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# ACTIVITIES OF THE CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HE

2018

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(SKVC)**

## Objectives

✓ to contribute to creation of favorable conditions for free movement of persons

- assessment of foreign qualifications
- provision of info and consultations
- oversight of HEI recognition practices

✓ to encourage quality of activities of HEI

- review and accreditation of HEI (institutional review)
- evaluation and accreditation of HE study programs (ex-ante and ex-post)
- assessment of (new) establishing HEI

## What is quality?

We at SKVC understand quality first of all as **fitness for purpose**.

Quality is a multidimensional phenomenon, where **agreement** of all stakeholders (academics, administrators, students, labor market representatives) regarding what is quality it is of utmost importance.

## quality assurance ≠ evaluation of quality

Quality assurance activities include:

- **Consultations** before reviews (but not business type!)
- **Capacity building** during training events, seminars, conferences (regarding self-evaluation, student centered learning, involvement of stakeholders, internationalisation...)
- **Evaluations** (of programs, institutions, applications to establish providers of HE and related activities)
- **Follow-up** (visits to reviewed HEIS, targeted seminars regarding implementation of expert recommendations, publishing)
- **Publicity** (first of all – of evaluation reports and decisions, then on evaluations organised, analyses of results)
- **Analitical activities** (on the level of programs and institutions, country-wide, with interenational references)
- **Development of guidelines and drafting of legislation** (evaluation methodologies, subject benchmark statements, etc.)

## Quality Assurance in Higher Education

- Revised Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), adopted by 47 Ministers of Education in 2015, provide a framework under which different national higher education systems become largely compatible
- ESG directly pertain to internal quality assurance of HEIs
- ESG directly relate to work of external quality assurance (QA) agencies
- Double function of external QA: „At the heart of all quality assurance activities are the twin purposes of **accountability** and **enhancement**“.
- „Quality assurance and quality enhancement are thus inter-related. They can support the development of a quality culture that is embraced by all: from the students and academic staff to the institutional leadership and management.“

## Expertise of SKVC in QA of HE

- SKVC as QA agency has knowledge and experience in application and interpretation of the ESG, and can assist in capacity building of relevant authorities in Azerbaijan since we:
  - ✓ operate as external QA agency in Lithuania for already 23 years;
  - ✓ successfully underwent two external international reviews, organised by ENQA (in 2012 and 2016);
  - ✓ are listed as trustworthy QA agency on EQAR from 2012, did reviews abroad;
  - ✓ work as experts of QA in various capacities (serving on Boards of ENQA and CEENQA; as experts in ENQA reviews of agencies to determine their compliance to ESG; as Bologna experts; as experts in Twinning projects, as members of international and local working groups; as invited speakers to various international events, including several in Azerbaijan; as consultants to various QA agencies which are in the process of development).

## SKVC's commitment to ENQA

- ENQA GA in Vilnius (October 2013)
- Former SKVC Director – ENQA Vicepresident
- Two members of staff – on ENQA Board (in the past)
- Two members of staff – among ENQA reviewers for QA agency reviews
- Participation in working groups:
  - on impact of quality assurance
  - staff development
  - stakeholder involvement in quality assurance
  - excellence
  - review of the external review model for quality agencies
  - internal quality assurance and compliance of quality agencies with ESG requirements
  - links between quality assurance and qualifications' recognition

## Our own quality

SKVC as academic information and recognition centre: voluntary self-evaluation and external review by the international panel following SQUARE methodology (end of 2015 – beginning 2016).

SKVC as external quality assurance agency: Mandatory self-evaluation and external review against Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) by ENQA: 1<sup>st</sup> in 2012, 2<sup>nd</sup> – in 2016.



## *International relations*

- **INQAAHE** (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education) – full member from 1997
- **ENIC/NARIC** (European Network of National Information Centres / Network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres) – full member from 1999
- **CEENQA** (The Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education) – co-founder and full member from 2000
- **ENQA** (associate member from 2000, full member since 14 Sept 2012)
- Listed on **EQAR** as trustworthy QA agency from 2012



## Optimisation of the network of institutions of higher education

- Finished regular institutional reviews by the scheme and criteria of 2011 (2016)
- Three negative decisions: cases of Žemaitija College of HE, Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences (LEU) and European Humanities University;
  - Triggered merger of LEU to Vytautas Magnus University (VDU);
  - Amendments to the Law on HE&R regarding special clauses for universities in exile (May 2018);
  - A new application to (re)establish EHU (Aug 2018 - ).
- Voluntary mergers of HEIs (VGTU+MRU; VDU+ASU; VU+SU...)
- A working group at the Ministry including SKVC looking into the current state and future of colleges of higher education (April 2018- ).
- Discontinuation of activities by some private colleges (VKK; ŠLK)
- Currently drafting the scheme for new regular institutional reviews.

## Transition period in evaluation of quality of studies

- Finished regular evaluations of single study programmes in June 2018
- Working on legislation for new regular evaluations of study fields
- Working on amending legislation to allow European Approach for QA of joint programmes
- Challenge: use of quantitative data towards qualitative reviews



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