



**Republika e Kosovës**  
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo

Agjencia e Kosovës për Akreditim  
Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju  
Kosovo Accreditation Agency



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**Summary of the main activities of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA)  
during 2021**

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## 1. MAIN DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ACCREDITATION AGENCY FOR 2021

### **1.1 KAA has successfully completed the accreditation processes for 239 study programs**

Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA), during the year 2021 has managed to successfully complete the accreditation process for 239 academic programs and 9 institutional accreditation processes at the level of higher education institutions. Out of this number 199 reports / decisions are positive for accreditation, while 40 are recommended not to be accredited.

Despite the many difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the KAA team managed to conduct all field visits within the legal deadline, and enabled the State Council of Quality (SCQ) to make accreditation (or rejection) decisions in a timely manner.

Field visits were conducted by international remote experts (online) but the KAA team together with the director were physically present in any external evaluation process and verified all persons who were involved in accreditation, then all the information, documents and videos which were presented to the international experts were physically verified.

International experts engaged in the evaluation process have confirmed that during 2021 they have seen very positive developments in the quality of higher education in Kosovo..

During the accreditation process KAA has not received any complaint from any institution of higher education, regarding the external evaluation process. Complaints as usual have come after the submission of draft reports of international experts, which in some cases have been negative for the accreditation of study programs.

The accreditation process in Kosovo was evaluated positively in the report of the European Commission for Kosovo, it was evaluated positively during the meetings with the director of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and by the Central and Eastern European Network of

Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA). The accreditation process in Kosovo has been positively evaluated by both local monitors and international donors.

### **1.2 During 2021, 81 international experts are engaged in the accreditation process**

According to the legislation in force, Kosovo is the only country in the region that the entire process of external evaluation of higher education institutions and their study programs is implemented by international experts.

The accreditation process during 2021 involved 81 eminent European experts in the respective fields of study.

During this process, KAA has implemented the recommendation of ENQA, for the involvement of expert students in the accreditation process.

All draft reports of international experts have been sent to higher education institutions for comment, before being sent to the SCQ for review and decision-making process..

### **1.3 Approval of the Strategic Plan of KAA 2021-2025**

The State Council of Quality in the meeting held on December 18, 2021 has approved the Strategic Plan of KAA 2021-2025.

The KAA Five-Year Strategic Plan has these objectives:

- a) Restoration of KAA membership in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Register for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (EQAR);
- b) Consolidated legal framework that guarantees the institutional and financial independence of the KAA in conducting external quality assurance processes;
- c) Advanced management and administration system of KAA through the increase of physical and professional capacities;
- d) Improving the quality of the higher education sector through efficient and effective accreditation and monitoring procedures;
- e) Advanced digitalization of KAA procedures for an effective management of information and data of external evaluation procedures.

The KAA Strategic Plan was initially drafted by the Agency staff, then 4 local experts were engaged and finally, with the support of the Heras Plus Project, a German expert was engaged to verify whether the strategic plan is in line with European standards and recommendations and ENQA.

In the drafting of the Strategic Plan there was a comprehensiveness of all actors of higher education.

[Download the document at the KAA Website](#)

### **1.4 Twinning between Kosovo and Austria Accreditation Agencies**

With the support of the Heras Plus project, funded by the Austrian Agency for International Development (ADA), the Kosovo Accreditation Agency is twinned with the Austrian counterpart Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation.

This project increases the cooperation in the field of education between Kosovo and Austria.

The main beneficiaries of this project will be the KAA and all parties in higher education in Kosovo, including public universities and private colleges, which have thousands of students and teaching staff. Improving policies and increasing the capacity of the KAA directly affects the quality of higher education in Kosovo. Through the implementation of European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) from Kosovo, the exchange of students and academic staff becomes much easier. With the implementation of ESG standards,

spaces are created to facilitate the integration of the Kosovo education system in the EU, as well as subjects are created for the recognition of diplomas of Kosovar students in EU countries.

The twinning project aims to exchange Austrian experiences for the KAA, through mutual visits, conferences, trainings and consultations in the field of implementation of ESG standards. KAA staff will visit the Austrian Accreditation Agency and the Austrian partners will also visit Kosovo, where they will exchange experiences and best practices of institutional management, process management, quality assurance and results monitoring. Exchanges will take place at all levels related to quality in higher education.

The project will focus on these more specific areas in designing methodologies for the accreditation process and implementation (decision-making) reporting and appeal process in accordance with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).

Part of the project is also the support of AQ Austria for the KAA in preparing for return to ENQA and EQAR.

### **1.5 The feasibility study for the digitalization and automation of processes in the KAA has been finalized**

With the support of the United States Embassy in Pristina - Fulbright Project, the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA), on November 25, 2021, has finalized the project of implementing a feasibility study for the overall digitalization of processes.

This project will contribute to the digitalization and automation of all processes in KAA and will enable increased transparency for the public.

KAA now has the implementation project for digitalization and automation, which during 2022 is planned to be implemented and will be put into operation for all actors of higher education in the Republic of Kosovo.

The implementation of this project will be done with the funds of KAA and international donors, to increase the satisfaction of all stakeholders, including students, academic community, civil society organizations and the general public.

The idea is to integrate all these parts into a single platform where the accreditation process will be fully digitized. Portugal is one of the EU countries that has had a lot of success in digitizing accreditation. KAA is planning to bring this model to Kosovo.

KAA has planned the budget of fifty thousand euros for 2022, while it has received promises from donors that will help us finalize digitalization.

All actors of higher education have been involved in this project. Their recommendations have been analyzed and some of them have been included in the final document.

[Download the document from the KAA Website](#)

### **1.6 The methodology for thematic analysis has been approved**

With funding from the Embassy of the United States of America, WUS Kosovo has implemented the project "Support to the Kosovo Accreditation Agency to meet some of the recommendations of ENQA."

The project was implemented in the period September 2020 - September 2021.

The main point of this project was the implementation of the recommendation of ENQA for the establishment of the Methodology for thematic analysis. KAA has, in addition to establishing the Thematic Analysis Methodology, has also implemented two thematic analyzes:

a) Preparing Kosovar Graduates for the Labor Market - The Perspective of Employers and Graduates.

b) Thematic Analysis for Institutional Accreditation for HEIs.

Part of this project was also the training of KAA staff to implement in the future thematic analysis of topics of interest to the higher education system.

This project involved all actors in higher education in Kosovo and the business community.

[Download the Methodology on thematic analysis from the KAA Website](#)

[Download the thematic analysis 1 from the KAA website](#)

[Download the thematic analysis 2 from the KAA Website](#)

### **1.7 The Guideline for Internal Evaluation of KAA staff has been approved**

With the support of the WUS Kosova project, KAA has approved the Guide for Internal Evaluation of KAA staff, which has also been a recommendation of ENQA.

The purpose of this guide is performance management as an ongoing organizational process that is carried out to maximize staff productivity with the overall goal of improving the effectiveness of the institution. This guide is in line with the strategic goals of the KAA and requires open communication between managers and staff.

[Download the document from the KAA Website](#)

### **1.8 The Monitoring Methodology and post-accreditation procedures have been finalized**

The KAA has finalized the document on Monitoring Methodology and post-accreditation procedures. So far KAA has not had a monitoring mechanism nor post-accreditation procedures and this has been a major setback for quality assurance in higher education.

The document will serve as a guide for the KAA, higher education institutions, international experts, and the general public to implement fair and transparent post-accreditation and monitoring procedures.

The document meets Standard 2.3 of the European Quality Assurance Guidelines for Higher Education (ESG) which requires quality assurance agencies to complete the accreditation cycle with post-accreditation procedures aimed at continuously improving the quality of higher educational institutions.

All higher education actors were involved in the design of this project, through conferences, interviews, roundtables and public hearings.

This document was implemented with the support of the QAIN Project, funded by the Austrian ADA. The document has been put on the agenda for approval at the SCQ meeting in February 2022.

[Download the document on the KAA Website](#)

### **1.9 Accreditation Confirmations are now issued online**

With funding from the US Embassy, the KAA in the summer of 2021 has digitized the issuance of accreditation confirmations. All students and graduates who need to obtain certifications for the accreditation of their study programs can now get them online, without having to physically come to the Accreditation Agency.

This is a great achievement, because in addition to increasing the security of the issuance of documentation, and eliminating all possibilities for human error, this platform also increases the reliability of documents issued by the Accreditation Agency to international partners.

Each confirmation issued electronically, allows all parties to electronically verify in a separate link. All KAA counterpart agencies in Europe and beyond, now have direct access to the verification of documents issued by the KAA.

This service has passed all cyber security standards from the Information Society Agency (ASHI).

[See the application on the KAA Website](#)

### **1.10 The Manual for International Accreditation Experts has been approved**

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) with the support of the Heras Plus Project has approved an Information and Training Manual to provide practice-based guidance for international assessment experts conducting an external evaluation of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Kosovo on behalf of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA).

The manual is vital as the Agency will use it to provide experts with formal training on relevant topics of the accreditation process and the contextual understanding of the higher education landscape and related processes.

The project directly affects the quality of the services of the Accreditation Agency for the external evaluation of higher education institutions, but also meets one of the criteria for our return to ENQA and EQAR.

“With this product, the Heras Plus Project and Austrian donors are contributing to quality assurance in higher education in Kosovo. "Guidelines for external experts participating in the evaluation process in Kosovo, increases the quality of our services, explains in detail to experts the KAA standards and the Kosovar context," said Gashi.

[Download the Manual from the KAA Website](#)

### **1.11 The new KAA website and official Facebook profile have been launched**

Funded by the Embassy of the United States of America, the new KAA website has been developed and launched.

The site is in three languages, Albanian, English and Serbian. All decisions and developments in KAA are published on the website.

KAA has also launched the official Facebook profile, where all news, announcements, and developments in KAA are published.

[See the new KAA Website](#)

[See the new official Facebook profile](#)

### **1.12. ASHl guarantees the cyber security of KAA**

In addition to the creation of the new website, the transfer of KAA servers to the Agency for Society Information (ASHI) was also done. From now on the website of the Agency, the issuance of electronic confirmations for accreditation and the E-Accreditation platform where it stores the data of over 4000 academic staff, is guaranteed by ASHl.

### **1.13 Linking the E-Accreditation Platform with the Tax Administration**

KAA owns the electronic platform E-Accreditation which stores all data of academic staff in the Republic of Kosovo. During 2021 KAA has connected this platform with the servers of the Tax Administration of Kosovo, to verify if the academic staff has more than one full-time job.

This platform has eliminated the phenomenon of academic staff engagement in more than two full-time positions.

[See the platform on the KAA website](#)

### **1.14 All decisions and reports of international accreditation experts are published**

For the purpose of full transparency and accountability to the public, the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) has published on 13.08.2021 all decisions and final reports of international accreditation experts. Full transparency and accountability is one of the recommendations of ENQA, which KAA is fully implementing.

The accreditation process for the programs of the academic year 2021/2022, started in January of this year and ended successfully on July 27, 2021, when the State Council of Quality decided on the reports of international accreditation experts.

After a few years, for the first time, all study programs that have been in the process of accreditation or re-accreditation have been evaluated, while the quotas for the number of students that will be enrolled in a study program have been determined, according to the recommendations of international experts.

[See the decisions on accreditation on the KAA Website](#)

### **1.15 KAA publishes the list of accredited programs and information videos**

Kosovo Accreditation Agency has published on 06.08.2021 the list of programs accredited in higher education institutions in the Republic of Kosovo for the new academic year 2021/2022.

The list of decisions with accredited programs includes the decisions of the State Council of Quality (SCQ) dated 27.07.2021, but also the programs that have had previous accreditation.

All new students have been informed that no academic program that is not on this list is valid in the Republic of Kosovo.

Also, with its own budget the KAA has published an advertising video which advises young students to visit the KAA website before deciding to apply in any of the Kosovo HEIs.

[See the list of accredited programmes on the KAA website](#)

[See the Promotional Video on the KAA Website](#)

## **2. COMPLETING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENQA AND EQAR**

### **2.1 Adoption of the Law on KAA in the Government**

With the proposal of the Minister of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation, Arbërie Nagavci, the Government of the Republic of Kosovo, in the meeting held on 10.12.2021, approved the Draft Law on the Kosovo Accreditation Agency.

This Draft Law regulates the status of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency as a regulatory agency in the processes and responsibilities of accreditation, re-accreditation, validation, and monitoring, to ensure quality in higher education in the Republic of Kosovo. All relevant actors, experts from MESTI, the Accreditation Agency, representatives of the academic community, donors and civil society are involved in the drafting of this draft law.

This version of the Draft Law ensures the independence of the Accreditation Agency as well as the implementation of European quality assurance standards in higher education.

With the approval of this law, the last criterion for re-application of KAA for return to ENQA and EQAR is being met.

### **2.2 Dynamic Plan for return to ENQA and EQAR**

KAA has compiled and submitted to MESTI the Dynamic Plan for Return to ENQA and EQAR.



According to this Plan, out of the 13 main recommendations for return to ENQA and EQAR, over 90% have already been fulfilled. After the Law on KAA is approved in the Assembly and the bylaws are issued, it is considered that the criteria are met at the level of 100%.

### **2.3 SCQ and KAA visits to all higher education institutions**

The President of the State Council of Quality (SCQ), members of the Council and the leaders of the KAA, have visited all accredited institutions of higher education in Kosovo. During the visits, in addition to the management, meetings were held with student representatives and the academic community.

Concrete recommendations for raising the quality of higher education have been received from the heads of higher education institutions, the academic community, and students.

Involvement of HEIs in the decision-making process is also one of the criteria for returning to ENQA and EQAR.

[See the news from the sites visits on the KAA Website](#)

### **2.4 New KAA building**

The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MEST) has decided that the new public building, in the location "Prishtina e Re", be dedicated to the KAA. The facility is modern with over 1000 square meters and meets all the needs of the KAA.

The construction of the new headquarters is planned to be completed at the beginning of 2022 and it is expected that KAA will move to the new facility by the end of 2022.

With this building KAA meets the criterion of ENQA for "sufficient space for the staff of the Agency".

### **2.5 Staff recruitment**

In the case of amending the Law on Public Officials, the procedures for recruiting staff have also changed. As KAA staff are civil servants, this has been put on hold until new recruitment procedures are established in accordance with the new law.

KAA currently has 9 staff, while it has 32 approved staff. It is expected that during 2022 the number of employees in KAA will double to 18.

### **2.6 Cooperation with civil society**

KAA has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the QAIN project, which enables the local organization ORCA to monitor the work of the Agency and SCQ.

BIRN also monitors the work of the SCQ.

In all the reports of these two organizations it appears that KAA is very transparent and accountable to the public.

[See the ORCA Report on the KAA on the Website](#)

### **2.7 State Advocacy: KAA is not endangered by any court dispute**

The State Advocacy of Kosovo on 11.11.2021 has concluded that KAA is fully respecting the legal framework in the Republic of Kosovo and is not endangered by any court dispute.

The State Advocacy has pledged to fully support the Accreditation Agency, not only for legal protection in the courts, but also for the drafting of legal acts, so that they are fully in line with applicable law and cannot be challenged in the courts.



The State Advocacy has welcomed the measures taken by the KAA to guarantee legal certainty to all parties. With the support of the State Advocacy so far, the Accreditation Agency should not lose any case in the courts.

The State Advocacy and the Accreditation Agency have appointed contact persons in order to facilitate cooperation between the two institutions. The State Advocacy has expressed readiness to support the KAA in cases of preparation of lawsuits in the courts when violations in the higher education system are identified.

### **3. COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND PARTNERS**

#### **3.1 European Commission report on Kosovo, very positive for the work of KAA**

The European Commission Report for Kosovo, October 2021 in the section on the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) is accurate, very positive and encouraging for the work of the KAA and gives hope for a return to ENQA and EQAR.

Although affected by the pandemic, the European Commission estimated that, quote: "The Agency managed to complete the full cycle of accreditation for the academic year 2021-2022, reducing the number of programs and institutions, based on quality criteria."

This shows that the KAA fully implements European quality standards, as 81 eminent international experts have been engaged in the accreditation process this year.

Even in the report of 23 February 2021 in the framework of the Stabilization and Association Agreement Process, the European Commission evaluates very positively the work of the KAA, saying that "although in pandemic conditions the accreditation process is very well managed".

The European Commission praises the work of the KAA in meeting the criteria for returning to ENQA and EQAR when it says "The KAA continued its efforts to restore membership".

The European Commission has also confirmed the reports of civil society organizations in Kosovo, which have evaluated very positively the work of the Accreditation Agency.

[See the European Commission's Report on the Website](#)

#### **3.2 Revision of standards at the bachelor and master level**

Funded by the Austrian ADA, the Heras Plus Project is implementing standards review project at the bachelor and master level.

This project includes MESTI, SCQ, KAA, HEIs, local and international experts, representatives of donors, civil society, academia, students, etc.

Roundtables and conferences were held with all higher education actors. There is now a revised draft of the standards which goes through public review procedures. The new standards are expected to enter into force by April 2022, while trainings with HEIs will be held for 6 months to prepare for their application in October 2022.

#### **3.3 KAA receives a grant from the US Embassy for student involvement in decision-making**

The Accreditation Agency, on October 8, 2021, was announced the winner of a grant from the US Embassy in Kosovo. The funded project aims to increase student involvement in the quality assurance process,

creating a direct impact on the higher education system in Kosovo and turning students into key stakeholders within the system.

### **3.4 CEENQA presents the success of KAA in the process of digitalization of services**

The December issue of the network of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies of Higher Education of (CEENQA), presented the successful work of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) in finalizing the implementation project for general digitalization of processes in the KAA. Along with the sister agencies of Central and Eastern European countries, on page 13 of this magazine, KAA-Kosovo is presented with the title "*The feasibility study for digitalization and automation of processes in KAA has been finalized*". This is the third time in a year that CEENQA presents Kosovo and its Accreditation Agency as success stories for raising the quality of higher education.

In December 2020 and July 2021, CEENQA also presented the KAA with very positive reviews.

Kosovo is a full member of CEENQA.

[See the notification on the CEENQA Website](#)

### **3.5 The KAA and the American ATMAE Association work together to promote quality in higher education**

At the invitation of the American counterpart agency - Association for Technology, Management and Applied Engineering (ATMAE), which accredits all academic programs in the field of technology and engineering in the US, the delegation of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) and MESTI (NARIC Center), in November 2021 stayed for a week in Orlando, Florida, USA.

During meetings with US counterparts, ATMAE has expressed its readiness to support KAA with eminent experts to promote the development of academic programs in the field of technology and engineering in Kosovo.

ATMAE executives have expressed their readiness for KAA staff to be involved, in the capacity of external experts, in the process of accreditation of academic programs in the USA. This is strong evidence that American counterparts believe in the values, academic and institutional integrity that the KAA represents. The Kosovo delegation participated in the meetings of the Board and management of ATMAE, in several scientific and innovative conferences, in the fair of the most famous American universities and in the student competition in the field of robotics.

In the main ceremony ATMAE awarded the delegation from Kosovo an acknowledgment "for successful cooperation and accreditation".