



Annual Activity and Economy Report of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education for the year 2024

Bratislava, April 2025

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FOREWORD

Dear readers,

we present to you the annual report of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education for the year 2024. The report documents not only the activities of the calendar year, but also the culmination of six years of efforts in the implementation of modern quality assurance in higher education in Slovakia.

Although these efforts began with the preparation of the modern Act before 2018, actual implementation did not take place until the Agency was established following its adoption. Gradually, the bodies and structures of the Agency were established, accreditation standards were issued, internal quality assurance systems were implemented at higher education institutions, up to the first external review of these internal systems, which was completed just last year.

The report also provides information on the successful international evaluation of the Agency and its procedures within the framework of the ENQA Agency Review and the WFME BME Recognition Programme. Based on the positive results of these challenging evaluations, the Agency was registered in the European Quality Assurance Register EQAR, admitted to the European Quality Assurance Network ENQA and received the prestigious “Recognition Status” of the World Federation of Medical Education WFME. The results of the Agency’s assessments of the higher education institutions are now recorded and published in the Database of External Quality Assurance Results DEQAR.

The Agency’s annual activity and economy report documents that, over the past year, Slovakia has effectively fulfilled its third key commitment to the European Higher Education Area, namely in the area of quality assurance. The process of harmonising higher education, to which Slovakia committed itself back in 2000 by signing the Bologna Declaration, has thus been completed.

Personally, I am pleased that, together with my colleagues and external partners, we were able to be at the heart of these changes, which have the potential to improve the quality of provided education at Slovak higher education institutions in these dynamic times of increasing demands.

Robert Redhammer
Chair of the Executive Board of the Agency

1. INTRODUCTION

The year 2024 was particularly significant for the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as “SAAHE” or the “Agency”). The Agency’s primary activity in the area of external quality assurance of higher education in 2024 was the completion of proceedings for the assessment of compliance of the internal system and its implementation with standards at all higher education institutions based in Slovakia. These proceedings were initiated in 2023 in accordance with the Quality Assurance Act. In this regard, the Agency was able to issue the relevant decisions in the case of 32 higher education institutions in 2024; one decision was postponed to 2025 due to objective reasons, but even in this case, it was issued within the limit set by law.

For the Agency, the year 2024 was also an important year in the area of internationalisation, European integration and international recognition of its processes and procedures. The Agency became a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), building on its inclusion in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), which took place back in 2023. The Agency also became a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). A particularly significant achievement for SAAHE was obtaining the Recognition Status from the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME).

As part of its internal activities, the Agency produced one thematic report and completed all the tasks specified in its work plan. In the field of internal legislation, 8 new internal regulations were issued in the year, mainly concerning the area of cybersecurity; two internal regulations were amended. The Agency also continuously adjusted and developed its information system in order to reduce the administrative burden on higher education institutions and improve user comfort.

The submitted *Annual Activity and Economy Report of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education for the year 2024* is a fulfilment of § 4 par. 2 letter g) point 3 of the Quality Assurance Act and contains all the data pursuant to § 20 par. 8 of this Act.

2. ABOUT THE AGENCY

2.1. Legal definition and mission

The Agency is a public institution which carries out external quality assurance activities in higher education. It was established on 1 November 2018 by Act No. 269/2018 Coll. on Quality Assurance of Higher Education and amending Act No. 343/2015 Coll. on public procurement and on the amendment of certain acts as amended (hereinafter referred to as 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 with external quality assurance tools according to the principles of ESG 2015 and in accordance with the expectations of stakeholders involved in education. The Agency provides higher education institutions with a professional and independent view on the quality of education and strengthens the culture of quality. As an independent public institution, it mainly decides on matters related to the granting of authorisations to higher education institutions based on their requests and performs other related tasks.

2.2. Structure and composition of the Agency's bodies in 2024

The Quality Assurance Act, § 5 – § 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 bodies. They are:

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

2.2.1. Chair and Vice-Chair of the Executive Board

The Chair of the Executive Board is a statutory body of the Agency, manages the Agency, acts on its behalf and represents it externally. The Chair of the Executive Board is represented in his/her absence by the Vice-Chair of the Executive Board. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Executive Board are appointed and dismissed by the Minister for Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the "Minister"). In 2024, these positions were held by:

prof. Ing. Robert Redhammer, PhD., Chair of the Executive Board,
prof. RNDr. René Matlovič, PhD., LL.M., Vice-Chair of the Executive Board.

2.2.2. Executive Board

The Executive Board has nine members, including the Chair and the Vice-Chair. The members of the Executive Board are 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 activity, two members on the proposal of the Student Council for Higher Education and two members on the proposal of employers' representatives. The 9th member is the Chair of the Executive Board.

In 2024, the Executive Board worked in the following composition, which remained unchanged throughout the year:

prof. Ing. Robert Redhammer, PhD., Chair,
prof. RNDr. René Matlovič, PhD., LL.M., Vice-Chair,
MUDr. Ljuba Bachárová, DrSc., MBA, member,
prof. RNDr. František Kačík, DrSc., member,
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.

2.2.3. Board of Appeal

The Board of Appeal examines the procedures of the Executive Board and the review panels of the Executive Board of the Agency based on objections submitted by participants in the proceedings to the decisions or statements of the Executive Board. Pursuant to § 20 par. 8 of the Quality Assurance Act, the Board of Appeal has five members and two alternates appointed and dismissed by the Minister based on the results of the selection process.

Pursuant to § 9 par. 3 of the Quality Assurance Act, the term of office for a member of the Board of Appeal is four years. The first term of office for four members of the Board of Appeal expired on 31. 1. 2024, and two of them – JUDr. Peter Štrpka, PhD., and prof. JUDr. Margita Prokeinová, PhD. - were appointed for a second term following a selection process. In 2024, the composition of the Board of Appeal was as follows:

Dr. h. c. Prof. Ing. Rudolf Sivák, PhD., Chair – since 6. 2. 2024 to 5. 12.2024

JUDr. Marcel Jurko, PhD., member – until 31. 1. 2024,

Mgr. Roman Oleksik, LL.M., member – to 31. 1. 2024,

JUDr. Peter Štrpka, PhD., member

Mgr. Igor Schweizer, member – from 1. 2. 2024,

Mgr. Michal Řehák, member – from 1. 2. 2024,

prof. Ing. Peter Demeč, CSc., member – from 1. 2. 2024,

prof. RNDr. Jozef Hvorecký, PhD., alternate member - from 1. 2. 2024,

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

The Board of Appeal had a legally prescribed composition of five members and two alternates until 5. 12. 2024, when prof. Sivák resigned from the Board of Appeal for health-related reasons. This was communicated by the Agency to the Ministry, which initiated the relevant selection process to fill the vacant position.

2.2.4. Auditor

Based on the results of the selection process, the auditor is appointed for a term of office of four years by the Minister. The first term of office of auditor **Ing. Ivan Hargaš** ended on 31. 1. 2024. Based on a selection process, auditor **Ing. Zora Dobříková** was appointed to this position on 1. 2. 2024. Pursuant to the relevant provisions of the Quality Assurance Act, she commented on the Agency's financial statements and the Annual Activity and Economy Report before submitting them for approval to the Executive Board.

2.2.5. Head of Office

The Head of Office mainly ensures the proper operation of the Agency, including administrative, technical, spatial and personnel security of the Agency, manages the Agency's office to the extent determined by the Chair of the Executive Board. The Head of Office is appointed and dismissed by the Chair of the Executive Board based on the results of the selection process. In 2024, this position was held by **Ing. Dušan Faktor, PhD.**

2.3. Organisational structure and human resources

The performance of the Agency's mandate and the full security of its activities is tied to the staffing of the Agency with qualified employees. As of 31 December 2024, the Agency had a total of 27 employees in permanent employment, of which 15 were women. Eight employees were working on a part-time basis. There was a total of 25 persons who performed activities based on agreements executed outside the employment relationship (the work agreement – 11 persons; employment agreement – 13 persons). In 2024, the number of Agency employees in permanent employment stabilized compared to the previous period. The decrease in the number of employees working under contracts outside of permanent employment (24 compared to 59 in 2023) resulted primarily from the termination of contracts for individuals serving as secretaries of individual review panels. For the same reason, the

average adjusted number of Agency employees also decreased, to 22.7 (compared to 28.3 in 2023).

The basic division of the Agency and its structure is already determined by the Quality Assurance Act by establishing the Agency's bodies and defining their rights, obligations and basic ties. Pursuant to the valid organizational rules, the agency is divided into:

- Department of Accreditation Activities;
- Analytical Department,
- Economics and Operations Department,
- Legislative and Legal Department;
- Internal Quality Assurance Department.

The main tasks, duties and responsibilities of each department are listed in the Organisational Rules; at the head of each section is its head/leader, who is responsible for his/her activities to the Head of Office. The Legislative and Legal Department provides cooperation to other organizational departments of the Agency according to the needs and instructions of the Chair of the Executive Board. The work of the Internal Quality Assurance Department is ensured by the Internal Quality Assurance Coordinator, who is appointed and dismissed by the Chair of the Executive Board. The current organisational structure enabled the Agency's management to address strategic issues in higher education in an appropriate and responsible manner.

2.4. Professional development of employees

Since its inception, the Agency has consistently strived to create an optimal work environment for its employees and considers it to be one of the key factors influencing both individual and team performance.

In addition to technical equipment, the Agency also emphasizes the education and personal growth of its employees. The Agency's job positions are unique within the labour market, and the structure of its activities, relative to the number of employees, requires the creation of cumulative positions with a broader focus. Therefore, the Agency adapts and optimises professional development and training structure of the employees in light of planned work tasks, while also taking into account employees' requests for self-education. The goals are focused on final results and the quality of work in public interest.

The training program consists of mandatory courses focused on occupational health and safety, fire safety, internal regulations and procedures, and is supplemented by a wide range of external training courses and seminars, both domestic and international.

An overview of the educational and development events of the Agency's employees in 2024 is in the following three tables.

1. Training of newly recruited employees and periodic training:

Date	Training content
Continuously as needed	Training – Protection and safety of health at work and fire protection Trained by: Ing. Eva Hlivová – bezp.sk
Continuously as needed	Training – use of information system for registry management – employees of the company Trained by: employee of A.V.I.S.

2. Domestic professional training for employees:

Date	Training content
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8. 1. 2024	Training: TEXT meeting Trained by: ACREA CZ
17. 1. 2024	Training: Finalisation of evaluation reports – content of evaluation reports on the review of the internal system Trained by: CoR President, CoR Vice-President
12. 4. 2024	Training: GDPR for public administration in 2024 Trained by: Poradca podnikateľa, s. r. o.
23. 4. 2024	Training: The Administrative Procedure Act in practice Training: OTIDEA, s. r. o.
26. 4. 2024	Training: The Information Act, current amendments and solutions to the most common practical issues in state and local government Training: OTIDEA, s. r. o.
21. 5. 2024	Training: Evaluation report on the review of the internal quality assurance system – justification of deficiencies and supporting evidence Trained by: Mgr. Jana Kuriňavová
21. 5. 2024	Training: Anti-social activities - documentation for the employer the designated person Training: PROEKO, s. r. o.
10. – 11. 6. 2024	Training: Responsibilities and coordination of the work of the review panel chairs during the review of the higher education institution's application Trained by: Chair of the Executive Board
19. 8. 2024	Training: Publication of contracts, invoices and purchase orders without sanctions in 2024 in accordance with the Information Act and GDPR Training: PROEKO, s. r. o.
10. 9. 2024	Training: How to procure so-called small-scale contracts and below-threshold contracts from 1. 8. 2024 Training: PROEKO, s. r. o.
25. 9. 2024	Training: Budget management rules according to Act No. 523/2004 Coll. and violation of financial discipline in theory and decision-making practice Training: PROEKO, s. r. o.
1. 10. 2024	Training: Diplomatic protocol, state protocol and etiquette in practice with a former diplomat Training: OTIDEA, s.r.o.
11. 10. 2024	Training: Basic financial audit – dates and deadlines Training: PROEKO, s. r. o.
17. 10. 2024	Training: 5 steps to proper written communication – the Slovak language in official correspondence Training: OTIDEA, s. r. o.

3. Foreign professional training for employees:

Date	Content of the training	
6. - 7. 5. 2024	ECA Workshop - A European Approach to Joint Curricula Cologne, Germany	Zacharová
4. 7. 6. 2024	ENQA Leadership Development Programme 2024, 1st workshop focused on educating the staff of the accreditation agencies that are members of ENQA Budapest, Hungary	Blight
18. – 20. 9. 2024	ENQA Leadership Development Programme 2024, 2nd workshop focused on educating the staff of the accreditation agencies that are members of ENQA Stockholm, Sweden	Blight
20. 9. 2024	Webinar INQAAHE II Global Study – Eastern Europe EQAP Focus Group I; Active participation – participation in INQAAHE survey	Zacharová
31. 10. 2024	ENQA webinar - Supporting Cultures of Academic Integrity: The role of quality assurance agencies in promoting and enhancing academic integrity and ensuring learning Active participation, final summary of review panel's results	Zacharová
14. - 16. 11. 2024	2024 European Quality Assurance Forum Enhancing education, research and societal engagement through quality assurance – presentations and workshops on trends, research policies and case studies Enschede, The Netherlands	Blight Bujdák

27. – 29. 11. 2024	ENQA Leadership Development Programme 2024, 3rd workshop focused on educating the staff of the accreditation agencies that are members of ENQA Cologne, Germany	Blight Zacharová
11. 12. 2024	ENQA Seminar on the European dimension of Quality Assurance Basic principles of QA at European level Brussels, Belgium	Bujdák Kurňavová
12. 12. 2024	Workshop ENQA Staff development, ENQA Quality assurance professional competences framework – discussion on the competences of agency staff, start of work on the adaptation of the QA professional competences framework Brussels, Belgium	Zacharová

The Agency provides an optimal working environment by providing office and technical equipment, which the Agency regularly upgrades and adapts to the current needs and requirements of its employees.

2.5. Remuneration and social benefits

In the area of human resources management, the Agency contributes to a stable work environment and the long-term retention of its employees through remuneration and social benefits. These include a meal allowance from the social fund, an employer contribution to supplementary pension savings and other benefits. Some of them were amended in the latest revision of the SAAHE salary regulation dated 27. 7. 2024.

2.6. Spatial and material equipment of the Agency

The Agency's spatial and material background and facilities remained unchanged in 2024. The Agency is based in an administrative building on Freedom Square 11 in Bratislava, where it has rented office space and used the entire 5th floor and the entire 3rd floor during 2024. The total area of the leased space is 520 m². The Agency has 9 parking spaces, 3 indoors and 7 outdoors. All offices and meeting rooms are equipped with office furniture and IT infrastructure owned by the Agency. A total of 14 offices is 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 employees. The Agency also has 2 meeting rooms equipped with audio-visual technology and used for meetings of the Executive Board, the Board of Appeal, external visits, training, and work meetings. Employees on each floor have a kitchenette equipped with daily necessities and sanitary facilities.

There is a reception in the building on the ground floor, which is provided and operated by the landlord. The reception serves all companies located in the administrative building. The vicinity 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 of 2022, the Agency has a reference service vehicle which was fully used by employees for business trips undertaken primarily in connection with accreditations of higher education institutions.

2.7. Agency information system and cybersecurity

In the context of its activities, the Agency paid great attention in 2024 to improving the functionalities of its own information system, in particular in terms of complementing the necessary functionalities. Also, thanks to this activity, the administrative procedures related to the processing of higher education institutions' applications for the review of the internal quality assurance system, the subsequent decision-making in the Executive Board and the

management of the review panels involved in these proceedings have been streamlined and automated.

Another important activity of the Agency was to increase the cybersecurity of the information systems it uses in its activities. By decision of the National Security Office of the Slovak Republic, the Agency, as a public authority, was classified as an “essential service provider” effective 1. 1. 2024, meaning that it is subject to comprehensive legislation regarding the cybersecurity of information systems and technologies in public administration. This primarily concerns obligations arising from Act No. 69/2018 Coll. on cybersecurity and subsequent legislation. In this context, the Agency has adopted new internal regulations governing this area, and several related processes have been revised. These revisions primarily concerned the allocation, tracking and management of access to information systems, as well as raising employee awareness of cybersecurity and the handling of security incidents.

3. CHANGES IN THE EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

In 2024, the Agency continued to monitor and evaluate external changes in the legislative environment, as well as feedback from its own processes. Based on its evaluation, the Agency drafted and adopted internal regulations governing the implementation of new processes, as well as the necessary updates to those regulations needed by changes in legislation. The addition of new functionalities improved the Agency's information system, especially in terms of automation and user-friendliness, but also in relation to the necessary increase in the protection of personal data and cybersecurity.

3.1. External legislative changes

The legislative environment within which the Agency carries out its activities is formed mainly by the Quality Assurance Act, which was amended three times during 2024, however, only the first amendment took effect in 2024. The Agency actively cooperated with the Ministry and other stakeholders in the preparation of these amendments and participated in the approval process.

The first of the amendment to the Quality Assurance Act, implemented by Act No. 167/2024 Coll., extended the period of existing rights of higher education institutions to conduct habilitation and inauguration proceedings by two years. These rights will therefore remain in effect until 31. 8. 2026.

The second amendment to the Quality Assurance Act resulted from the adoption of Act No. 292/2024 coll. on adult education and on the amendment of certain acts. Among other things, this Act introduces the concept of so-called micro-certificates and, in this context, required SAAHE to publish, by 31. 1. 2025, a proposal to amend the standards for the internal system to reflect the introduction of microcredentials. The Agency has fulfilled this obligation, and the Executive Board discussed the initial draft of the amendments in 2024, which will only be subject to approval and subsequent public comment in 2025.

The most recent amendment to the Quality Assurance Act, adopted in 2024 (effective from 1. 2. 2025), was introduced by an amendment to Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on higher education institutions (Act No. 399/2024 Coll.). In this latest indirect amendment to the Quality Assurance Act, in addition to technical changes, the conditions under which a higher education institution may submit to the Agency an evaluation report prepared by a legal entity other than the institution itself were clarified, as were the conditions and procedure for the accreditation of a cross-border joint study programmes. From the perspective of the Agency's

scope of authority, the cited amendment to the Higher Education Institution Act was also important in that it brought greater clarity to the remit of the bodies of the higher education institution, in particular its Board of Directors, and defined the mutual relationships between the structures of the higher education institution.

In 2024, the Agency thoroughly addressed all external changes to legislation, not only those related to higher education, and, where justified, modified or initiated changes to its procedures, regulations and processes.

3.2. Internal legislation of the Agency and its amendments

The Agency relies on a system of internal regulations and internal legislation in the performance of its mandate and consistent application of the authorizations it has. By the end of 2024, it consisted of 35 directives, regulations and other types of standards that regulate the Agency's internal and external procedures. Based on the results of the feedback, the analysis of changes in external legislation and changes to internal processes, the Agency issued 8 new regulations and amended 2 internal regulations.

The Agency has amended its procedures through new internal regulations following a final decision imposing corrective measure on a higher education institution and the subsequent procedures following the higher education institution's notification of the measures taken to address the deficiencies. The optimisation of the Agency's procedures and the inclusion of legislative changes led to the adoption of new rules of procedure for the Executive Board and new directives governing the Agency's procedures for mandatory disclosure of information and public procurement. Following the inclusion of the Agency in the register of essential service providers by the National Security Office of the Slovak Republic, new regulations governing the operation of information systems and cybersecurity were also adopted. In this context, the recommendations from the cybersecurity audit commissioned by the Agency in 2023 were also implemented.

A detailed overview of the new and amended internal regulations can be found in the following two tables.

1. New internal regulations:

Number	Title of the internal regulation	Date of approval
1/2024	Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board	Approved on 8. 2. 2024
2/2024	Strategy of Cyber Security of SAAHE	Approved on 29. 2. 2024
3/2024	Methodology of SAAHE Security and Risk Analysis	Approved on 20. 6. 2024
4/2024	Directive on SAAHE Mandatory Disclosure and Free Access to Information	Approved on 4. 9. 2024
5/2024	Rules on SAAHE Procedures After the Imposition of Corrective Measures	Approved on 17. 10. 2024
6/2024	Directive on the Public Procurement Procedures	Approved on 17. 10. 2024
7/2024	Directive on Management of Access Rights to Information Systems of SAAHE	Approved on 12. 12. 2024

8/2024	Directive on Management of Security Incidents of SAAHE	Approved on 12. 12. 2024
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2. Amended internal regulations:

Number	Title of the internal regulation	Date of approval
4/2021	Registry Procedure of SAAHE	Approved on 25. 1. 2024
9/2019	Salary Regulation of SAAHE	Approved on 25. 7. 2024

4. AGENCY REVIEWERS AND REVIEW PANELS

The year 2024 was marked by active work with the list of reviewers and continuous interaction with them, in connection with the ongoing assessments of internal systems and their implementation at all higher education institutions. The simultaneous assessment of internal systems at all 33 higher education institutions in Slovakia and the ongoing proceedings based on applications for the accreditation of study programmes meant the need for frequent communication with the reviewers as well as updates to this list.

At its meetings in 2024, the Executive Board approved the inclusion of 20 reviewers to the list of reviewers, 12 of whom were from abroad. Two student reviewers were also added to the list of reviewers. In 2024, the Executive Board also approved the removal of 62 reviewers. The most common reason was the incompatibility of the reviewer's position with their current role at their workplace, or failure to meet the requirements for reviewers (particularly the completion of the student's studies in 48 cases).

For individual reviewers, the Agency records their professional focus, profile (higher education teacher, practitioner, internal system expert, student, etc.) and other data about their professional activities. Based on the evaluation of this data, the Agency may propose a reviewer to a review panel to assess the specific activity of the higher education institution. In 2024, a total of 10 review panels were established to assess applications for the accreditation of study programmes and joint study programmes.

Review panels for the assessment of applications for the accreditation of study programmes and joint study programmes were established in accordance with the Quality Assurance Act and in accordance with the internal regulation *Principles for inclusion in the list of reviewers, removal from this list and creation of review panels of SAAHE*. In order to review these requests, it was necessary to appoint 5 members of the review panel – the chair of the review panel, experts in the field of study, professional expert and a student representative.

As part of the review of internal systems, a total of more than 320 reviewers were involved, of whom more than 70 were members of two review panels and 28 were members of three review panels; six reviewers were members of a review panel more than three times. The involvement of multiple reviewers ensured a more consistent approach to assessments. The Executive Board established 11 5-member review panels, 6 review panels with 6-10 members, 7 review panels with 11-20 members. Nine review panels had more than 20 members, the largest having 62 members (of which 7 internal system experts, 7 professional experts and 7 student representatives).

Great attention was also paid to the internationalisation of review panels, as 150 of the total number of reviewers involved were foreign, which is more than 46%. A total of 116 reviewers from the Czech Republic participated in the review panels, while 34 were from other countries. More than 50 reviewers participated in two or more review panels.

In 2023, the Agency conducted several types of training for reviewers, mainly in connection with their preparation for reviewing the internal systems of higher education institutions within individual review panels – both overall and broken down by the roles of the review panel members. The first online meeting of the members of each review panel included training regarding the actual review of the internal system itself, the individual processes and stages of the review, the expected outputs of the process and the information system of the Agency. Its second part focused on the individual functions of review panel members; its goal was to prepare reviewers for their specific function in the review panel – an internal system expert, an expert in the field of study, a representative of employers and a student representative. For each function, at least one training course or more was carried out, depending on the size of the review panel. The specific documents for the request, their meaning and importance for the review of individual articles of the standards for the internal system, the distribution of the importance of individual articles of the standards for the individual functions of the review panel members, the division of tasks during the site visit and the preparation of questions for its individual blocks were reflected upon. The third online meeting of the review panel members took place just before the site visit and was therefore focused on the progress of the visit, the distribution of tasks during the visit and the subsequent development of the relevant parts of the evaluation report. The site plan for the review, the different parts of the visit and the expected outcome from them, the types of questions and how they were asked, the formulation of findings during and after the site visit were discussed with the members of the review panel. The second part focused on the development of the evaluation report and its parts according to the function of the members and according to the structure of the higher education institution. The way in which the report was written, the articulation of deficiencies and their justification and the formulation of recommendations were clarified.

The Agency pays close attention to the list of reviewers, its up-to-date nature and its work with reviewers, regularly updates it and publishes it on its website.

5. MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

In 2024, 11 meetings of the Executive Board took place. The dates of the meetings and the brief content of each meeting are given in the following overview.

68th meeting of the Executive Board 25. 1. 2024

Among the main points on the agenda of the first Executive Board meeting in 2024 was the approval of proposals for the composition of six review panels. At this meeting, the Executive Board also approved an update to the plan for thematic analyses and reports for 2022-2025 and a proposal to amend internal regulation No. 4/2021 *Registry Procedure of SAAHE*. Last but not least, the Executive Board approved a proposal to remove certain reviewers from the list of reviewers.

69th meeting of the Executive Board 8. 2. 2024

At this meeting, the Executive Board decided on the reviews of the internal systems of six higher education institutions. It also approved the draft of internal regulation No. 1/2024 *Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board*. Furthermore, the Executive Board also approved a proposal to remove certain reviewers from the list of reviewers. At the February meeting, a proposal to amend the standards for study programmes and a proposal to amend the standards for the habilitation proceedings and proceedings for the appointment of professors were also approved for public comment.

70th meeting of the Executive Board 29. 2. 2024

At that meeting, the Executive Board approved the SAAHE financial statements for 2023 and the SAAHE budget proposal for 2024, as submitted. The Executive Board also decided on the compliance of internal systems and their implementation with the standards in three cases. It also approved an accreditation of one study programme. In addition, the Executive Board approved the draft of internal regulation No. 2/2024 strategy of *Cyber Security of SAAHE* and the draft of procurement plan for 2024, as submitted.

71st meeting of the Executive Board 21. 3. 2024

At its 71st meeting, the Executive Board decided on the compliance of the internal system and its implementation with the standards for the three higher education institutions.

72nd meeting of the Executive Board 11. 4. 2024

At this meeting, the Executive Board, based on requests from higher education institutions, revoked the accreditation of habilitation proceedings and the accreditation of inauguration proceedings in the fields of habilitation proceedings and inauguration proceedings. The Executive Board also decided on the compliance of the internal system and its implementation with the standards for five higher education institutions. Furthermore, the Executive Board agreed to support ENQA's opinion on the European Commission's proposal regarding a single European degree and its recognition.

73rd meeting of the Executive Board 16. 5. 2024

At its May meeting, the Executive Board once again decided on the compliance of internal systems of higher education institutions and their implementation with the standards for the internal system. Based on applications from higher education institutions, the Executive Board decided on the revocation of accreditation for habilitation proceedings and the accreditation of inauguration proceedings. It also approved the evaluation of the comments on the proposal to amend the standards for study programmes and, subsequently, the proposal to amend the standards for study programmes prior to its submission to the Ministry for review. The Executive Board also approved the draft of Annual Activity and Economy Report of SAAHE for the year 2023.

From May 30th to June 3rd, 2024, a *per rollam* vote was held during which the Executive Board approved the composition of the review panel for the accreditation process of the joint study programme.

74th meeting of the Executive Board 20. 6. 2024

At this meeting, the Executive Board decided on the compliance of the internal system and its implementation with the standards for the internal system in the case of five higher education institutions. It further approved the SAAHE working plan for 2024 with an outlook to 2025, as well as the draft of internal regulation No. 3/2024 *Methodics of SAAHE Security and Risk Analysis*. The Executive Board took note of the information on the outcome of the Ministry's inspection, conducted at one of the higher education institutions. Finally, pursuant to Article 6 par. 2 of the Salary Regulation, the Executive Board approved the proposal to award a bonus to the Chair of the Executive Board.

75th meeting of the Executive Board 25. 7. 2024

At its July meeting, the Executive Board also decided on the compliance of the internal system and its implementation with the standards for the internal system for five higher education institutions. The Executive Board further decided on the accreditation of the joint study programme and, upon the higher education institution's request, revoked the accreditation of habilitation proceedings and the accreditation of inauguration proceedings. It also approved the proposal to amend the standards for study programmes and to amend internal regulation No. 9/2019 *Salary Regulation*. In addition, it approved the evaluation of comments on the proposal to amend the standards for the habilitation proceedings and proceedings for the appointment of professors and, in connection with this, the proposal itself to amend the standards for the habilitation proceedings and proceedings for the appointment of professors prior to their submission to the Ministry for review.

76th meeting of the Executive Board 4. 9. 2024

At its September meeting, the Executive Board approved SAAHE's opinion on the Ministry's position regarding the verification of compliance with the conditions for the awarding the academic title "professor" and its compliance with the legislation and standards for the inauguration proceedings. Subsequently, the Executive Board decided on the compliance of the internal system and its implementation with the standards for the internal system. It also decided on the accreditation of joint study programmes. At this meeting, the thematic report titled *Summarizing Report on the Slovak Doctoral Education Survey in Relation to the Quality of Education 2023* was approved, as was the draft of internal regulation No. 4/2024 *Directive on SAAHE Mandatory Disclosure and Free Access to Information*.

77th meeting of the Executive Board 17. 10. 2024

At this meeting, the Executive Board approved review panel and proposals for inclusion in and removal from the SAAHE list of reviewers. Decisions were also made regarding the accreditation of study programmes, and in one case, the Executive Board took note of the withdrawal of an application for the accreditation of the study programme. At this meeting, the Executive Board approved a proposal to amend the standards for the habilitation proceedings and inauguration proceedings. It also approved a proposal to amend the fee schedule for the activities of SAAHE for public comment, a draft of internal regulation No. 5/2024 *Rules on SAAHE Procedures After the Imposition of Corrective Measures* as well as draft of internal regulation No. 6/2024 *Directive Public Procurement Procedures*.

78th meeting of the Executive Board 12. 12. 2024

At this meeting, the Executive Board approved the proposals for the composition of two review panels for the accreditation of a study programme. The Executive Board also took note of the evaluation of comments on the proposed amendment of the fee schedule for the activities of SAAHE and subsequently approved this proposal prior to its submission to the Ministry for approval. Furthermore, the Executive Board approved internal regulation No. 7/2024 *Directive on Management of Access Rights to Information Systems of SAAHE*. It also approved internal regulation No. 8/2024 *Directive on Management of Security Incidents of SAAHE*. Finally, the Executive Board approved the meeting schedule for 2025.

6. PERFORMANCE OF THE AGENCY'S SCOPE

Pursuant to the Quality Assurance Act, the performance of the Agency's competence is ensured primarily through procedures that are initiated based on an application from a higher education institution, an applicant for state approval or on the Agency's own initiative. In 2024, the Agency implemented actions in the areas listed below.

6.1. Proceedings for granting accreditation of new study programmes

The Act on Quality Assurance allows higher education institutions to submit applications to the Agency for the granting of accreditation of new study programmes in the field of study and degree in which they are not yet authorised to conduct study programmes. In 2024, higher education institutions filed 11 such applications; 6 proceedings based on these applications were initiated in 2024 and 2 proceedings initiated in 2023 were concluded.

For the purposes of assessing applications of higher education institutions for the accreditation of study programmes, the Executive Board formed review panels of at least five members from 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. Proceedings for granting accreditation of joint study programmes

The Quality Assurance Act allowed higher education institutions to submit applications to the Agency for the accreditation of joint study programmes by 31 July 2024, to be valid until 31 December 2024, if the higher education institution offers a study programme in the relevant field of study and level that is not a joint study programme. In 2023, higher education institutions submitted 5 such applications – 2 in the field of teaching and pedagogical sciences (1st degree), 1 in the field of economics and management (2nd degree), 1 in the field of cybernetics (2nd degree) and 1 in the field of food science (2nd degree). One of the applications was withdrawn by the higher education institution in 2024, the other proceedings based on these applications were concluded in 2024.

For the purposes of assessing the applications of higher education institutions for accreditation of joint study programmes, the Executive Board formed review panels of at least five members from 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.

6.3. Proceedings for the review of the internal system

Higher education institutions were obliged to harmonize their internal system with the Quality Assurance Act and Standards for the Internal System within 24 months of their entry

into force, and they were obliged to inform the Agency this without delay. All higher education institutions fulfilled these obligations within the legal deadline.

One proceeding on the review of the internal system began in late 2022, all other proceedings began in 2023.

For the purpose of assessing the request of higher education institutions for the review of the internal system and its implementation, the Executive Board formed at least five review panels from the persons listed on the list of reviewers according to the structure of the higher education institution, the number of study fields and programmes. Several review panels had more than 20 members, with the largest review panel having up to 62 members. Each review panel had a chair, other members included experts in the internal system, experts in the field of study (at least one per field in which the higher education institution conducts study programmes), professional experts and student representatives. The number of experts per field, the number of professional experts and the number of members with student status depended on the size of the higher education institution assessed.

In 2024, the Agency decided on 32 applications from higher education institutions for a review of the internal quality assurance system. One proceeding is ongoing and a decision is scheduled for the Executive Board meeting in early 2025. In the case of 27 higher education institutions, the Agency decided that the internal system and its implementation is in compliance with the standards for the internal system, in five cases it decided that the internal system and its implementation is not in compliance with the standards for the internal system and imposed a corrective pursuant to § 26 of Act No. 269/2018 Coll. on quality assurance – order to eliminate deficiencies. By the end of 2024, two higher education institutions had reported the Agency of the measures taken and their results.

7. ACTIVITIES OF THE BOARD OF APPEAL

The situation at the beginning of 2024, when the Board of Appeal had only four members, changed 1. 2. 2024. On that date, the Minister for Education appointed the missing members of the Board of Appeal following a selection process, and since then, the Board of Appeal has met the statutory requirement of five members and two alternates.

In 2024, the Board of Appeal held three meetings. On 6. 2. 2024, it met for the first time in its new composition and elected Dr. h. c. prof. Ing. Rudolf Sivák, PhD., as its Chair. The newly elected members reviewed the objection filed by the University of Veterinary Medicine and Pharmacy in Košice regarding the rejection of the application for accreditation of the study programme *Family Farmer*. At its second meeting 4. 4. 2024 the Board of Appeal discussed this objection and referred the matter back to the Executive Board for further proceedings and decision. At the third meeting of the Board of Appeal 19. 6. 2024, its member JUDr. Štrpka was tasked with preparing the relevant decision. On 9. 10. 2024 the University of Veterinary Medicine and Pharmacy in Košice withdrew the application for accreditation of the *Family Farmer* study programme, thereby definitely closing the matter.

Regarding the composition of the Board of Appeal, we note that on 5. 12. 2024, prof. Sivák resigned from membership for health reasons and this was notified to the Ministry. From that date onward, the Board of Appeal once again failed to meet the statutory requirement of five members and two alternates. At the end of 2024, the Ministry initiated the relevant selection process to fill the vacant position, but it had not been concluded by the end of the year.

8. THEMATIC REPORTS OF THE AGENCY

In 2024, the Agency prepared and published one thematic report titled *Summarizing Report on the Slovak Doctoral Education Survey in Relation to the Quality of Education 2023*. The report examines how students in the third level of higher education in the Slovak Republic perceive the quality of their education. It is based not only on students' views on the fulfilment of educational objectives, but also on the experience of PhD students and PhD graduates with the educational process itself. The report also includes a summary of responses to open questions, as well as results sorted by individual fields of study. The report was prepared in accordance with the provisions of Article 3.4 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* and with accordance with § 4 par. 2 letter g) point 2 of the Quality Assurance Act and was approved at the September meeting of the Executive Board. The report's findings were carefully reflected by higher education institutions and other stakeholders. They will also be used in the process of revising standards related to doctoral studies.

9. COOPERATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

As part of its activities, the Agency continued to actively collaborate with stakeholders in 2024, particularly with public authorities, higher education institutions and their representations, employers' organisations, as well as the general public, with the aim of monitoring changing conditions, requirements and expectations of society, and of strengthening and raising awareness of the need to improve the quality of higher education.

Among the stakeholders, the Agency maintains particularly close ties with the Ministry. Designated representatives of the Agency actively participated in 9 projects under the Ministry's established project management system. This also included cooperation on a survey among employees of the higher education institution conducted by the Agency, as well as cooperation in the specification of new functionalities for the registers of field of study and study programmes on which the Ministry is working.

The agency's cooperation with stakeholders representing higher education institutions - the Slovak Rector's Conference, the Council of Universities and the Student Council for Higher Education - was also important. Agency's representatives were regular guests at meetings and conferences organised by the above-mentioned representations, which deepened the discussion and cooperation on problem solving. Employers, either directly or through their representative associations, entered into discussions with the Agency in specific areas related to quality assurance in higher education.

A recap of the Agency's year-round activities and its cooperation with stakeholders took place at the two-day conference *Six Years of Quality Assurance in Higher Education according to the ESG in Slovakia*, organised by the Agency in November 2024 with significant international participation.

10. INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND INTERNACIONALISATION of SAAHE

In the area of internationalisation and anchoring of the Agency in international coordinates, 2023 was exceptionally important, in particular in the context of the Agency's ambitions for international anchoring and the recognition of its quality assurance practices in higher education.

10.1. Full membership of SAAHE in ENQA

Among the Agency's international priorities were achieving ENQA membership and registration in EQAR. These tasks are also outlined in the Quality Assurance Act and have been key priorities for the management since it took office. Following an external evaluation by ENQA, which began in 2022 with the preparation of the self-assessment report and continued with a visit by ENQA expert panel to the Agency's seat on 29 – 30 March 2023 resulted in the publication of the evaluation report. Based on this report, in February 2024, the relevant ENQA body decided to grant SAAHE full membership in the organisation. The Agency has thus fulfilled both of these priorities, as its inclusion in the EQAR register took place as early as 2023.

10.2. Registration of SAAHE in WFME

In order to increase the international prestige of the Agency and thus also the prestige of accredited higher education institutions (especially their medical faculties), SAAHE decided to be recognised and registered in the database of the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME). It is a non-governmental global organisation whose mandate includes, among other things, the standardisation of medical education in a global context. As part of its activities, the organisation evaluates (assesses) the accreditation agencies that apply for it (WFME Recognition Programme) and assigns recognition status to those meeting the WFME standards in the field of medical education.

Based on suggestions from medical faculties and with the support of the Ministry, the Agency initiated the necessary steps towards its registration and recognition by WFME in June 2023. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the WFME's rules and procedures (Recognition Programme). This process included a visit by the WFME Recognition Team together with the Agency's review panel and (online) participation in the Executive Board meeting where the relevant assessment was decided. SAAHE received a positive decision and recognition status in September 2024.

10.3. V4QA Forum

In the context of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, the Agency continues to be an active member of the V4QA platform – Forum for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in the Visegrad Group (V4) countries in 2024. The main objectives of the forum are the regular exchange of experiences in the field of quality assurance, the development of an international network of experts and the exchange of reviewers and staff of V4 countries' agencies. On October 3-4, 2024, the V4QA forum took place in Warsaw, hosted by the Polish Accreditation Agency – Polska Komisja Akredytacyjna (PKA). SAAHE actively contributed to the main topics, which were quality assurance in doctoral studies and the European approach to quality assurance. In addition to the exchange of experience, other topics included planned changes and updates to accreditation and evaluation processes, as well as future tasks and challenges related to quality assurance in higher education.

10.4. Other international activities

In addition to its membership in ENQA and its listing in the EQAR register, the Agency also became a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) in 2024. Within the framework of European organisations, the Agency has been a member of ENAI (European Network for Academic Integrity) since its inception, the organisation's goal is to promote European principles and share experiences in the

development of academic integrity within the higher education environment. In 2024, representatives of SAAHE, now as a member organisation of the above-mentioned associations, participated in 25 international events (conferences, seminars, review panels) and actively participated in and contributed to the exchange of experience in the field of quality assurance in higher education.

In connection with the international anchoring of SAAHE, it is worth noting that its achievements in this area have served as an inspiration for other international agencies, and SAAHE has received numerous requests for study visits and to share experience with the ENQA accession process. With this goal in mind, visits to by representatives of accreditation agencies from Kosovo and Azerbaijan took place at the seat of SAAHE in 2024, with further such visits already planned for 2025.

11. QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE AGENCY'S ACTIVITIES

Already in 2022, the Agency formulated its strategic goals until 2027 in the adopted *SAAHE Development Strategy for the years 2022-2027*, which defined the basic principles it upholds in fulfilling its mission. This is the accreditation activity itself, international cooperation and the enhancement of quality culture. Strategic goals in these three areas and their concretization in the annual plans are evaluated annually, in accordance with the procedures set forth in the regulation *Internal Quality Assurance System of SAAHE Activities*. Pursuant to the above-mentioned regulation, the Agency carries out an annual evaluation of its internal system and proposes improvement measures based on an evaluation of the working plan, the results of stakeholder feedback and a review of the internal system processes. Such an *Annual Evaluation of the Internal System of SAAHE for the year 2024* was prepared and discussed at the January meeting of the Executive Board.

In the **area of accreditation activities**, the most important task was the completion of the review of compliance of the internal systems of higher education institutions and their implementation with the standards for the internal system, followed by the subsequent adoption of the relevant decisions by the Executive Board for each higher education institution based in the Slovak Republic.

In the **area of international cooperation**, the Agency - now a full member of ENQA and registered in EQAR – has participated in the international activities of these organisations. In 2024, the Agency also became a member of INQAAHE (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education) and obtained the Recognition Status from the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME). A priority in the area of international cooperation and internationalisation of the Agency continued to be the involvement of international reviewers in the review panels of the Executive Board.

In the **strategic area of quality culture**, the Agency collected feedback on its activities and continuously improved its procedures. It also conducted a field survey on the opinions of higher education institution employees. The target group consisted of teaching staff and researchers, as well as other higher education institution employees. The survey focused mainly on the conditions under which they provide higher education.

In addition to tasks and measures reflecting those strategic areas, the annual review of the internal system also includes an evaluation of other tasks arising from the Agency's current internal needs and external input.

12. EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

Pursuant to Article 9 of the regulation *Internal Quality Assurance System of SAAHE Activities*, the Agency undergoes an external evaluation of its internal system and activities every 5 years. The first external evaluation of SAAHE by ENQA was conducted at the end of 2023 in connection with the membership application. The external evaluation of the Agency was concluded with the publication of an evaluation report, which served as the basis for the decision regarding its ENQA membership and its registration in the EQAR register. The ENQA evaluation report includes 6 recommendations and 9 suggestions for further improvement. The Agency will reflect them and, in accordance with the requirements, will prepare a report on their implementation within two years.

The Agency underwent another external evaluation in 2023-2024 by the World Federation of Medical Education (WFME) in connection with the Agency's application for recognition of its accreditation procedures by the organisation. The WFME followed specific standards (Standards for Basic Medical Education), the implementation of which was evaluated by the WFME review panel, and its findings are included in the final evaluation report (Recognition Report). This evaluation report served as the basis of the relevant WFME bodies in deciding whether to grant recognition status.

13. FINANCING AND MANAGEMENT OF THE AGENCY

The method of financing the Agency is defined in § 19 par. (1) – (5) of the Quality Assurance Act. Pursuant to its § 20 par. (1) – (8), the Agency has a clearly defined form of management. Financial resources are kept in accounts with the state treasury, while each source of income is in a separate account and accounting is kept in accordance with Act No. 431/2002 Coll. on accounting as amended.

In the course of 2024, the Agency managed, according to the income and expenditure budget, which was approved by the Executive Board by resolution No. 70/8 at its meeting on 29 February 2024.

13.1. Financial statements for 2024

The Agency's financial statements were drawn up in accordance with the relevant regulations and approved by the Executive Board at its meeting on 27 February 2025 by resolution 80/8 and was published in the Register of Financial Statements on 3. 3. 2025. The corporate income tax return was filed electronically with the Financial Administration on 7. 3. 2025. The financial statements also include the statement of the Agency's auditor, Ing. Zora Dobříková, who in her statement dated 14. 2. 2025 stated that: *“My responsibility as an auditor of SAAHE, appointed pursuant to § 10 par. 1 of Act No. 269/2018 Coll., effective from 1 February 2024, is to express, in accordance with § 10 par. 2 letter c), an opinion on the Agency's financial statements for 2024 based on an – verification. Based on the foregoing, and in accordance with the cited provision of § 10 par. 2 letter c) of Act No. 269/2018 Coll. on quality assurance in higher education, I therefore express the opinion that the financial statements of SAAHE prepared as of 31 December 2024 **provide a true and fair view of the economic and financial situation** of this independent public-law institution, and that its financial results for 2024 are in accordance with the Accounting Act No. 431/2002 Coll., as amended”*.

13.2. Settlement with the state budget

The source of the Agency's income in 2024 was earmarked funds from the state budget, provided through the ministry's budget, in accordance with § 19 par. 5 of the Quality Assurance Act for the material and financial security of the Agency's activities hereinafter referred to as the "purpose"), subject to the fulfillment of the conditions specified in the concluded *Agreement on the provision of financial resources* No. 0111/2024. The total amount of funds provided was € 1 095 037, -.

The funds were provided to the Agency in terms of the cited contract for current expenditure in two instalments as follows:

- first instalment of € 547 518.50 on 14. 2. 2024,
- second instalment of € 547 518.50 on 14. 6. 2024

Funds provided to SAAHE in 2024	Total
Total expenditure (600 + 700)	€ 1 095 037.00
Current expenditure (600)	€ 1 095 037.00
Wages, salaries, service income and other allowances (610)	€ 621 000,00
Insurance premiums and contribution to insurance companies (620)	€ 217 039,50
Goods and services (630), including	€ 250 240,00
Current transfers (640), including	€ 6,757.50
Capital expenditure (700)	€ 0,00
Acquisition of capital assets (710)	€ 0,00

The funds were purposefully allocated to individual items and sub-items of the economic classification and could be used for:

- a) wage expenditure (610), insurance premiums and contributions to insurance companies (620),
- b) expenditure on goods and services (630),
- c) current transfers (640), in particular membership fees for international organisations.

The Agency's approved budget for 2024 has been broken down by individual items and sub-items and is presented in the table below:

Funds provided to SAAHE in 2024	Approved budget
Total expenditure (600 + 700)	1 095 037.00 €
Current expenditure (600)	1 095 037.00 €
Wages, salaries, service income and other allowances (610)	621 000,00 €
Insurance premiums and contributions to insurance companies (620)	220 839,50 €
Goods and services (630), including	243 587,27 €
631 Reimbursement of travel expenses	18 100,00 €
632 Energy, water and communications	20 996.00 €
633 Material	19 416,00 €

634 Transportation	2 000,00 €
635 Routine and standard maintenance	1 700,00 €
636 Rent for rent	51 000,00 €
637 Services, including	130 375,27 €
637027 Remuneration of employees outside of employment	40 000,00 €
637200 Other services	90 375,27 €
Current transfers (640), including	€ 9 610,23
649 Transfers abroad	6 000,00 €
640 Sick leave + membership	€ 3 610,23
Capital expenditure (700)	0,00 €
Acquisition of capital assets (710), including	0,00 €
711 Purchase of land and intangible assets (software, licences)	0,00 €
713 Purchase of machinery, apparatus, equipment, techniques and tools	0,00 €
714 Purchase of means of transport of all kinds	0,00 €

For 2024, the Agency did not have capital funds allocated, nor did it have funds allocated for capital expenditure from previous periods.

13.2.1. Budget expenditures in 2024

Total expenditure in 2024 amounted to €932,731.46, representing 85.18% of the approved budget. Current expenditure was implemented and broken down as follows:

Funds provided in 2024 - drawn in 2024	Utilization
Total expenditure (600 + 700)	€ 932,731.46
Current expenditure (600)	€ 932,731.46
Wages, salaries, service income and other personal allowances (610)	€ 490 581,48
Insurance premiums and contributions to insurance companies (620)	€ 191 949,93
Goods and services (630), including	€ 247,365.88
631 Reimbursement of travel expenses	€ 23 543.91
632 Energy, water and communications	€ 23,467.10
633 Material	€ 16 402.10
634 Transportation	€ 15.82
635 Routine and standard maintenance	€ 0,00
636 Rent for rent	€ 47 187.20
637 Services, including	€ 136 749,75
637027 Remuneration of employees outside of employment	€40 823,45
637200 Other services	€ 95 926.30
Current transfers (640), including	€ 2,834.17

642015 Sick leave benefits	€ 1 029.17
649003 International organisations	1 805.00 €
Capital expenditure (700)	0,00 €
Acquisition of capital assets (710), including	0,00 €
711 Purchase of land and intangible assets (software, licences)	0,00 €
713 Purchase of machinery, apparatus, equipment, techniques and tools	0,00 €
714 Purchase of means of transport of all kinds	0,00 €

610 - wages, salaries, service income and other personal expenses (OPE),

620 – insurance premiums and contribution to insurance companies,

637027 - remuneration of employees outside of employment.

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

631 – reimbursement of travel expenses

In 2024, the Agency's employees undertook several business trips abroad, including:

- ENQA Forum (Hannover - Germany, Helsinki - Finland),
- ENQA Leadership Development Programme (Cologne - Germany, Budapest - Hungary, Stockholm - Sweden),
- EQAF (Enschede - The Netherlands),
- ENQA General Assembly (Malta),
- V4QA Forum - meeting of V4 accreditation agencies (Warsaw - Poland)
- SEQA ESG 2 workshop (Belgrade – Serbia),
- ENQA Staff development workshop (Brussels - Belgium),
- MAB - visit to the Accreditation Agency (Budapest - Hungary)
- PKA Quality forum (Krakow – Poland).

632 – Energy, water and communications

Energy expenditure, telecommunication charges, internet access and postal services.

633 – Material

Purchase of common consumables (office and sanitary supplies, cleaning and disinfectants, etc.), interior furnishings and computer and telecommunications equipment for employees.

634 – Transport

Costs related to the use of a company vehicle for employee business trips.

636 – Rent for rent

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

637200 - Other services

Personnel expenditure – meal vouchers, creation of a social fund, employee training expenditure, etc. Other services ensuring the operation of the Agency, such as software services, the Agency's website, occupational safety and GDPR, professional PR and cybersecurity consulting services, translations and various fees.

640 – Current transfers

Compensation for salary for the first 10 days of sick leave of Agency's employees and payment of membership fees: ENQA, EQAR, WFME, INQAAHE.

700 – Capital expenditure

Capital funds were not provided to the Agency in 2024 and capital funds from previous periods were fully settled.

Out of the total funding provided for 2024, EUR 162 305,54 of current expenditure was not used. These funds were transferred pursuant to the Budgetary Regulations Act and the grant agreement to be fully utilized until the end of March 2025. They will be used as a priority for the payment of salaries of employees with permanent employment contracts and those working under contracts for specific work or contracts for services and for the payment of invoices for December 2024 due in 2025.

13.2.2. Utilization of the 2023 budget funds

At the beginning of 2024, the Agency had a balance of current funds from 2023 of EUR 144 025,51. Current funds were used up in the first quarter of 2024 under the terms of a grant agreement from 2023.

The structure of funds for 2023 and their utilization is shown in the following table:

Budgetary funds of 2023 transferred for use in 1Q 2024	Structure of funds 2023	Utilization in 2024
Total expenditure (600 + 700)	144 025 51 €	144 025,51 €
Current expenditure (600)	144 025,51 €	144 025,51 €
<i>Wages, salaries, service income and other personal settlements (610)</i>	78 438,32 €	61 588,61 €
<i>Insurance premiums and contributions to insurance companies (620)</i>	35 350,78 €	22 412,42 €
<i>Goods and services (630)</i>	19 160,55 €	56 489,38 €
<i>Current transfers (640), including</i>	€11,075.86	3 535,00 €
Capital expenditure (700)	0,00 €	0,00 €

610 - Wages, salaries, service income and other personal expenses (OPE)

Payment of employee wage for December 2023, due in January 2024.

620 – Insurance premiums and contribution to insurance companies

Reimbursement of premiums related to item 610 – salaries, salaries, service income and OOV.

630 – Goods and services

Goods and services related to the operation of the Agency.

632 – Energy, water and communications

Energy expenditure, telecommunication fees, internet connection and postal services.

633 – Material

Purchase of common consumables (office and hygiene supplies, cleaning and disinfectants, etc.).

636 – Rent for rent

Payment for the rent of premises and other services associated with the rent of premises.

637200 - Other services

Personnel expenditure – meal vouchers, social fund creation (for December 2023), employee training planned for the end of 2023 and implemented in the first quarter of 2024 and other services providing the Agency's operation.

13.3. Management of own funds

The Agency's own funds are made up of fees for operations based on the rates in the fee schedule pursuant to § 21 par. 1 letters a) and b) of the Quality Assurance Act and the scope of the Agency's actions related to a particular request of a party to the proceedings. Fee rates are taken into account according to § 19 par. 4 of the Quality Assurance Act anticipated costs associated with the actions of the Agency. Their amount is determined by the expected workload of the proceedings and the estimated cost of the work of the members of the review panel according to the type and scope of the proceeding.

The income of 2024 consisted of the higher education institutions' fees for the assessment of study programmes pursuant to the fee schedule for a total amount of € 31 806.00. The total amount of own funds spent was € 1 348 248.59. The time discrepancy between the collected funds and the expenditure of the current year is mainly due to the fact that higher education institutions are obliged to pay the administrative fee after submitting the application, but the funds are actually disbursed through the payment of remuneration and flat-rate compensation to the members of the review panels following the adoption of the relevant decision in the Executive Board. These were mainly implemented in 2024. The Agency must also foresee future expenditure as part of the supervision of compliance with the standards.

The balance of own funds in 2024 is shown in the following table:

INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
Total income	31 806.00 €	Total expenditure (600 + 700)	1 348 248.59 €
Fees	31 806.00 €	Current expenditure (600)	1 348 248.59 €
		Wages, salaries, servicing income and other persons (610)	€391,032.37
		Insurance premiums and contribution to insurance companies (620)	150 642.95 €
		Goods and services (63X)	€806,573.27
		Current transfers (640)	0,00 €

610 - Wages, salaries, service income and other personal expenses (OPE)

The Agency partially covered the costs of salaries of employees who directly participated in the review panel's activities in the process of reviewing the higher education institution's internal system.

620 – Insurance premiums and contribution to insurance companies

Economic classification item directly related to item 610 Wages, salaries, service income and OPEs.

631 – Travel refunds

Travel allowances for Agency employees for business trips connected with site assessments, in their capacity as coordinators of the Executive Board's review panels.

634 – Expenses connected with the operation of a service motor vehicle

Purchase of fuel, maintenance and servicing of the service motor vehicle, vignettes, compulsory and accident insurance of the service motor vehicle.

633 – Representative

Provision of promotional items for the conference organized by the Agency to mark the sixth anniversary of quality assurance of higher education according to the ESG in Slovakia.

636 – Rent

Rental of space for a conference.

637 – Services, including

637001 - Catering expenses for guest speakers and conference participants

637004 - General services

Accommodation of employees during the review of the internal system of higher education institutions throughout the territory of the Slovak Republic.

637007 – Travel expenses

Reimbursement of travel and accommodation expenses for members of the Agency's Executive Board review panels in connection with the site assessments.

637011 - Remuneration

Funds used for the payment of remuneration to members of the review panels on the basis of concluded mandate contracts for assessment activities and the preparation of an evaluation report in accordance with the internal rules of the *Directive on the Remuneration of the Executive Board Review Panels and Reimbursement of Related Incidental Expenses*.

13.4. Condition and movement of property

13.4.1. Long-term intangible assets

Long-term intangible assets acquired by the Agency are valued at acquisition price less depreciation and accumulated impairment losses. The acquisition price includes all costs directly attributed to the acquired property. Where the use of fixed intangible assets is determined by contract, the term of use will be determined according to the validity of the contract. In other cases, the provisions of the Income Tax Act, as amended, will be applied accordingly.

The Agency has included licenses for information systems and software in the register of intangible assets. Its overall movement is shown in the following table:

Intangible assets			
	Software	Valuable rights	Total
Status as of 1. 1. 2024	17 313,08	2 760,00	20 073,08
additions			
losses			
transfers			
Status as of 31. 12. 2024	17 313,08	2 760,00	20 073,08

Corrections as of 1. 1. 2024	12 812,66	1 840,00	14 652,66
additions	4 071,29	506,00	4 577,29
losses	2 995,16		2 995,16
Status as of 31. 12. 2024	13 888,79	2 346,00	16 234,79

Adjustments as of 1. 1. 2024			
additions			
losses			
Adjustments as of 31. 12. 2024			

Residual value as of 1. 1. 2024	4 500,42	920,00	5 420,42
Residual value as of 31. 12. 2024	3 424,29	414,00	3 838,29

13.4.2. Long-term tangible assets

Long-term tangible assets are valued at acquisition price less depreciation and accumulated impairment losses. The acquisition price includes all costs directly attributed to the acquired property. The Agency will classify separate movable items and sets of separate movable items, the entry price of which is less than € 1700 and operational and technical functions longer than one year, as small tangible assets. The provisions of the Income Tax Act, as amended, apply to the depreciation of long-term tangible assets.

In the register of tangible property, the Agency includes mainly computers, notebooks, audio-visual equipment and copying machines. In the register of small tangible assets, the Agency registers some laptops and accessories. Movements of tangible assets of the Agency in 2024 are summarised in the table below:

Tangible assets				
	Individual movables items and sets of movable items	Means of transport	Small and other long-term tangible assets	Total
Status as of 1. 1. 2024	28 438,66	25 190,00	2 246,96	55 875,62
additions				
losses				
transfers				
Status as of 31. 12. 2024	28 438,66	25 190,00	2 246,96	55 875,62

Corrections as of 1. 1. 2024	14 774,21	6 822,27	1 310,96	22 907,44
additions	4 577,21	5 772,69	515,02	10 864,92
losses				
Corrections as of 31. 12. 2024	19 351,42	12 594,96	1 825,98	33 772,36

Adjustments 1 to 1. 1. 2024				
additions				
losses				
Adjustments as of 31. 12. 2024				

Residual value k 1. 1. 2024	13 664,45	18 367,73	936,00	32 968,18
Residual value at 31. 12. 2024	9 087,24	12 595,04	420,98	22 103,26

14. STATEMENT OF THE AUDITOR

“In accordance with the provisions of § 10 par. 2 letter c) of Act No. 269/2018 Coll. on quality assurance in higher education and on amendments of Act No. 343/2015 Coll. on public procurement, I have prepared a report on the financial statements of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as the “Agency” or “SAAHE”) prepared as of 31 December 2024, which include the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Income and Expenses, as well as the required Notes and supplementary information.

The Agency is an independent public-law institution established pursuant to § 4 par. 1 of Act No. 269/2018 Coll., has legal personality and is a separate non-profit accounting entity.”

14.1. Responsibility of the SAAHE Auditor

“My responsibility as the auditor of SAAHE, appointed pursuant to § 10 par. 1 of Act No. 269/2018 Coll., effective as of 1 February 2024, is to express, in accordance with § 10 par. 2 letter c), an opinion on the Agency’s financial statements for 2024 based on an audit - verification.

I carried out the verification of accuracy in accordance with audit standards, adhering to ethical requirements and building on the findings of ongoing reviews, during which I focused on potential risks and possible occurrence of irregularities that I had encountered in my previous practice. Throughout the year, I reviewed documentation related to accounting transactions, the terms of existing financial contracts, the plan and compliance with the Public Procurement Act, as well as the timeliness of payments, i.e. the Agency’s overall budget management in accordance with Act No. 523/2004 Coll. on Public Administration Budgetary Rules and other applicable legal regulations.

I can therefore conclude that I have obtained reasonable assurance that the Agency’s accounting documentation and supporting documents are complete and verifiable, and that the amounts declared therein are reflected in the figures presented in the financial statements. I have not identified any errors and deficiencies of such nature that could impair the truthfulness or fair presentation of the Agency’s financial statements as of 31 December 2024 or cast doubt on the reported financial results for 2024.”

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

The statutory body of the Agency is the Chair of the Executive Board of SAAHE, appointed pursuant to § 6 of Act No. 269/2018 Coll., and is therefore responsible, pursuant to § 20 par. 6 of Act No. 269/2018 Coll., for the efficient and effective use of financial resources, for their settlement with the state budget and for the proper management of the Agency's assets. He is also responsible for the correct preparation of the financial statements so that they present a true and fair view in accordance with the Accounting Act No. 431/2002 Coll., as amended, for the proper performance of basic financial controls and for any additional checks that the statutory body deems necessary for the preparation of the financial statements.

The Chair of the Executive Board of SAAHE is also responsible for compliance with the rules of budgetary management and financing pursuant to Act No. 523/2004 Coll. on the budgetary rules of public administration and on amendments to certain acts, as amended.

14.3. Statement of the Auditor

“Based on the foregoing and in accordance with § 10 par. 2 letter c) of Act No. 269/2018 Coll. on quality assurance in higher education, I therefore express the opinion that the financial statements of SAAHE prepared as of 31 December 2024

present a true and fair view of the economic and financial situation

of this independent public-law institution and that its financial results for 2024 are in accordance with the Accounting Act No. 431/2002 Coll., as amended.”

Ing. Zora Dobříková, Auditor of SAAHE
Bratislava, 14 February 2025

15. CONCLUSION

The submitted annual report summarises an overview of the activities carried out by the Agency in 2024, and other activities directly related to the performance of its mandate. It mainly recapitulates activities in the area of the main activity, namely proceedings on the review of the internal system and its implementation with standards at all higher education institutions based in Slovakia.

The report also reflects significant events of SAAHE in the field of internationalisation. The Agency has become a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), following its inclusion in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) in 2023. The Agency has also become a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). A particularly significant achievement of SAAHE was obtaining the Recognition Status from the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME).

As part of its internal activities, the Agency prepared one thematic report, issued eight new and amended two internal directives. It also modified and developed its information system and procedures with regard to reducing administrative burden, increasing user comfort and cybersecurity.

A substantial part of the report is devoted to the economy, the analysis of the financial statements and the management of the Agency's state budget resources as well as its own

resources. It also includes the state and movement of assets, an analysis of financial flows and a recapitulation of settlements with the state budget.

The submitted *Annual Activity and Economy Report on the of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education 2024* is a fulfilment of § 4 par. 2 letter g) point 3 of the Quality Assurance Act and contains all data pursuant to § 20 par. 8 of this Act.

© Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education

Bratislava, April 2025

The auditor of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education, Ing. Zora Dobříková, commented on the Annual Activity and Economy Report of SAAHE for 2024. The Annual Activity and Economy Report of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education 2024 was approved by its Executive Board on 24.4.2024.

The report is available on the website of SAAHE www.saavs.sk