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**ANNUAL WORK REPORT OF THE STATE QUALITY COUNCIL AND KOSOVO ACCREDITATION AGENCY FOR THE YEAR 2022**

Prishtina, 2023

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

ADA-Austrian Development Agency

KAA - Kosovo Accreditation Agency

CEENQA - Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance

ENQA - European Association for Quality Assurance

EQAR - European Quality Assurance Register

ESG-European Guidelines for Quality Assurance

HERAS - Higher Education, Research and Applied Science Plus

HEI - Higher Education Institution

HEI public - Higher Education Institutions financed by the Government of the Republic of Kosovo

IAL private-Self-financed Higher Education Institutions

INQAAHE - Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

KA - Appeals Committee which examines complaints received by HEI on the decisions of SQC

NQF – National Qualifications Framework

SQC - State Quality Council

Law on HE – Law on Higher Education

MESTI-Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation

QAINT **–** Quality, Accountability, Integrity and Transparency in Higher Education

SAR-Self-Assessment Report

QA-Quality Assurance

AI - Administrative Instruction

WUS Kosova - World University Service Kosova

KSAC -Kosovo Subject Area Code

# **1. INTRODUCTION**

This document was compiled for the purpose of the annual work report of the State Quality Council and Kosovo Accreditation Agency for the year 2022.

Information on the activities of the State Quality Council, of Kosovo Accreditation Agency and Appeals Committee for the period of one year are included in this Report. The report reflects:

1. Evaluation and accreditation processes of higher education institutions and their study programmes of level V, Bachelor, Master and Doctorate, for the year 2021/2022;
2. Activities and developments that contribute to internal quality assurance of the work of Kosovo Accreditation Agency and of functioning of the State Quality Council, as a decision-making institution of KAA;
3. Addressing recommendations on the return of the complete membership in the European Quality Assurance Register (ENQA) and the in Higher Education (EQAR); and
4. Cooperation with national and international partner institutions.

# **2. KOSOVO ACCREDITATION AGENCY (KAA)**

Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) is public, independent agency that accredits and re-accredits public and private institutions of higher education in Kosovo and their study programmes. It was founded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) in 2008, in accordance with the Law on Higher Education No. 2003/14.

Through the accreditation process, KAA supports development of quality in higher education and in this way ensures society that offers of higher education in Kosovo coincide with comparable international standards.

Legal basis for the activity of Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) is Law on Higher Education in Kosovo (No. 04/L-037, dated 31.08.2011) and Administrative Instruction for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Kosovo (No. 15/2018)[[1]](#footnote-1), etc.

In accordance with Article 7. of LAL (No. 04/L-037), KAA fulfils its responsibilities, which are: Consulting with the Ministry regarding requirements of institutions on licensing their courses or programmes; inspection of higher education providers and consultation with the Ministry regarding granting, change or annulment of licenses; carrying out periodic checks on the quality of licensed higher education providers and rendering decision on their accreditation or re-accreditation, performing periodic quality assessments of programmes offered by accredited higher education providers.

**Levels of accreditation:**

* Accreditation of higher education institutions;
* Accreditation of study programmes;
* Accreditation of branches and study programmes offered in those branches;
* Recognition/validation of international accreditation.

Since its establishment, KAA in accordance with the European Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) )[[2]](#footnote-2) has developed all standards and procedures for accreditation and has published them through its official website.[[3]](#footnote-3)

According to Article 7 of AI 15/2018 on the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Kosovo, request for accreditation may be made from:

* Higher education institution itself to be evaluated at the institutional or study programme level;
* Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI);
* State Quality Council of KAA, in the special cases.

In order to develop transparent accreditation process, KAA has prepared necessary documents on accreditation procedures that may be used by HEIs, as follows: KAA Standards, KAA Guidelines on Drafting the Report of Self-Evaluation (RSE) on the evaluation of higher education institutions and their study programmes, namely the Accreditation Manual. [[4]](#footnote-4)

 These documents have served not only as guidelines on higher education institutions for the purpose of accreditation process, but also as guidelines for internal quality assurance and management.

KAA consists of its administrative structure, which is led by the General Director, State Quality Council (SQC) which is governing and decision-making body of KAA, as well Appeals Committee. Administrative structure of KAA currently has employed the director and eight officials.

## **2.1 Mission and goals of KAA**

KAA's mission is to support development of quality in higher education institutions through an external evaluation process and to ensure Kosovo society that the quality of higher education is at the level of international standards.

Goals of Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) are as in the following:

* to promote, improve and increase the quality of higher education;
* to increase transparency and accountability in the higher education system;
* to improve the quality of studies in higher education institutions;
* to encourage innovative content in higher education;
* to ensure comparability of qualifications from Kosovo's higher education institutions with those provided by international programmes;
* to implement objectives for Kosovo's integration into European Higher Education Area and contribute to its development.

Main values ​​on which the work of KAA is based are:

*Independenc*e – KAA’s decisions are rendered independently and justified in a consistent and verifiable manner;

*Transparency –* KAA is guided by the principles of responsibility and public accountability through an effective information policy;

*Credibility –* KAA organizes credible external quality assurance processes, in which the academic community and society in general trust in the work of KAA;

*Professionalism –* KAA applies high professional standards applied in the Europe in external quality assurance processes.

## **2.2 Memberships and Partnerships**

KAA was part of international network on quality assurance in higher education and continues to be for the year 2022.

In 2022 KAA continues to be member of:

* Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education-CEENQA[[5]](#footnote-5).

- INQAAHE[[6]](#footnote-6), Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education .

During 2022 has also made two important memberships:

- ENQA Affiliate: During year 2022, KAA has managed to obtain ENQA Affiliate status, upon fulfilling a series of criteria which have been verified by Board of ENQA and afterwards approved by Assembly of ENQA in Stockholm.[[7]](#footnote-7)

- ECLBC full member: During 2022 KAA has become full member of European Council for Leading Business Schools (ECLBS).[[8]](#footnote-8)

- KAA has become full member of the Global Academic Integrity Network (GAIN). Global Academic Integrity Network is a consortium of education quality and integrity agencies around the world joining forces to combat the rise of commercial academic fraud services targeting students, and is supported by a number of important international education bodies, such as ENQA, European Network for Academic Integrity and ETINED. [[9]](#footnote-9)

- Twinning project with the Accreditation Agency of Austria has continued.

# **3. STATE QUALITY COUNCIL (SQC)**

State Quality Council (SQC) or the Board of KAA, is a decision-making authority of Kosovo Accreditation Agency and is responsible for rendering decisions on the accreditation of higher education institutions and their study programmes.

Activity of SQC is based on the Law on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo No. 04/L-037, relevant secondary legislation, Administrative Instruction on the criteria and procedures on the selection of SQC members (No. 05/2018, dared 15.03.2018) as well supported by the Regulation on the Work of the State Quality Council (No. 621/18D, dt.12.06.2018).[[10]](#footnote-10)

Selection of SQC members is envisaged according to the provisions of the Law on Higher Education, namely Article 7, paragraph 4, which defines that “*KAA shall be governed by a Board consisting of not less than five and not more than nine
persons appointed by the Ministry for a fixed term from among persons of both genders active in academic work in higher education and/or the professions within and outside of Kosovo, such that there
are at least three persons (‘international experts’) not employed by any higher education provider in Kosovo. This Board shall be designated the National Quality Council of the KAA. Its membership shall
be ratified by the Assembly. Decisions or recommendations regarding the accreditation council takes majority vote of its members. Council reports annually to the Ministry and Assembly regarding on its accreditation activities and on the adequacy of the infrastructural support available to it.”*

Applicable law enables selection of SQC members based on professional and transparent criteria and procedures. The selected list of nominees is ratified by the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo. Based on the Work Regulation of the State Quality Council, SQC sets annual agendas on the HEI accreditation process, approves accreditation standards, procedures and criteria, approves teams of external experts, proposed by the director of KAA, renders decisions on accreditation, as well approves the Statute and all regulations of KAA.

Current composition of SQC is as follows:

1. Prof. Asoc. Dr. Hasnije Ilazi, President;
2. Dr. Klemen Miklavic; Vice-President
3. Prof. Asoc. Dr. Rozafa Koliqi, Member;
4. Prof. Asoc. Dr. Dukagjin Zeka; Member;
5. Prof. Ass. Dr. Gëzim Tosuni, Member;
6. Prof. Asoc.Dr. Maja Martinović, Member;
7. *Ex officio*, Director of KAA, Naim Gashi.

On 25.11.2022, SQC member Prof.Ass.Dr. Krenare Pireva Nuçi resigned on the grounds that she is working as regular staff member at the University of Pristina and it is in breach with AI 06/2018, Article 4, paragraph 1, sub-paragraph 1.4.

On 29.07.2022, Minister of MESTI has dismissed the member of the SQC, Prof. Ass.Dr. Seb Bytyqi, due to the conflict of interest, since at the SQC meeting held 14.07.2022 has stated that he is engaged in two HEIs. Decision has been rendered in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 1.3 of AI 06\2018, which states that any engagement in more than one HEI is considered incompatible with this position.

Two current members of SQC, Prof.Assoc.Dr. Dukagjin Zeka and Prof. Assoc. Rozafa Koliqi are at the end of their mandate (on 16 April 2023). On 3of February 2023, MESTI has announced a public call for the nomination of four local members of the State Quality Council.

Table 1: Main activities of SQC for the year 2022

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| No. | Description | Date |
|  | SQC has reviewed and decided on the list of international accreditation experts. SQC and KAA from the beginning have re-evaluated the existing list of international experts from which inactive experts have been removed, while experts from ENQA member countries have been set as a priority. SQC has decided that the call for experts to be open throughout the year. | 2022 |
|  | SQC has reviewed and decided on all expert evaluation reports. | 2022 |
|  | SQC has reviewed all requests of HEIs and has examined and proceeded to the Appeals Committee all the complaints of HEIs. | 2022 |
|  | In order to increase transparency and involve all actors of higher education in the decision-making process, SQC has visited all accredited higher education institutions in Kosovo. | January – June 2022 |
|  | SQC together with the KAA staff, have held two workshops on the revision of accreditation standards, where relevant actors of higher education have participated. | 28 February- 1 March 2022; and 28-29 March 2022 |
|  | SQC has approved the forms of the Monitoring Methodology Manual and post-accreditation procedures. This decision was rendered after a comprehensive process of local actors and international partners.  | 21 February 2022 |
|  | SQC has worked in the document Kosovo Subject Area Code. This document is still under draft. | 2022 |
|  | SQC and KAA have conducted visits to Vienna, Podgorica, Zagreb, Tirana and Skopje, to the counterpart agencies, while they have participated in the meetings and conferences of ENQA and EQAR. | 2022 |
|  | SQC and KAA have met representatives of all accredited HEIs in the regular annual meeting.  | 4 October 2022 |
|  | SQC approves Activities Plan forin 2023 with the main priority having the return of KAA toEuropean Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and European Quality Assurance Register in Higher Education (EQAR). | December 2022 |
|  | SAÇ and KAA participate in the working group of Parliamentary Committee for Education, Science, Technology, Innovation, Culture, Youth and Sport on the amendment of the Law on KAA, prior the second reading. | 2022 |
|  | SQC reports to the Committee for Education,Science, Technology, Innovation, Culture, Youth and Sports in theAssembly of Kosovo. | 2022 |

## **3.1. Meetings and decisions of SQC**

During 2022, SQC has held 13 meetings and one online vote (04 August 2022). The table below lists meetings held as follows.

Table 2: List of meetings held for the year 2022

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| No. | Date | Meetings |
| 1 | 18.01.2022 | 95th meeting of SQC (online) |
| 2 | 21.02.2022 | 96th meeting of SQC |
| 3 | 05.04.2022 | 97th meeting of SQC |
| 4 | 26.04.2022 | 98th meeting of SQC |
| 5 | 13.05.2022, continuing on 23.05.2022 | 99th meeting of SQC |
| 6 | 16.06.2022 | 100th meeting of SQC |
| 7 | 30.06.2022 | 101th meeting of SQC |
| 8 | 14.07.2022 | 102th meeting of SQC |
| 9 | 26.07.2022 | 103th meeting of SQC |
| 10 | 01.09.2022 | 104th meeting of SQC |
| 11 | 04.10.2022 | 105th meeting of SQC |
| 12 | 25.10.2022 | 106th meeting of SQC |
| 13 | 24.11.2002 | 107th meeting of SQC |
| 14 | 19 and 20.12.2022 Continuation on 12 and 16 January 2023 | 10th meeting of SQC |

For each SQC meeting, notices are compiled which are published on KAA official website and on the official Facebook profile.

# **EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION PROCESS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS FOR THE YEAR 2022**

Institutional and study programme evaluation is a periodic activity of KAA. This process is based on the evaluation of documents submitted by the applicant institution (Self-Assessment Report) and based on findings during the field visit with the team of international accreditation experts. Based on the published procedures of KAA, each HEI shall prove that it meets accreditation criteria in order to receive accreditation.

Based on the Article 10 of Administrative Instruction for the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (No. 15/2018), each HEI that submits a request for institutional accreditation/re-accreditation of one or more study programmes. At the same time, HEI shall also present the list of academic staff, declared in KAA through the e-accreditation platform on the engagement in the same HEI, in the relevant programme for the relevant academic year. Application, together with the list of staff, is subject to evaluation of the fulfilment of formal criteria and upon approval by SQC, it is included in the annual agenda of KAA on evaluation. In case of preliminary negative evaluation of the application by SQC, it is rejected and not subject to evaluation. In addition to applications and lists of approved staff, HEI shall also bring to the KAA the Self-Assessment Report (SAR), which is sent to external assessment team in a certain period of time prior to the physical visit or remote evaluation through online meetings.

In year 2022, KAA has carried out process of evaluation and accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes based on the revised standards in 2019 and the new Accreditation Manual on which HEIs shall be based when drafting the SAR. These standards aim to advance the overall quality of HEIs in Kosovo and focus on consolidating their internal quality assurance system.

During the year 2022, 17 applications for institutional accreditation were submitted to KAA. of them, 13 have undergone evaluation, one has been approved for validation and 3 HEIs have not been subject to the evaluation, as no study programme has been passed. Of the 13 HEIs evaluated by international expert teams, 11 are accredited while 2 are not accredited.

Accreditation process in Kosovo for the year 2022 has been positively evaluated in the report of European Commission for Kosovo. Accreditation process in Kosovo has been positively evaluated by local monitors and international donors.

During the year 2022, applications of programme accreditation (and validation) were for 191 programmes, of which 60 were rejected due to the non-fulfilment of the basic criteria, while 131 applications for study programmes were tried (72 bachelor's, 54 master's or integrated, 5 PhD).

[**Translator’s Note**: *Text inside the above figures are not editable*]

Out of 131 approved: 122 have been subject to evaluation, 2 programmes have been validated, while 7 programmes have not been evaluated, because HEIs did not have institutional accreditation.

[**Translator’s Note**: *Text inside the above figure is not editable*]

Out of 122 programmes evaluated by teams of international experts, 113 programmes were accredited (38 programmes for 5 years, 75 programmes for 3 years) while 9 were not accredited.

[**Translator’s Note**: *Text inside the above figures are not editable*]

# **APPEALS COMMITTEE**

The right of HEI to appeal against SQC decisions is regulated by Article 22 of AI 15/2018, according to which HEIs may appeal against SQC decision within a period of time of 30 days from the day the Party has been notified on SQC's decision on accreditation, a procedure that is in accordance with the Law on Administrative Procedure.[[11]](#footnote-11) Functioning of Appeals Committee is regulated by Regulation No. 2/2019[[12]](#footnote-12) on the functioning of the Appeals Committee of KAA. This Committee accepts complaints of HEIs and within a period of 30 days shall review them and return answers to HEIs. An independent Appeal Committee was established in September 2020, and consists 5 external members, of which 3 are permanent, while the other 2 are reserve members. One of the permanent members is lawyer by profession, with over 10 years of experience. Mandate of members of the Committee is 2 years.

Selection process of Committee members; In the absence of sufficient members to be functional, on 03.06.2022 temporary Committee established by MESTI prot. No. 1003 of 11/05/2022 has elected two new members with a two-year mandate, whose mandate and the scope are defined by Regulation No. 2/2019 on the complaints procedure in the Appeal Committee, at Kosovo Accreditation Agency (*hereinafter* AKA).

On 09.06.2022 upon the proposal and voting of the majority of members of the committee, Prof. Dr. Faton Berisha was unanimously elected chairman of the Committee and in this manner the process of electing the leadership of Appeal Committee was completed according to the Article 7 and the Appeal Committee of KAA.

Commission has agreed that in the event of a conflict of interest of the chairman or members, he shall be replaced according to the regulation into force (Regulation No. 2/2019 on the procedure of appeals in the Appeals Committee in KAA).

The Committee maintains continuous communication on a weekly and monthly basis with the staff of the KAA and takes care of any complaint or submission addressed to KAA by the interested Parties, which is related to the scope of the Committee. (*Annex I, Decisions of the Appeal Committee*).

## **5.1 Composition of the Appeals Committee**

In the absence of sufficient members to be functional, on 03.06.2022 temporary Committee established by MESTI prot.No. 1003, dated 11/05/2022 has elected two new members with a two-year mandate, whose mandate and their scope is determined by Regulation No. 2/2019 on the complaints procedure in the Appeals Committee at the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (*hereinafter* KAA).

On 09.06.2022 upon the proposal and voting of the majority of members of the committee, Prof. Dr. Faton Berisha was unanimously elected chairman of the Committee and in this manner the process of electing the leadership of the Appeals Committee was completed according to Article 7 and the Appeals Committee of KAA was constituted with the following composition;

1. Prof. Dr. Faton Berisha, Head;

2. Prof. Asoc. Muhamet Qerimi, Member;

3. Ms. Zejnepe Imeri, Member;

4. Prof. Dr. Haki Demolli, reserve member;

5. Prof. Dr. Bujar Pira, reserve member.

Committee has agreed that in the event of a conflict of interest of the head or members, will be replaced according to the Regulation into force (Regulation No. 2/2019 on the complaints procedure in the Appeals Committee in KAA).

Upon completion of the mandate of one (1) regular member and two (2) alternative members of the committee, appointed with decision 1448/20, dated 04.09.2020, KAA based on the legal acts into force has selected one (1) regular member and two (2) reserve members, who were appointed with decision no. 1713/22, dated 10.10.2022 for a two-year mandate, with the possibility of re-election for another mandate, according to the Article 22, paragraph 14 of Administrative Instruction (MEST) No. 15/2018 on the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Kosovo.

Members of the Appeals Committee until 31.12.2022 were:

1. Prof. Dr. Faton Berisha, Head;

2. Ms. Zejnepe Imeri, Member;

3. Prof. Dr. Ibish Mazreku, Member;

4. Prof. Asoc. Dr. Kemajl Zeqiri, reserve member;

5. Prof. Asoc. Dr. Fatos Rexhepi, reserve member.

On 23.03.2023, Head of Appeals Committee, Prof. Dr. Faton Berisha has resigned from the Committee because he has taken a managerial position at the University of Pristina. In the meeting held on 24.03.2023, the Committee has elected the solely regular academic member, Prof. Dr. Ibish Mazreku. The Committee is functional because there are also two reserve members.

# **MAIN ACTIVITIES OF ACCREDITATION AGENCY IN THE YEAR 2022**

## **6.1. Approval of the list of international accreditation experts**

The State Quality Council (KQS) of Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) at the 95th meeting, held on 18.01.2022, has approved the list of international experts who have been involved in the process of accreditation of educational institutions of higher education and their study programmes.

In the yeas 2022, 75 international experts were engaged in one or more evaluations of HEIs or their study programmes. Out of them, 55 international experts had PhD degree of various profiles and fields, while another 20 were student experts at the doctorate, master's or bachelor's level.

83 total evaluation visits and one monitoring visit on validation were organized.

[**Translator’s Note**: *Text inside the above figures are not editable*]

## **6.2. Drafting and approval of Manual Forms on Methodology of monitoring and post-accreditation procedures**

The State Quality Council (SQC) of Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) at the 96th meeting, held on 21.02.2022, has approved forms that serve on the Methodology of monitoring and post-accreditation procedures.

After a two-year work in which all stakeholders of higher education in Kosovo were involved, SQC has approved the Methodology of monitoring higher education institutions in Kosovo, thus completing last recommendation of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

Approved methodology meets Standard 2.3 of European Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG), which requires quality assurance agencies to complete the accreditation cycle with post-accreditation procedures aimed at continuous improvement of the quality of higher education institutions.

Monitoring is a formal process carried out by KAA through which it is assessed that the institution of higher education maintains and continues to meet recommendations of external evaluators and the given conditions of accreditation, as well implements the standards of Accreditation Manual.

While the "post-accreditation Procedure" is process which is limited to the verification of accreditation conditions and confirmation of the level of fulfilment of recommendations from KAA, and commitments from HEI and not to the re-evaluation of standards of Accreditation Manual.

Approval of the Methodology of monitoring was carried out with the support of the QAINT Project and with funding from ADA Agency of Austria.

## **6.3. Information session with HEIs on the Methodology of monitoring**

With the support of the QAINT project implemented by Kosovo Education Centre, on 13 July 2022, KAA has held an information session with HEIs of the Republic of Kosovo on the methodology monitoring and post-accreditation procedures.

During the session, speakers were Hana Hasimja from the QAINT project, Marija Vasilevska, the engaged international expert, and Flamur Abazaj, senior official of KAA.

Presentation included all relevant details on the methodology, including explanations on the specific processes, as well main differences between the two procedures.

Another information session will be organized in the following months in order to provide same information to the HEIs who failed to participate.[[13]](#footnote-13)

## **6.4. Presentation of KAA Strategy 2021-2025**

With the participation of heads of higher education institutions and stakeholders, Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) presented the one-year work and strategic document on 25.01.2022 in Prishtina.

Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, participated in this meeting; Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Arbërie Nagavci; President of the Committee for Education, Science, Technology, Innovation, Culture, Youth and Sports, Ardian Gola; assembly member from this Committee, SQC members, representatives of all HEIs, international donors, civil society, media, etc.

## **6.5. Drafting the Guidelines on the engagement of students in quality assurance processes**

KAA within the project "Increasing involvement of students in the processes of internal and external quality assurance in higher education in Kosovo" financed by the Embassy of America in Kosovo, has drafted the Guidelines which aims to provide instructions that how students can contribute on increasing the quality of higher education institutions and improving their study conditions.

*Guidelines shall be used by all stakeholders of higher education in Kosovo as a point of reference when defining higher education legislation, accreditation provisions and other regulations at the institutional or study programme level. (II Annex* *Guidelines for the student)*

[Download the guidelines.](https://akreditimi.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Udhezues-per-angazhimin-e-studenteve-ne-proceset-e-sigurimit-te-cilesise-al.pdf) [[14]](#footnote-14)

## **6.6. Accreditation Agency has commenced process of monitoring higher education institutions**

Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA), on 30 May, 2023, has started process of monitoring higher education institutions in the Republic of Kosovo, thus fulfilling an important recommendation of European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

Process of monitoring higher education institutions and their academic programmes is one of recommendations of European Commission in the field of education in Kosovo, within the Stabilization and Association Process.

Team of Accreditation Agency, in accordance with the Methodology of Monitoring and Post-Accreditation Procedures, at the beginning of the monitoring process, has monitored schedules of lectures and exercises, as well the attendance of the academic staff in two private colleges and one public faculty.

The monitoring process meets Standard 2.3 of European Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG) which requires quality assurance agencies to complete the accreditation cycle with post-accreditation procedures aimed at continuous improvement of the quality of institutions of higher education.

Monitoring is a formal process carried out by KAA through which it is assessed that institution of higher education maintains and continues to meet recommendations of external evaluators and given conditions of accreditation, as well implements standards of the Accreditation Manual.

Whilst the "Post-accreditation procedure" is process which is limited to the verification of accreditation conditions and confirmation of the level of fulfilment of recommendations from KAA and commitments from HEI, and not to the re-evaluation of standards of the Accreditation Manual.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Monitoring process has started in three HEIs: Faculty of Education - UP, AAB College and UBT College.

The Agency is facing significant staff shortages on monitoring. Although 32 positions have been approved, KAA is facing difficulties in recruiting new staff due to the changes in the Law on Public Officials and the impossibility of opening external announcements.

## **6.7. Public hearing on the draft document “Kosovo Subject Area Code“**

On 13.06.2022, Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) has held a public hearing regarding the draft document "Kosovo Subject Area Code". This document will enable higher education institutions to identify and adapt academic staff to the study programme in which they will be the bearers.

HEI representatives, education experts, donor representatives and student representatives participated in this meeting.

In order to ensure that the document is comprehensive and in accordance with the needs of higher education system, the document maintains quality principles and criteria defined by the European quality standards (ESG). All proposals and suggestions of higher education institutions have been recorded and will be handled by the Board of KAA Board.

The public hearing is supported by KAA's partner, the Project "Quality, Accountability, Integrity and Transparency in Higher Education - QAINT" which is funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA).

## **6.8. Supporting the academic programmes of all communities in Kosovo**

The President of the State Quality Council (SQC), Professor Hasnije Ilazi and Director of Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA), Naim Gashi, has hosted a delegation of Turkish community in Kosovo in the meeting on 8th of August 2022, with whom they have discussed on expansion of academic programmes of the communities in Kosovo, implementing the quality standards applied by KAA.

Delegation from the Turkish community in Kosovo consisted of Minister of Regional Development, Mr. Fikrim Damka; the Vice-President of the Parliamentary Committee for Education, member of assembly Enis Kervan and member of assembly of the Turkish community, Fidal Jilta.

Rector of the University of Prizren, Professor Samedin Krrabaj, also has participated in the meeting.

## **6.9. KAA's contribution to MESTI's decision on academic integrity**

Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA), on 15.08.2022, has welcomed MESTI’s decision on "the compatibility of scientific work and publications with the research ethics of academic staff of higher education institutions (HEI)”.

With the legislation into force and internal regulations, KAA applies the "Research" standard and "Academic Integrity" standard during accreditation process. Today's decision clarifies the legal basis for their implementation.

KAA was invited by MESTI and contributed, especially in adapting the decision to European Quality Standards and Guidelines (ESG), which are basis of quality assurance and operation of accreditation agencies in Europe.

##  **Regular annual meeting with HEIs on quality improvement in higher education**

The State Quality Council (SQC) of Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA), at the regular annual meeting, discussed on 04.10.2022, with the leaders of higher education institutions (IALs) about raising the quality of education system in Kosovo.

Heads of HEI and of quality offices have welcomed this meeting in order to include all stakeholders of higher education in the decision-making process and increase transparency.

They have also discussed about issues confronted by HEIs during the processes of implementing standards.

##  **Completion of declaration process for 2835 academic staff in Kosovo**

At the meeting of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA), held on 01.11.2022, was concluded that on 30.10.2022, process of declaring 2835 academic staff in the Republic of Kosovo has been successfully completed.

On 31.10.2022, application process for accreditation and re-accreditation of higher education institutions and their study programmes has been completed.

According to the administrative instruction, declaration of academic staff is made from 1 to 31st October of each year on the electronic platform of KAA called E-Accreditation.

KAA team has established that the E-Accreditation electronic platform has been in full functionality, without a single minute of interruption, and has been monitored 24 hours per day throughout the month of October.

KAA team has provided technical support to over 250 academic staff through email and over 200 academic staff on the telephone.

KAA concludes that no academic staff has been left without declaring on technical reasons. Declaration of academic staff is legal obligation for all programmes that have prior accreditation, and for those that will enter the process of accreditation and re-accreditation.

Declaration of academic staff is also object of the monitoring process and the post-accreditation procedures carried out by KAA during an academic year. Kosovo Accreditation Agency wishes a successful academic year to all institutions of higher education, students and teachers.

# **7. COOPERATION WITH INSTITUTIONS AND LOCAL PARTNERS**

## **7.1. Kosovo Accreditation Agency becomes an "*affiliate*" member of ENQA**

Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) has received on 3d of September 2022, a letter from the Director of European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), Anna Gover, confirming that Accreditation Agency's application for "*affiliate*" member status. This decision came after that KAA has made progress in implementing ENQA's recommendations and has reported concrete activities on guaranteeing quality in higher education in accordance with European quality standards (ESG).

ENQA's decision is a credible guarantee of quality in higher education and facilitates process of recognition of students' and graduates' diplomas in European countries. Also, this decision facilitates exchange process of students and professors with European countries and beyond.

Kosovo Accreditation Agency may now use logo of ENQA in all its decisions and communications, within the territory of Kosovo, but also in international communication.

At the same time, on the official website of European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), on 23.10.2022, logo and credentials of Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) have also been set.

##  **European Commission confirms Accreditation Agency has implemented recommendations of ENQA**

European Commission, in the Report on Kosovo that was published on 12.10.2022 in Brussels, has stated that Kosovo Accreditation Agency has implemented recommendations of European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) related to institutional and financial independence.

“After the exclusion from the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) has implemented recommendations related to institutional and financial independence, as well the increase in the number of staff", says European Commission's Report on Kosovo.

Institutional and financial independence and the increase of human capacities have been the main recommendations that KAA has implemented to obtain "*affiliate"* status in ENQA.

European Commission's report also talks about the commitment and success of Accreditation Agency in implementing recommendations for returning to (ENQA) and European Quality Assurance Register in Higher Education (EQAR).

“Kosovo Accreditation Agency continued its efforts to regain membership in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and European Quality Assurance Register in Higher Education" the European Commission's report states.

In the part of the report that refers about KAA, European Commission has recommended to continue the process of post-accreditation procedures on monitoring of higher education institutions, which KAA is implementing very precisely.[[16]](#footnote-16)

##  **Kosovo Accreditation Agency has been declared winner of the grant TAIEX**

On 15th March 2022, Kosovo Accreditation Agency was declared the winner of the TAIEX grant, a programme of European Union dedicated to assistance and support for institutions with Euro-integration aspirations.

Project aimed to support KAA in the process of adoption and implementation of European Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015).

Project ensures to the institution of KAA to be offered a further step in its goal of membership in ENQA and EQAR, ensuring that internationally comparable quality standards and criteria are applied in the Republic of Kosovo.

##  **SQC and KAA visit to AQ Austria**

From 14th of December 2022, SQC members and KAA staff visited the counterpart Agency of Austria - AQ Austria for a three-day visit as part of the twinning project between two agencies.

Project is funded by ADA as part of HERAS+ Project. During the visit, best practices and experiences will be shared among members of peer agencies, and AQ Austria is also sharing a lot of information about their compliance with ESG 2015 standards and lessons learned over the past years. [[17]](#footnote-17)

##  **KAA and ASCAL (Albania) have signed Memorandum of Cooperation**

Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) and Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASCAL) in Albania have signed Memorandum of Cooperation on 30.03.2022 in Prishtina which provides for interstate cooperation in raising the quality of higher education.

From Kosovo side, agreement is signed by the Director of KAA, Naim Gashi, whereas from Albania, agreement by the Director of ASCAL, Xhiliola Bixheku.

This agreement will contribute to the increase of quality of higher education and advancement of academic studies in both countries, continuous improvement of the quality of higher education institutions. Memorandum aims to encourage implementation of European standards and procedures (ESG) in higher education systems and cooperation in fulfilling the criteria and recommendations of European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) European Quality Assurance Register in Higher Education (EQAR);

This Memorandum enables exchange of information about the quality, results and accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and the programmes that they offer; encouraging exchanges of academic staff and students who engage in accreditation processes in both countries (as members of external evaluation group); joint application in regional and international projects in the field of quality assurance in higher education; exchange of knowledge on regulations, instructions, manuals or any other legal act that regulates the field of quality assurance in higher education; exchange of staff on the exchange of experiences, etc.

##  **KAA and ASCAL (Albania) have signed Memorandum of Cooperation**

Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) and Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASCAL) in North Macedonia, on 27.05.2022, signed in Skopje a Memorandum of Cooperation, which foresees interstate cooperation in raising the quality of higher education.

From Kosovo side, agreement is signed by the Director of KAA, Naim Gashi, whereas from North Macedonia, agreement is signed by the Director of ASCAL, Agim Rushiti.

This agreement will contribute to the increase of quality of higher education and advancement of academic studies in both countries, continuous improvement of the quality of higher education institutions. Memorandum aims to encourage implementation of European standards and procedures (ESG) in higher education systems and cooperation in fulfilling the criteria and recommendations of European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) European Quality Assurance Register in Higher Education (EQAR);

##  **KAA and ACQAHE (Montenegro) cooperate on raising the quality in higher education**

Heads of Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) were received on 18th of July, 2022 in Podgorica from the leaders of the Montenegro Agency for Quality Control and Assurance (ACQAHE), with whom they discussed on interstate cooperation in the field of quality assurance in higher education.

Heads of the two counterpart agencies have agreed to promote cooperation in regional projects, exchange of information, participation in the scientific conferences, promotion of exchanges of academic staff and students, etc.

In this meeting, Parties have agreed to cooperate in the meeting about standards for membership European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and registering in European Quality Assurance Register in Higher Education (EQAR).[[18]](#footnote-18)

##  **KAA benefits from Croatian experience in the field of quality assurance in higher education**

With the support of TAIEX Project of European Commission, Director of Accreditation Agency of Croatia, Sandra Bezjak, for three days in a row has attended the workshop organized by Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA), in which the quality assurance in the higher education and receiving Croatian experiences for the return of KAA to European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and registering in European Quality Assurance Register in Higher Education (EQAR).

Entire State Quality Council (SQC) and all the staff of KAA were part of this workshop, where KAA's achievements were discussed in details and about future priorities.

##  **KAA and AZVO (Croatian) intensify cooperation on raising quality in higher education**

A delegation of Kosovo Accreditation for(AKA), on 27.09.2022, was received in Zagreb by the Heads of Croatian Agency for Science in Higher Education (AZVO), where they discussed about intensification of cooperation on raising the quality of higher education.

Kosovo delegation consisted of the President of the State Quality Council (SQC), Professor Hasnije Ilazi, members of the SQC, Professors Maja Martinovic and Dukagjin Zeka, as well Director of KAA, Naim Gashi.

Host of this meeting was Director of AZVO, Sandra Bezjak and her colleagues. In this meeting, Parties have evaluated as very important support of AZVO for KAA through TAIEX project of European Union, whilst they have agreed that the Croatian side will support Accreditation Agency in the process of the review of bachelor and master level standards.[[19]](#footnote-19)

## **KAA delegation part of ENQA event on quality in higher education**

A delegation of Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA), on 3of June 2022, for two days in a row has participated in an event organized by European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), in Cologne, Germany, where was discussed external evaluation process for ENQA membership.

KAA delegation was the only one from the Balkan region. Purpose of this organization, in which 29 European countrie have participated, was preparation of accreditation agencies for evaluation by ENQA, as well exchange of good experiences of quality in higher education.

Kosovo delegation has held meetings with heads of ENQA and EQAR, as well with the heads of counterpart agencies from Germany, Italy, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, etc., with whom concrete steps of cooperation on quality assurance were discussed. in higher education.

Heads of KAA have presented the work that has been carried out in the implementation of European Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG) and the plans to be subject to the assessment by ENQA, for membership in this institution.[[20]](#footnote-20)

## **7.11. Representatives of American Embassy for a visit to the Accreditation Agency**

President of the State Quality Council (SQC), professor Hasnije Ilazi and Director of Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA), Naim Gashi, have met representatives of the United States Embassy (USA) in Prishtina, Mrs. Kelsey De Rinaldis, Deputy Public Affairs Officer and Ms. Remzije Potoku, specialist for education policies at the American Embassy.

In the meeting has been discussed on institutional and financial support of American Embassy for Kosovo Accreditation Agency, as well about the work of KAA in raising the quality of higher education.

## **7.12.** **KAA becomes member of the Global Academic Integrity Network (GAIN)**

On 5th of December 2022, KAA has participated in an inaugural meeting of the Global Academic Integrity Network.

Global Academic Integrity Network is a consortium of education quality and integrity agencies around the world joining forces to combat the rise of commercial academic fraud services targeting students, and it is supported by a number of important international education bodies, as ENQA, European Network for Academic Integrity and ETINED.

Established by the Quality and Qualifications Agency of Ireland and Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) in Australia, the network aims to tackle commercial fraud operations, protect students, qualifications and integrity of national education systems.

GAIN will share experiences and resources to help other jurisdictions in order to develop legislation, regulatory approaches and frameworks that penalize facilitation and advertising of fraudulent services.

KAA in its efforts to increase levels of academic integrity in Kosovo, will share best practices offered by the network and ensure that it is updated with international trends in the prevention of fraud and violations of academic integrity.[[21]](#footnote-21)

## **7.13. KAA presents its work at the bimonthly meeting of CEENQA**

At the bimonthly meeting of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA) held on 16.11.2022, the Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Officer of KAA, Flamur Abazaj, has participated and presented Kosovo Accreditation Agency and its work in 2022 year. At the meeting, other European counterpart agencies also have presented their work, practices and lessons learned were shared.

KAA is a full member of CEENQA.

## **7.14. QAINT Project finances 60 thousand Euros euro equipment for KAA**

The QAINT project has supplied KAA with electronic and ICT equipment in the value of 60,000 Euros. Through this investment, technical infrastructure of KAA has been improved, staff conditions have been improved and the quality of services has been increased.[[22]](#footnote-22) *(Annex III* *equipment provided by the QAINT Project).*

1. https://akreditimi.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/UDHEZIM\_ADMINISTRATIV\_MASHT\_NR.\_015\_2018\_PER\_AKREDITIMIN\_E\_INSTITUCIONEVE\_TE\_ARSIMIT\_TE\_LARTE\_NE\_REPUBLIKEN\_E\_KOSOVES.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 3 <https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://akreditimi.rks-gov.net/guidelines/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://akreditimi.rks-gov.net/accreditation/standards/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education. <https://www.ceenqa.org/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) <https://www.inqaahe.org/> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. ENQA Affiliate <https://www.enqa.eu/membership-database/kaa-kosovo-accreditation-agency/> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. European Council for Leading Business Schools <https://www.eclbs.eu/list-of-members> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Global Academic Integrity Network (GAIN) <https://globalacademicintegrity.network/> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eRBWnoiUghGYcsp8nO5HlmVWlDUyQ3Te/view?usp=sharing> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. <https://mpb.rks-gov.net/ap/desk/inc/media/FC95CB25-50B5-4385-A800-CB31810A35CC.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. https://akreditimi.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Rregullore-mbi-punen-e-KA.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. [Details in the ueb site of KAA](https://akreditimi.rks-gov.net/2022/07/14/kaa-mbane-nje-sesion-informues-me-ial-per-metodologjine-e-monitorimit-dhe-procedurat-pas-akredituese/)  [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. <https://akreditimi.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Udhezues-per-angazhimin-e-studenteve-ne-proceset-e-sigurimit-te-cilesise-al.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Details in the ueb site of KAA [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Details in the ueb site of KAA [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Details in the ueb site of KAA [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Details in the ueb site of KAA [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Details in the ueb site of KAA [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Details in the ueb site of KAA [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. <https://globalacademicintegrity.network/> [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Details in the ueb site of KAA [↑](#footnote-ref-22)