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# Newsletter

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*Happy Holidays!*

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## CEENQA News

### Save the Date: CEENQA General Assembly and Workshop May 14-15, 2020

The Annual **General Assembly Meeting 2020** of the members of the Central and Eastern Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA) will take place in **Prague, Czech Republic** on **May 14-15, 2020**. The Meeting will be hosted by the National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education (**NAB**), Czech Republic.

### CEENQA Staff Exchange 2020 – Call for Agencies

CEENQA is launching **a new call to member agencies to participate in the staff exchange scheme** in 2020. This is an excellent opportunity to share experience, learn from best practice and discuss various pressing topics of quality assurance with peers across the CEENQA platform. This call is open to agencies new to the scheme that wish to benefit from the network and knowledge represented in CEENQA, as well as to agencies that have found this mechanism useful in the past and seek to expand on the previous experience. The staff that travel abroad on the visit can come from the lower level and mid-level staff as well as from the senior managerial staff and even



Board members of agencies. The costs of travel and stay are to be covered by the sending agency.

Possible topics that could be covered during staff exchange include, but are not limited to:

- Institutional and/or program level evaluations
- Accreditation processes and criteria/standards
- Re-evaluation procedures for institutions and/or programs
- Rules and procedures for reporting
- Forming expert groups and training of experts
- Stakeholder involvement
- Web applications, databases and other technical solutions
- EU projects and international cooperation
- ENQA External Review process
- Internal quality assurance of agency

Agencies planning to host and/or send staff members for staff exchange in 2020 are asked to **reply to this call by 31 January, 2020**. After collecting the responses from interested agencies, CEENQA will match mutually suitable agencies and put them in touch with each other to organize the details of the study visits.

Please include the following information in your agency response:

- willingness to host and/or to send staff members on a visit in 2020,
- willingness to be included on a permanent list of interested agencies that would eliminate the need to respond to individual calls for expressions of interest every year (with the possibility to opt-out in a given year),
- languages the involved staff members are able to use,
- specific subject of focus of the visit (if relevant),
- possible details about the agency's needs (i.e. proposed time period, particular requirements on partner agency, etc.) – however, please be mindful that depending on the other responses to the call, it might not be possible to accommodate all particular requests of the agency.

The responses to this call and any requests for more information should be sent to **Martina Vidlakova**, Vice President ([vidlakovam@msmt.cz](mailto:vidlakovam@msmt.cz)) **by 31 January, 2020**. Mark your calendars now!

### Call for Agency News 2020

CEENQA is launching a **call to member agencies** to regularly send in agency news related to **upcoming dates, conferences and events or to any relevant activities**. These updates will be collected and published on the CEENQA website as they arrive. This will help reach a wider audience for each conference, event or activity, as well as generate interest in CEENQA members and CEENQA itself.

Please send your updates (key points or short text) to **Raphaela Forst** ([secretariat@ceenqa.org](mailto:secretariat@ceenqa.org)).



## Message from the President

**Dear CEENQA members,  
Dear Colleagues,**

Another year has passed for the CEENQA family, so I invite you to a brief reflection on what we have achieved in the past year.

I want to acknowledge the election of **Mr Ruben Topchyan**, director of the Armenian National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance (ANQA) as **member to ENQA Board**, joining the other two CEENQA members to hold this position: The Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) and the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS). CEENQA is now represented also through one of the vice-presidents, so our organisation gains even more **visibility at the European Higher Education Area level**.

Furthermore, I want to thank all members that have responded positively to the request to update the description of their organisations on our **website**. I invite you all to check the **revised content** at <https://www.ceenga.org>, and please let us know if there are further improvements to be made. Please do not forget to send **contributions to the news section** of the website, as this is an important instrument for increased visibility of our organisation. During the Board meeting that took place on the 15th of November 2019, it was decided that quarterly reminders will be sent to member agencies, and the website will be updated each time information will be received. Please do not forget to download from the web-site the leaflet with general information, membership conditions and an overview of CEENQA activities, that can be used to promote CEENQA during different events that you are organising or participating in.

Another topic discussed in the Board meeting is related to the membership of our association. Currently, our organisation has **38 members from 23 countries**. The Board is especially pleased to welcome **three new members** since the last General Assembly: **ILAD** (Turkey), **Elbaasy** (Kyrgyz Republic) and **ARQA** (Kazakhstan). The Board is also continuously preoccupied in recruiting new members, so discussions are ongoing with agencies from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine, as well as Greece and Slovakia.

Regarding **EU projects**, the final report for the project QUAERE was approved and CEENQA received the final instalment in December. The **new EU call** for proposals in three "key actions" - Learning Mobility of Individuals, Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices and Support for Policy Reform - are now open, with deadlines for the submission of an application, depending on key action, between February and March 2020. As participating in projects is an important resource for collaboration, exchange of ideas and best practices as well as for the development of new policies in the field of quality assurance, I am kindly asking our members to **include CEENQA in the applications**, when possible. Due to CEENQA's unique position as a network of quality assurance agencies, it offers a wealth of knowledge and experience in both national and international quality assurance processes, standards, guidelines and procedures as well as the tools of quality assurance. Though the network itself does not have enough capacity and resources to coordinate a European level project, it can



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participate as a partner, enabling a consortium to gain access to this knowledge.

Speaking of **sharing knowledge and experience** in national and international quality assurance, the **CEENQA staff exchange** permits member agencies to do so each year. It has proven to be very useful in the past, so I do hope that we will continue it, and even expand it, in 2020!

Looking to the future, the next yearly meeting (**CEENQA General Assembly and Workshop**) will be generously hosted by National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education (**NAB**), in the wonderful town of **Prague**. An amazing European capital to be discovered for those that have never been there, and a place where I return with great pleasure every time. Taking into consideration the current discussions and debates at EHEA level on the **future of the Bologna Process**, the Board propose to tackle topics in the same area of interest, including the **role of the quality assurance in society** or **enhancing collaboration among countries and quality assurance agencies** by implementing the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. I hope to see you all in Prague on **14 – 15 May 2020!**

Finally, I'm inviting you to read the news from our members, to whom I am warmly thanking for their contribution.

I am also expressing my gratitude to all member agencies for the collaboration and the contributions to CEENQA activities in 2020, and I wish you all joyful winter holidays and a Happy New Year!

**Cristina Ghițulică**

**President of CEENQA**

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## Upcoming Events

**14-15 May 2020**

**CEENQA General Assembly and Workshop**

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## News from Members and Partners

### AIKA/AIC News



#### The Quality Agency for Higher Education (AIKA) / Academic Information Centre (AIC) Launches E-Platform for Managing Quality Assessment

The Quality Agency for Higher Education (AIKA) / Academic Information Centre (AIC) has developed and launched a **comprehensive tool (e-platform) for managing quality assessment procedures**. The e-platform functions both as a **public database** and as an **internal system for evaluation management**.

The public database is available at [www.eplatforma.aika.lv](http://www.eplatforma.aika.lv) and contains up to date information about the accredited higher education institutions, study directions and study programmes in Latvia. The public information is available in Latvian and English. The internal system is available for all those who involved in assessment procedures – agency staff members, higher education institutions, experts and Study Quality Committee.

The development process of this e-platform started in 2018 and included exchange visits to quality assurance agencies abroad and extensive consultations and testing period with the Latvian higher education institutions.

Since November 2019, the e-platform has been used for evaluations of study directions. In the upcoming months, it will be launched for all the remaining quality assessment procedures performed by AIKA/AIC.

The e-platform was developed within the ESF project "Support for meeting the requirements set for EQAR agency" No.8.2.4.0/15/I/001.

### ASHE News



#### Second Seminar in Cycle on Internationalization of Higher Education: "European Universities and Development of Joint Studies"

As part of the cycle of seminars on internationalization of higher education, the Agency for Science and Higher Education organized a seminar titled **"European Universities and Development of Joint Studies"** that was held on Wednesday, 30 October 2019 at the Faculty of Forestry, University of Zagreb.

The European Commission recently published the names of higher education institutions from all over Europe that were selected for the first alliances ([full list](#)); the list of 114 HEIs also includes Croatian universities - University of Split and University of Zadar, and University of Rijeka as an associate member. Of the 54 applicants, 17 European universities were selected, comprising a total of 114 higher education institutions from 24 EU member states. The selection was based on an assessment carried out by 26 independent external experts, including rectors, professors and researchers appointed by the European Commission. The budget for the first 17 European universities amounts to EUR 85 million. This first call - along with the second, expected this autumn - will test **different models for implementing the new concept of European universities**, and its potential for development of higher education.





As the European Universities Initiative was designed to enhance student and staff mobility, as well as the quality, competitiveness and attractiveness of the European higher education by fostering cooperation between European HEIs, a discussion was held during the seminar on the possibilities of joining universities' alliances and opportunities this would present for Croatian HEIs.

Participants in the discussion on the opportunities and challenges of joining universities' alliances included Tine Delva, policy officer in Higher Education Unit DG EAC in European Commission, Klemen Šubic and Maja Milas from the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, and representatives of Croatian higher education institutions, prof. dr. sc. Slaven Zjalić, Vice Rector for Inter-Institutional Cooperation And Technology Transfer, University of Zadar, and prof. dr. sc. Leandra Vranješ Markić, Vice Rector for Science and Innovation, University of Split.

In the second part of the seminar, participants had the opportunity to hear different experiences related to development of joint studies and attracting foreign students from the University of Dubrovnik, University of Zadar, Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Zagreb, and the Zagreb School of Economics and Management.

The cycle of seminars on internationalization was launched in response to the results of the re-accreditation process, which indicated a great potential and strength of Croatian higher education institutions with regard to offering study programmes in the global market, attracting international students and participating as equal partners in academic cooperation and exchange programmes. Notwithstanding some identified obstacles, higher education institutions showed considerable interest and engagement in this regard.

The cycle of seminars on internationalization of higher education is organized within SKAZVO project - Improvement of quality assurance and enhancement systems in higher education, carried out by ASHE and financed from the European Social Fund.

## ARACIS News



### Enhancing Stakeholders' Engagement in External Quality Assurance: A Romanian Initiative - the ESQA Project on the Run.

Under the framework of the project 'Effective involvement of stakeholders in external quality assurance activities' (ESQA), the Ministry of National Education of Romania, in collaboration with the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), organized between 30 October and 1 November 2019 a first **Peer-review activity and diagnose workshop** with participation of invited external stakeholders.

Objective of these peer-review activities was the thorough analysis of the way in which stakeholders are involved in the external quality assurance activities of the four partner agencies. Among these partner agencies were the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) from Romania, National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEEA) from Bulgaria, the Agency National Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC) from the of Moldova, all three CEENQA members.

The agenda of the meeting with the stakeholders included two sessions of interactive "Questions and discussions". Several categories of stakeholders were invited to participate actively, such as student unions, teaching staff



representatives, the Council of Rectors, internal quality assurance experts, teachers' unions, employers, as well as professional and non-governmental associations.

The participants were divided into smaller groups for guided discussions, with questions proposed in advance, namely what is quality assurance of higher education, what is really working and what doesn't work as external stakeholders' contribution to quality assurance and what is to be done to enhance their contribution. Thus, the aim of this diagnose was to identify the strong and weak areas in what concerns the involvement of stakeholders in quality assurance activities.

The next peer learning activity and diagnose workshop will take place in Copenhagen, December 2-4, 2019, to be hosted by the Danish partner DAI.

The project is co-funded by the programme ERASMUS+ for a period of 24 months (May, 2019 – April, 2021). The main objectives of this projects are:

- providing support to the peer - learning activities on QA within the Bologna Follow – up Group and the Bologna process,
- analysing the various categories of stakeholders' involvement in QA and their expectations towards external quality assurance work,
- sharing practices among QAAs', in regards to including stakeholders in EQA activities and ongoing development of practices and
- drafting recommendations to the national authorities and QAAs aiming to strengthen dialogue and cooperation with stakeholders for their effective involvement in QA processes.



## evalag News

### Successful renewal of EQAR registration

**evalag** has successfully completed the renewal process of the registration in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). On November 5, 2019, the Register Committee of EQAR confirmed that evalag carries out quality assurance procedures in the field of study and teaching in full compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG). The registration was renewed and is valid until June 30, 2024.

The renewal process was preceded by the regular renewal of evalag's membership in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) on June 20, 2019.

There are currently 48 agencies listed in the EQAR Register. **evalag** is the **first German accreditation agency to be licensed by EQAR after the reform of the German accreditation system in 2018.**

More on EQAR at <https://www.eqar.eu>.

### New member of the European Research Infrastructure Evaluation Consortium (ERIEC)

By signing an agreement on October 22, 2019, **evalag joined European Research Infrastructure Evaluation Consortium (ERIEC)**. ERIEC was founded in April 2019 and consists of five members. These are the European quality assurance agencies Hcéres (Haute conseil de l'évaluation de la recherche



et de l'enseignement supérieure, France), ANVUR (Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes), AEI (Agencia Estatal de Investigación, Spain) and – beside evalag – QANU (Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities). Hcéres is coordinator of ERIEC.

The ERIEC consortium operates at the request of the European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC), which are subject to a statutory evaluation obligation. The ERIEC-members strive for combining the best international and European approaches in quality assurance in a common evaluation system.

More on ERIEC at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/strategy/european-research-infrastructures/eric\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/strategy/european-research-infrastructures/eric_en)

## YÖDAK News

### CEENQA Staff Exchange Program 2019: A Review

Having been matched for the 2019 CEENQA staff exchange program, the first phase of the exchange scheme completed successfully between SQAA and YÖDAK during **11-15 November 2019 in Ljubljana**.

The program duration, timing of the visit, level of participation, topics /areas to be studied could be agreed by both sides with consensus. The CEENQA staff exchange gives a clear view and reflection on the best practices as well as deficiencies in the areas and process for both sides. It also encourages future collaboration on related areas as well as sharing the knowledge and experts between the agencies. Corporate culture, organizational commitment, autonomy, digitalization and internationalization were key topics found to be discussed further and necessary for progress on for both sides.

During the first phase of the exchange, the following topics were covered:

- ENQA Review process for re-evaluation for SQAA
- Institutional and program level Evaluation of the programs for quality assurance (Human resources, students, infrastructure, education materials etc)
- Program accreditation process and evaluation criteria
- Program evaluation process
- Forming expert groups and its practices
- Reevaluation procedures for programs
- Site visit process
- Reporting procedure
- eNAKVIS database practices
- web page applications (visual disabled friendly)
- EU, ENQA projects

In summary, the exchange program worked very well and was found to be beneficial and valuable by both sides in terms of mutual learning, sharing experiences and good practices. It was highly appreciated that the host agency SQAA was very kind, professional and hospitable to accommodate the guest from YÖDAK even to make him feel like at home. During the discussions, it was a consensus that CEENQA must continue this exchange scheme on an ongoing basis so that more agencies could benefit from each other and contribute to the mission of CEENQA. This program is highly recommended to all other agencies to experience the mutual benefits.





The second phase of the exchange will take place next spring in Kyrenia, North Cyprus, with representatives from SQAA/NAKVIS visiting YÖDAK.



## SKVC News

### Lithuanian Student Union and SKVC Engaged in a Project "Student, Become a Minister!"

SKVC, Lithuanian quality assurance agency, enjoys close cooperation with the national Student Union for a number of years already. Students are engaged in all aspects of work of SKVC, starting from governance to participation in external evaluation and follow-up procedures.

While higher education is a very serious sphere in life of every society and economy, students also find **playful ways to raise important issues on shaping the common future and advocating their own rights**. One such initiative by the Lithuanian Student Union (LSS) is the project "Student, become a Minister!" The participants in this project take up the **post of a Minister of their choice for one day** and have **discussions with policy makers and various governmental institutions** that lead to concrete actions for students' sake.

More specifically, in terms of this initiative, LSS invite students to become head of their chosen ministry or Prime Minister for one day, on which they meet members of the Parliament and visit various state agencies. On the next day this is followed by a joint meeting of student Ministers and the real Cabinet of Ministers to discuss how each ministry can contribute to the future and current well-being of students. As a result, in 2018, Lithuanian Government made a decision to fund a special project on safeguarding student mental health and offering student counselling services, from which 15 000 students benefited.

In 2019, a special focus of the project is on **improvement of legislation**. Mr. Tautvydas Klivickas, a student at ISM University of Management and Economics, and also a participant of the project, visited SKVC on November 14. Mr. Almantas Šerpatauskas, Director of SKVC, and Ms. Aurelija Valeikiene, Deputy Director, welcomed Mr. Tautvydas Klivickas as Minister of Education, Science and Sport for one day. The meeting was also attended by Mr. Andrius Zalitis, Advisor to the current permanent Minister of Education, Science and Sport, Dr Algirdas Monkevičius.

During the meeting at SKVC, various issues of higher education that are relevant to students, to the national quality assurance agency and the Ministry were discussed. Attention was on the acquisition and development of teachers' didactic competences, on the one side, and students' responsibility for their learning outcomes, on the other. Notably, teachers and students are the most important actors in higher education, while national authorities play a supporting role, enabling quality teaching and learning to happen. External quality assurance is meant to support institutional improvement and exercise accountability, while safeguarding rights of students and the general society to quality higher education. The meeting provided a possibility to discuss the **new external quality assurance framework in Lithuania to be launched in 2020**.

The LSS initiative "Student, Become a Minister!" is dedicated to the International Student Day, which is celebrated on November 17.



## ASIIN News

### ASIIN 6th Global Conference "The Game is On – Pioneering Strategies for Tomorrow's Higher Education"

On December 9/10, 2019, in the context of the 6th edition of ASIIN's global university conference, about 100 participants from 32 countries and 17 invited speakers discussed the **latest trends in the areas of digitization and internationalization of higher education** as well as the diverse strategies of the (inter)national higher education sector against the background of a constantly increasing **demand for lifelong learning**.

Introductory remarks by the deputy chairman of the ASIIN, Prof. Heiss, set the tone for the conference participants to discuss the adaptation processes with which universities and quality assurance agencies are reacting worldwide in order to meet the growing demand for appropriate education.



*Participants of the ASIIN 6th Global Conference in Dresden, Germany*

After opening speeches by the education fund manager Troy Williams and the ASIIN managing director, each of which focused on the **emerging global trends in the international higher education and accreditation landscape**, the following presentations provided an overview of current trends in the areas of **digital learning** and the use of artificial intelligence in university teaching. Presentations on the challenges of developing a digitization strategy as an internal control instrument for HEI and the development of modern examination forms for digital learning rounded off the first day.

The second day focused on **current trends in lifelong learning**, the **emerging establishment of individual education accounts** and the development of a European qualification framework for "**microcredentials**"; topics, which will also be the focus of the next Bologna Conference of the European Ministers of Education. In addition, there were exciting presentations on current **training activities of companies** (including the activities of the Robert Bosch Learning Company and on the topic of "boot camps" in the ICT sector), a presentation of the **development of a vocational certificate** (using the example of the vocational certificate in the agricultural and food sector), as well as a presentation on the new **European e-Competence Framework**, which has just been adopted. In the afternoon, the special challenges universities and agencies have to face in the field of **transnational educational activities** were explained - from the perspective of a national system (Great Britain), two universities (TU Berlin and TU Munich) and a bi-national course of studies (offered in cooperation between HAW Hamburg and USST Shanghai). ASIIN thanks all speakers and participants for the interesting and stimulating 6th Global Conference and looks forward to seeing you all at the next one!



# CEENQA

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN NETWORK  
OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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