and cooperation in solving problems.

Employers, either directly or through their representative associations, engaged in discussions with the Agency on different aspects of the quality assessment of higher education. Several meetings of the Agency with employers’ associations (RÚZ, SŽZ) took place in 2022, focusing on the possibility of cooperation in the creation of working groups and their activities, mapping the applicability of graduates or using the outputs of the Sectorally Managed Innovation project.

In 2022, the Agency held four public stakeholder events – one conference (SQAF 2022 – The future of quality assurance in universities) and three webinars. The following events on quality assurance topics at Slovak universities met with great interest and were attended by staff and members of the Agency’s bodies:

Theme/title	Term
Alignment of Habilitation and Inauguration Proceedings with Standards	25 February 2022
Applications for conformity assessment of the internal quality assurance system	29 April 2022
SQAF Conference – 2022 – Assessment of the HEIs	26 May 2022
Submission of an application for compliance assessment of the internal quality assurance system in the SAAVŠ information system	4 November 2022

10. INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

10.1. Integration and internationalisation of SAAVE

The Agency’s priorities in the international field include achieving ENQA membership and enrolling in EQAR. A request for an external assessment of the Agency by ENQA was sent in early 2022 to meet this target. Once the eligibility of SAAHE to apply for membership was confirmed, the process officially started with the signature of the contract with ENQA on the external assessment of the Agency and the signature of the so-called tripartite agreement on the reference conditions for assessment between the Agency, ENQA and EQAR. In this context, the most important activities in 2022 were the preparation, approval and transmission of a self-assessment report reflecting the degree of compliance of the accreditation activities and the

Agency's internal system with the requirements of Articles 2 and 3. ESG. The self-assessment report process was initiated at the Executive Board meeting on 3 February 2022, which approved its structure, author's team and preliminary content. The National Consultation Board and the International Consultation Board were further involved in the preparation process. No less important was the involvement of other stakeholders – the Slovak Rector's Conference, the Council of Higher Education Institutions, the Student Council of Universities and Employers, in particular through their representative associations. The drafting process and the state of play of the self-assessment report process was the subject of several discussions by the Executive Board in the course of 2022. Its final approval took place on 20 October 2022.

Since its inception, the Agency has been a member of ENAI (European Network for Academic Integrity). Its aim is to transfer European principles and experience with the development of academic integrity to the university environment in the Slovak Republic. In 2022, the activity focused mainly on the launch of an interactive portal to support victims of misbehaviour and unethical research and education practices.

10.2. The SEQA-ESG project

In 2022, the Agency successfully completed and evaluated the international project 'Supporting European quality assurance agencies in meeting the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area', SEQA-ESG. The aim of the project was to support the national accreditation agencies of Albania, the Czech Republic, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro and Slovakia in establishing national quality assurance systems in accordance with ESG. The support was based on mutual counselling, joint workshops and staff exchange. Two workshops took place in 2022, namely Montenegro and Malta, and staff participated in two mobilities, namely Cologne and Prague.

The evaluation of the project, which was also linked to the visit of ENQA and EQAR representatives to the Agency's headquarters, is part of *the Action plan for the external review of SAAHE*, which is published on the website. Its logical outcome was the launch of the Agency's accession process to ENQA and EQAR.

10.3. V4QA Forum

In 2022, the Agency strengthened its membership of the V4QA – Higher Education Quality Assurance Forum in Visegrad Group (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 assessors and staff of V4 agencies.

On 13 and 14 October 2022, the Agency organised a meeting of partners at its headquarters, under the auspices of the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic. The main topics concerned the membership of partner agencies (Hungarian and Polish) in ENQA and EQAR, cooperation on developing policies on quality assurance in higher education and exchange of information (e.g., consultation of registers). A mutual exchange of reviewers of individual agencies was also agreed.

In 2022, reviewers from the Czech Republic were involved in the accreditation activities of the Agency from the V4 countries. In addition to V4 partners, in 2022, the Agency also established cooperation with SQAA (Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) in the area of exchange of reviewers. SQAA reviewers will be part of the review panels when assessing the compliance of internal systems as early as 2023.

11. QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE AGENCY'S ACTIVITIES

In 2022, the Agency formulated its strategic objectives for 2027 in the adopted document 'Agency Development Strategy', which set out the basic principles it promotes in fulfilling its mission. The strategic objectives will be specified and evaluated in the Agency's annual plans in the coming years. The principles of independence, transparency, integrity, cooperation and improvement have been further developed in the policies of the Internal Quality Assurance System of the activities of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education.

With these rules, the Agency defined its own internal quality assurance system and defined the frequency, procedures and scope of its evaluation. Every five years, it undergoes an external evaluation and prepares a self-assessment report according to the guidelines of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). As a follow-up to this cycle, it also carries out a regular annual evaluation of the internal system to identify qualitative and quantitative changes in the fulfilment of the mission and policies of the internal system based on the implementation of the annual work plans, the results of feedback and the review of related processes.

In 2022, the Agency carried out the first self-assessment of the compliance of its activities with ESG requirements and produced a self-assessment report as part of the Agency's preparation for the first external review of the internal system with ENQA. The report is based on self-assessment of compliance with relevant ESG standards and evaluation of the Agency's performance in external quality assurance in higher education. It also includes a reflection on the fulfilment of individual standards and proposals for further improvement and is published on the Agency's website.

In the field of quality assurance, the Agency will focus on streamlining internal processes by interconnecting information systems, further deepening and systematising cooperation with stakeholders' representatives and preparing a feedback system following the assessment of compliance of the internal system of higher education institutions with standards.

12. FINANCING AND MANAGEMENT OF THE AGENCY

The method of financing of the Agency is defined in § 19 para.(1) – (5) of the Quality Assurance Act. According to its § 20 (1) – (8), the agency has a clearly defined form of management. It keeps funds in accounts with the State Treasury, with each source of income in a separate account and keeps accounting according to Act No. 431/2002 Coll. on accounting, as amended.

The agency managed during 2022 according to the revenue and expenditure budget, which was approved by the Executive Board by resolution at its meeting of 3 February 2022 and updated on 22 September 2022 and 8 December 2022.

12.1. Financial statements for 2022

The Agency's accounts were drawn up in accordance with the relevant rules and approved by the Agency's Executive Board at its meeting of 16.2.2023. The complete

accounts also include the opinion of the Agency's Controller Ing. Ivan Hargaš dated 7. 2.2023: *"The financial statements give a true and fair view of the economic and financial situation of the independent public institution of SAAHE as of 31 December 2022 and the results of its management for the year ending are in accordance with the Act on Accounting No. 431/2002 Coll., as amended."*

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

12.2. Clearing with the state budget

In 2022, the management of the Agency was governed by a budget approved by the Executive Board on 28 January 2022 and its modification was approved twice by the Agency's Executive Board during the year.

The agency's source of revenue for 2022 was earmarked funds from the state budget, provided through the budget of the provider by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as "MŠVVaŠ SR"), in accordance with Section 19(5) of the Act on Provision for material and financial provision of the Agency's activities (hereinafter referred to as "purpose"), subject to the conditions set out in the concluded Contract No. 1. The total amount of funds provided was **1,263,729,- €** for the purpose of using current expenses.

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

- the first instalment of € 547 518,50 in the form of current expenditure,,
- a second instalment of € 547 518,50 in the form of current expenditure, and
- a third instalment of € 168 692,00 on the basis of a signed amendment to the contract.

Funds provided to the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education in 2022	1st, 2nd instalment	Modification of the budget - Appendix 1	In total
Total expenditure (600 + 700)	1 095 037,00 €	168 692,00 €	1 263 729,00 €
Current Expenditure (600)	1 095 037,00 €	168 692,00 €	1 263 729,00 €
Wages, salaries, service income and other personal settlements (610)	621 000,00 €	76 650,00 €	697 650,00 €
Insurance premiums and contributions to insurance companies (620)	217 039,50 €	32 948,00 €	249 987,50 €
Goods and services (630)	250 240,00 €	29 094,00 €	279 334,00 €
Current transfers (640)	6 757,50 €	30 000,00 €	36 757,50 €
Capital Expenditure (700)	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €
Procurement of capital assets (710)	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €

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

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

The Agency's initially approved budget for 2022, as adjusted by item and sub-heading, is set out in the following table:

Funding provided to the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education in 2022	Approved budget	Modified after amendment no. 1
Total expenditure (600 + 700)	1 134 346,50 €	1 303 038,50 €
Current Expenditure (600)	1 095 037,00 €	1 263 729,00 €
Wages, salaries, service income and other personal settlements (610)	621 000,00 €	697 650,00 €
Insurance premiums and contributions to insurance companies (620)	220 839,50 €	247 629,50 €
Tovary a služby (630), v tom	251 900,00 €	287 152,00 €
631 Travel refunds	2 000,00 €	3 000,00 €
632 Energy, water and communications	21 000,00 €	20 000,00 €
633 Material	16 500,00 €	15 091,20 €
634 Transportation	0,00 €	0,00 €
635 Normal and Standard Maintenance	0,00 €	1 408,80 €
636 Lease for rent	51 500,00 €	51 144,00 €
637 Services, in this	160 900,00 €	196 508,00 €
637027 Remuneration of non-employment employees	50 000,00 €	79 700,00 €
637200 Other services	110 900,00 €	116 808,00 €
Current transfers (640), in this	1 297,50 €	31 297,50 €
649 Transfers abroad	500,00 €	30 500,00 €
640 AM+ members	797,50 €	797,50 €
Capital Expenditure (700)	39 309,50 €	39 309,50 €
Procurement of capital assets (710), in this	39 309,50 €	39 309,50 €
711 Purchase of land and intangible assets (software, licenses)	0,00 €	0,00 €
713 Purchase of machinery, apparatus, equipment, techniques and tools	39 309,50 €	14 119,50 €
714 Purchase of means of transport of all kinds	0,00 €	25 190,00 €

For 2022, the agency had no capital funds allocated. However, it had capital expenditures from 2020, provided in the total amount of €51,716, and their balance as of December 31, 2021 was €39,309.50. Pursuant to the grant agreement on their provision as amended and in connection with Act 523/2004 Coll. on the budget rules of public administration, the agency used up these capital funds in the amount of 99.8%, which amounts to €39,229.90. The agency referred the unspent part of the capital funds in the

total amount of €79.60 to the ministry. Capital funds were used to purchase the following tangible assets:

1. Personal vehicle VW Golf Life 1,5TSI	25 190,00 €
2. Presentation technology	9 188,60 €
3. Computer technology	851,30 €

12.2.1. Implementation of appropriations for 2022 by 31 December 2022

The total absorption of funds in 2022 was 99.12% with a total volume of € 1,164,174.87. Current expenses were drawn up as follows:

Funding provided in 2022— drawn in 2022	Čerpanie
Total expenditure (600 + 700)	1 203 484,37 €
Current Expenditure (600)	1 164 174,87 €
Wages, salaries, service income and other personal settlements (610)	615 178,50 €
Insurance premiums and contributions to insurance companies (620)	228 674,37 €
Goods and services (630), in this	283 277,37 €
631 Travel refunds	13 341,71 €
632 Energy, water and communications	17 588,93 €
633 Material	24 814,53 €
634 Transportation	0,00 €
635 Normal and Standard Maintenance	1 408,80 €
636 Lease for rent	57 230,01 €
637 Services, in this	168 893,39 €
637027 Remuneration of non-employment employees	52 331,68 €
637200 Other services	116 561,71 €
Current transfers (640), in this	37 044,63 €
642015 for sickness benefits	18,63 €
649003 International Organisations	37 026,00 €
Capital Expenditure (700)	39 309,50 €
Procurement of capital assets (710), in this	39 309,50 €
711 Purchase of land and intangible assets (software, licenses)	0,00 €
713 Purchase of machinery, apparatus, equipment, techniques and tools	14 119,50 €
714 Purchase of means of transport of all kinds	25 190,00 €

610 – wages, salaries, service income and DPOs (OOV)

620 – insurance premiums and insurance contributions

637027 – compensation of employees outside employment

Within the mentioned items, funds were drawn for wages and contributions to insurance companies, for employees in employment and for employees outside of employment.

631 – Travel refunds

In 2022, employees made business trips:

- Project SEQA (Montenegro, Malta, Cologne),
- Meetings ENQA (Cardiff, Stockholm, Timisoara),
- Assessments at Higher Education Institutions (Košice, Banská Bystrica)
 - 632 – Energy, Water and Communications

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

633 – Material

Purchase of equipment for new employees, purchase of common consumables (office and hygiene supplies, cleaning and disinfectants, respirators, AG tests, etc.), interior equipment due to the expansion of the agency to other office space, purchase of computer and telecommunication equipment for new employees.

634 – Transportation

Transport of purchased goods (as a result of pandemic measures, most purchases were made over the internet and delivered by courier service).

636 – rent for rent

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

637200 – other services

Personnel expenses — meal vouchers, social fund creation, staff training expenses, etc.

Other services ensuring the operation of the agency, such as software services, agency website, safety of work and GDPR, professional consulting services and various fees.

From the item *other services* were paid in 2022 to members of the working groups, for the proceedings to the adopted reports on the correction of the shortcomings of universities, which the Agency is obliged to assess on the basis of the acquired competences of the Accreditation Commission, the advisory body of the Government of the Slovak Republic.

640 – Current transfers

Compensation for the first 10 days of incapacity for work of the Agency and payment of the membership fee of the European Network for Academic Integrity.

700 – capital expenditure

The capital funds provided in 2020 were spent in 2022 for the purchase of a passenger car, presentation and computer technology.

The ongoing negative pandemic situation at the beginning of 2022 and the resulting restrictions affected both planned and real absorption of funds. Part of the meetings moved to the online environment and several planned face-to-face meetings, trainings, workshops and business trips, both domestic and foreign, were cancelled. As a result of the above, € 99,554.13 of the total funds provided for 2022 from current expenses has not been spent. These funds have been transferred under the Financial Regulation Act for replenishment until the end of March 2023. As a priority, they will be used to pay the salaries of permanent employees and employees for work performance agreement and work activity agreement and payment of invoices for the month of December 2022 due in 2023.

12.2.2. Absorption of appropriations for 2022

At the beginning of 2022, the Agency had a balance of ordinary funds from 2021 in the amount of € 102,728.65 and capital funds in the amount of € 39,309.50. Current funds were exhausted in the first quarter of 2022 and capital funds, under contract with the ministry, by the end of 2022.

2021 appropriations transferred for replenishment in Q1 2022	Budgetary structure	Absorption
<i>Current Expenditure (600)</i>	102 728,65 €	102 728,65 €
<i>Wages, salaries, service income and other personal settlements (610)</i>	65 233,57 €	65 233,57 €
<i>Insurance premiums and contributions to insurance companies (620)</i>	25 361,35 €	25 361,35 €
<i>Goods and services (630)</i>	12 133,73 €	12 133,73 €
<i>Current transfers (640), in this</i>	0,00 €	0,00 €
<i>Capital Expenditure (700)</i>	39 309,50 €	39 309,50 €
Total expenditure (600+ 700)	142 038,15 €	142 038,15 €

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

Payment of employees' wages for December 2021; due in January 2022.

620 – Premiums and contributions to insurance companies

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

630 – Goods and services

Goods and services related to the operation of the Agency.

632 – Energy, water, communications

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

633 – Material

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

636 – Rent

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

637200 – other services

Personnel expenses – meal vouchers, creation of social fund (for December 2021), training of employees scheduled for the end of 2021, realized in first quarter 2022 and other services ensuring the day-to-day running of the Agency

12.3. Own funds management

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

The Agency's own resources balance in 2022 is shown in the table below:

Income		Expenses	
Total revenue	194 911,90 €	Total expenditure (600 + 700)	80 743,16 €
Fees	42 064,00 €	Current expenses (600)	80 743,16 €
Other revenue	5 605,00€	Wages, salaries, service. income and other persons (610)	39 270,66 €
Balance 2021	147 242,90€	Insurance premiums and contributions (620)	13 615,17 €
		Goods and services (63X)	27 857,33 €
		Current transfers (640)	0,00 €
Balance 2022			114 168,74 €

The revenue of 2022 was mainly generated by fees of higher education institutions for the accreditation of study programmes. Other revenues are participation fees for the SQAF 2022 conference hosted by the agency.

The total amount of own funds used was € 80,743.16 and is shown in the table below:

Own funds drawn in 2022	Drawing of funds
Total expenditure (600 + 700)	80 743,16 €
Current expenditure (600)	80 743,16 €
Salaries, salaries, emoluments and other personal settlements (610)	39 270,66 €
Premiums and contributions to insurance companies (620)	13 615,17 €
Goods and services (630), in this	27 857,33 €
631 Travel expenses for staff	2 744,72 €
Services, in this	25 112,61 €
633 016 Representative	845,95 €
636 001 Rent	1 150,00 €
637 001 Expenses for seminars, conferences	3 868,70 €
637004 General services	334,00 €
637007 Travel expenses for persons outside the employment	1 732,55 €
637011 Rewards	17 168,96 €
637012 Account fees	12,45 €

610 – salaries, salaries, service income and other personnel expenses.

The agency partially covered the cost of salaries of staff directly involved in activities of the review panel in the process of assessing higher education institutions.

620 – premiums and contributions to insurance companies

Heading of the economic classification directly related to heading 610 wages, salaries, service income and other personnel expenses.

631 – travel allowances

Travel expenses for Agency staff for missions connected with assessment on the site of higher education institutions, in the capacity of coordinators with members of working groups of the Executive Board of the Agency.

633 – Presentable – promotional items for the SQAF 2022 conference

636 – Rent – rental of premises in hotel Tatra for the conference SQAF 2022 637

– services, in this

637001 – Seminar expenses, conferences – catering SQAF 2022

637004 – General services – accommodation of employees and guests during the SQAF 2022 conference

637007 – cestovné náhrady

Reimbursement for transport and accommodation of members of the review panels of the Executive Board of the Agency connected with on-site assessments of higher education institutions.

637011 – Rewards

Funds used for the payment of remuneration of members of working groups on the basis of concluded mandate contracts for assessment activities and the preparation of an evaluation report in accordance with the internal rules Directive on the remuneration of members of the review panels of the Executive Board.

12.4. Status and movement of assets

12.4.2. Non-current Intangible fixed assets

Intangible fixed assets acquired by the Agency shall be valued at cost less value adjustments and accumulated impairment losses. Cost includes all costs directly attributable to the asset acquired. In the event that the use of fixed intangible assets is determined by the contract, the period of use is determined according to the validity of the contract. In other cases, the provisions of the Income Tax Act, as amended, shall apply mutatis mutandis.

The Agency shall have licenses for information systems and software included in the records of intangible assets; its increase in 2022 was due to the acquisition of statistical software and its total movement is shown in the following table:

Intangible assets			
	Software	Valuable rights	Total
Status to 1. 1. 2022	17 313,08	2 760	20 073,08
Additions			
Decreases			
Transfers			

Status to 31. 12. 2022	17 313,08	2 760	20 073,08
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Deprecations to 1. 1. 2022	6 613,86	736	7 349,86
Additions	5 024,84	552	5 576,84
Decreases			
Deprecations to 31. 12. 2022	11 638,70	1 288	12 926,70

Provisions to 1. 1. 2022			
Additions			
Decreases			
Provisions to 31. 12. 2022			

Residual value to 1. 1. 2022	10 699,22	2 024	12 723,22
Residual value to 31. 12. 2022	5 674,38	1 472	7 146,38

12.4. 2. Non-current tangible assets

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

In the records of tangible assets, the Agency has included mainly computers, notebooks, audiovisual technology and copiers. In the records of small tangible assets, the Agency records some laptops and accessories. Movements of the Agency's tangible assets in 2022 are summarized in the following table:

Tangible assets				
	Separate movables and files of movables	Means of Transport	Minor and other long-term tangible assets	In total
Status to 1. 1. 2022	14 399,26		4 684,16	19 083,42
Additions	14 039,40	25 190,00	0,00	39 229,40
Decreases				
Transfers				
Status to 31. 12. 2022	28 438,66	25 190,00	4 684,16	58 312,82

Value adjustments to 1. 1. 2022	4 515,95		695,08	5 211,03
Additions	3 616,26	524,79	1 171,20	5 312,25
Decreases				
Value adjustments to 31. 12. 2022	8 132,21	524,79	1 866,28	10 523,28

Value adjustmentsk 1. 1. 2022				
Additions				
Decreases				
Value adjustments to 31.12.2022				

Residual value to 1.1. 2022	9 883,31	0,00	3 989,08	13 872,39
Residual value to 31. 12. 2022	20 306,45	24 665,21	2 817,88	47 789,54

13.AUDITOR'S REPORT

I prepared as an auditor – agency body, a statement on the submitted financial statements, a non-profit entity – an independent public institution of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education established pursuant to Section 4(1) of Act No. 269/2018 Coll. on Quality Assurance of Higher Education and on amendments to act No. 343/2015 Coll. on public procurement of 11.9.2018 which includes the balance sheet as at 31 December 2022, the profit and loss account and notes summarizing significant accounting policies and accounting methods, as well as other explanatory information.

13.1. Responsibility of Auditor of the Agency

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

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

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

The procedures chosen depended on the judgment of the controller, including an assessment of the risks of material misstatement in the financial statements, whether as a result of fraud or error. In assessing this risk, as controller, I took into account the internal checks carried out relevant to the assessment of the entity's financial statements in order to provide a true and fair view of SAAHE management in 2022.

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

13.2. Responsibility of the statutory body of SAAHE for the financial statements

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

13.3. AUDITOR'S OPINION

In my opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the economic and financial situation of the independent public institution SAAHE as at 31 December 2022 and the results of its management, for the year ending, are in accordance with the Act on Accounting No. 431/2002 Coll., as amended, at that date. On the basis of the verification of the budgetary management recorded in the Agency's accounts, I conclude that I have not identified significant facts that would call into question the reported ones. The Agency's own funds shall consist of fees for operations on the basis of tariff rates.

Ing. Ivan Hargaš
SAAHE Auditor 7. 2. 2023

14. CONCLUSION

The submitted annual report summarises an overview of the activities carried out by the Agency in 2022 and other activities related to the exercise of its remit. It summarises the changes made to internal regulations and also reflects external legislative changes. In 2022, the Agency carried out its mission and carried out external quality assurance activities in higher education on the basis of the law and its internal regulations. In addition, its activity was also focused on the preparation of processes of assessment of internal quality assurance systems of higher education institutions with standards.

In 2022, the Agency requested an external review of its activities and carried out substantial activities in relation to its ambition to become a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and to be registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). In 2022, the Agency produced and published two thematic reports, actively engaged with stakeholders and developed international cooperation.

A substantial part of the report is focused to an analysis of the agency's management of state budget resources as well as its own resources and contains data in accordance with § 20 par. 8 of the Quality Assurance Act.

