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ANALYSIS OF THE NEEDS FOR CHANGE AND ACTIONS PLANS

ANACEC - National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research

1. Analysis on the needs for change at the level of the national agency for quality assurance in education and research, based on the guideline on the involvement of stakeholders' in quality assurance activities (<https://esqa.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GESIQA.pdf>)

This analysis on the needs for change with regard to the effective involvement of stakeholders in the quality assurance activities was done by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC) based on the Guideline on the involvement of stakeholders' in quality assurance activities (WP6), taking into account the results of the peer-review activities under WP2, and the realities faced by the Agency.

Methodology: In order to carry out the analysis, a first meeting in the form of a round table was organized, attended by the management of the Agency (president, vice-president and secretary general), the staff of the Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE) and the head of Public Relations and International Cooperation Office, where the template for the analysis and the process of conducting it were agreed. Following this meeting, the results of the peer-review activities and the *Guideline on the involvement of stakeholders' in quality assurance activities*, activities carried out under the ESQA project, were shared for consultation via email among higher education institutions, the experts involved in the external evaluations carried out by ANACEC, students and business representatives (134 people in total), and discussed in more detail at a second meeting among the people involved in drafting this analysis – those mentioned above, including also members of the Governing Board and Profile Committee in Higher Education of ANACEC (also representing the academia, students and business environment as direct stakeholders in the external quality assurance activities). The draft of this *Analysis* was then analyzed by the ESQA project experts and useful feedback was provided. All the proposals were then collected and included in the agreed template.

Main results: Based on the feedback received, a final version of the Analysis on the needs for change was produced by ANACEC staff, leading to the elaboration of an action plan on effective stakeholder involvement in Agency's activities.

Conclusions: The elaboration of the planned activities aims to strengthen the Agency's dialogue with all stakeholders, thus ensuring both the transparency of information of public interest and ANACEC activities, as well as the implementation of those changes that we believe will contribute to continuous quality improvement.

Currently, the collaboration with the interested parties takes place through a variety of activities: annual questionnaires, webinars (at least 3 per year), information / training sessions depending on the needs of the Department of Evaluation in Higher Education, with some beneficiaries monthly meetings are organized where not only their opinion is asked, but also their involvement in updating the methodological framework, working tools in the external evaluation process, etc.



At the same time, in order to raise the degree of trust of the beneficiaries in the services provided, the Agency is currently involving in the external evaluations of the master's degree programs, experts and international observers (from ARACIS, FINEEC, EKKA).

The results obtained from the questionnaire / information sessions with stakeholders contributed to the updating of the External Evaluation Guidelines for bachelor's / integrated and master's degree programs, working tools of the expert evaluators (visit sheet and the external evaluation report).

Educational institutions have been very interested in participating in the development / modernization and updating of external evaluation methodologies. Thus, about 100 beneficiaries participated in the webinar dedicated to this issue.

The results of the questionnaires are published in the Annual Activity Reports of ANACEC, which are public on the website www.anacec.md.

The *Analysis on the needs for change at the level of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research*, the *Guideline on the involvement of stakeholders' in quality assurance activities*, as well as *The action plan for the effective involvement of the stakeholders in the quality assurance activities carried out by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research*, that was developed later based on the *Analysis on the needs for change* are published for public consultation on the website of the Agency - <https://www.anacec.md/en/projects>.

*	Proposed change	Reason(s) for change	Intended outcome(s)	Estimated duration	Additional factors to consider	Responsible for these actions
1.	Organizing open dialogue with stakeholders ** to clarify the concepts of quality assurance	<p>This builds a commitment that is embedded in a quality culture that is based on mutual trust and understanding.</p> <p>Raising the level of confidence in the national (higher) education system.</p> <p>Making the (higher) education system better adapted to the requirements of society.</p> <p>This change is needed to inform / train stakeholders on quality</p>	<p>Stakeholders know what quality assurance (QA) and quality culture in education, requirements and recommendations at European and international level, national legislation in the field, quality standards applied in the field of higher education are.</p> <p>Actively participate in clarifying and defining the concept of QA from their perspective.</p> <p>For students, teachers, employers, civil society, etc. the result would be</p>	<p>2-3 information sessions per year.</p> <p>The dialogue can be organized in the form of a Round Table (or possibly a webinar in case of restricted conditions). An event can be organized for each of the stakeholders (if the number of participants is large), but also for all stakeholders simultaneously, to be a faster interaction between them. The duration of a session should be within about 1.5 hours.</p>	<p>Additional beneficial effects could be: identification of people from various categories of stakeholders, who would then be recruited as experts for evaluation missions; establishing partnerships for certain activities carried out by the Agency (including dissemination).</p> <p>Influence on the organization of work of the Agency's staff.</p>	<p>Management of the Agency / Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE)</p>

		<p>assurance concepts.</p> <p>The organization of the dialogue would also allow the identification of needs / expectations for each of the elements representing the stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - students: what interests do they have in order to develop professional skills; - employers: what skills already developed must be possessed by young specialists, so as to carry out activities in the field of professional training according to the needs / demands of the labor market; - teachers and HEI management: what study programs to develop and how to organize the teaching process, so as to ensure the development of those skills... <p>Increasing the responsibility of representatives of educational</p>	<p>the acquaintance with the concepts of quality assurance, the increase of the motivation to participate and / or involve in the external evaluations of the study programs / higher education institutions.</p> <p>Following familiarization is also the awareness of the need for quality assurance, especially in terms of the application of ante-factum measures, which generates a much higher efficiency compared to post-factum (corrective) measures.</p> <p>Active involvement of stakeholders in the process of developing the methodological framework for external quality assessment.</p>	<p>Change planning - 4 weeks (elaboration of methodological support, setting objectives, goals and outcomes of the process).</p> <p>Communication of the change to those affected by it - 1 week (placing the announcement on the ANACEC website, Facebook page on organizing events on the development of open dialogue with stakeholders).</p> <p>Transition periods - 4 weeks.</p>		
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		institutions in the field of quality assurance. Understanding why quality assurance in education is the main goal in development strategies in the field.				
2.	Systematic involvement of stakeholders in (re) designing the quality assurance system	<p>This can lead to more openness, transparency and effective stakeholder involvement, based on co-ownership.</p> <p>All stakeholders thus have the opportunity to contribute to one degree or another to the (re)design of the quality assurance system.</p> <p>Through systematic involvement, it is ensured that stakeholders will know the field much better, could propose solutions to solve problems, but also exchange good practices.</p> <p>Continuous updating and improvement of the quality assurance system.</p>	<p>Meetings, consultations, working groups, thematic dialogues, etc. planned in advance.</p> <p>Stakeholders' views and expectations are taken into account when (re) designing, designing and / or improving the QA system.</p> <p>Stakeholders are showing an increased interest in QA in higher education (HE), and the role and added value of their involvement is being aware of and recognized.</p> <p>Active involvement of all stakeholders.</p> <p>Ensuring transparency.</p> <p>Increasing the credibility of the process of (re)designing the quality assurance system.</p>	<p>If necessary.</p> <p>At the request of the Department of Evaluation in Higher Education.</p> <p>In general, the emphasis will be on permanent involvement, but de facto participation will be based on the Agency's needs and quality assurance areas.</p> <p>Change planning - 4 weeks.</p> <p>Communication of the change to those affected by it - 2 weeks.</p> <p>Transition periods - 8 weeks.</p>	<p>It will increase the visibility of the Agency.</p> <p>Intense cooperation between the Agency team and stakeholders.</p> <p>Modification of the external evaluation procedure.</p> <p>Continuous change of the external evaluation procedure depending on the changes in the national education system and current trends in the national labor market.</p>	<p>Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR) /</p> <p>Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE)/</p> <p>Profile committees</p>



		<p>Presentation in the quality assurance system of stakeholders' opinions, which change depending on the categories of stakeholders (managers, teachers, students, graduates, employers, etc.).</p>	<p>The (re) design of the quality assurance system would be the result of working with a variety of categories of stakeholders, thus expressing several points of view. This, in addition to an increased efficiency of the quality assurance system, will also generate greater credibility.</p> <p>Reflection in the quality assurance system of the opinions of different categories of stakeholders.</p> <p>Efficient implementation in practice of the procedures in the quality assurance system.</p>			
3.	<p>Creating a greater and more explicit level of transparency regarding the different objectives of involving different categories of stakeholders</p>	<p>The effectiveness of involving different categories of stakeholders will increase.</p> <p>Ways to address these different categories will be identified.</p> <p>Creating a community of stakeholders interested in the QA in HE.</p> <p>Ensuring an objective / fair and transparent external evaluation process.</p>	<p>Different categories of stakeholders involved in internal and external quality assurance activities carried out by the Agency.</p> <p>Specific objectives for stakeholder involvement at different levels, with different purposes and at different stages identified.</p> <p>Active involvement of all relevant stakeholders in external</p>	<p>Continuous actions throughout the quality assurance process. The time period may also depend on the objectives set, possibly for different categories of stakeholders.</p> <p>Change planning - 2 weeks (identification of specific activities for each category of stakeholders).</p> <p>Communicating the change to those affected by it - permanently.</p>	<p>Realistic picture of the Agency's mission and objectives in general.</p> <p>Increasing the Agency's authority and prestige at national and international level.</p> <p>The low level of interest in the development of the true culture of quality in education, among school graduates and students.</p> <p>Low level of promotion of the Agency among civil society and</p>	<p>Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE)/</p> <p>Public Relations and International Cooperation Office</p>



	<p>Creating / strengthening the partnership between the institutions and the Agency in order to achieve the common objectives. These objectives could be grouped according to the category of stakeholders.</p> <p>Specification of objectives for each category of stakeholders.</p> <p>Development of efficient collaboration relations in the environment of stakeholders (students / graduates- teachers / managers- representatives of the business environment - Agency).</p> <p>The need to raise the popularity level of the Agency among students, the civil community and business representatives in order to change the attitude towards the main objective of obtaining a higher education diploma.</p>	<p>evaluation activities.</p> <p>Perception of the Agency as a partner in quality promotion.</p> <p>Transparent unification of different points of view and conceptions in the field of quality assurance.</p> <p>Involvement of civil society and the economic community in the development of the internal and external quality assurance system in education.</p> <p>Active involvement of school graduates and students of higher education institutions in the internal quality assurance process, through the development of awareness and responsibility towards the level of competences and knowledge acquired within a study program.</p>	<p>Transition periods - permanently.</p>	<p>business environment.</p> <p>Low level of promotion of the Agency's activity by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research.</p>	
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4.	<p>Applying various methods of recruitment / selection of stakeholders</p>	<p>Better and various opportunities for stakeholder recruitment / selection will be offered / created for different categories of stakeholders, as well as for different QA activities.</p> <p>Offering everyone the opportunity to participate in recruitment / selection, to meet the requirements submitted by the Agency.</p> <p>The diversity of methods ensures the attraction of a larger number, but also the heterogeneity of stakeholders.</p> <p>Preventing the involvement in the open dialogue with stakeholders of people "interested in" the result of the external evaluation process.</p> <p>Involvement in the process of external evaluation of experts from different fields and organizational structures (students, representatives of academia and business).</p>	<p>Various categories of stakeholders delegated by representative organizations.</p> <p>Information meetings / seminars / webinars will be organized with these organizations to clarify the role and expectations of future representatives.</p> <p>Stakeholders involved in development processes (e.g. quality assurance procedures).</p> <p>Separate stakeholder groups created in the field of QA.</p> <p>Direct, personalized approach for each category of stakeholders established and applied (e.g. company onsite visit and direct discussions with business / employers).</p> <p>Participation in the recruitment of representatives from all categories of stakeholders.</p> <p>Motivation of stakeholders.</p> <p>Enriching the Register of Experts.</p> <p>Ensuring the involvement of independent persons in the open dialogue</p>	<p>Implementation can also be immediate by attracting and involving associations by categories of stakeholders involved.</p> <p>Change planning - 2 weeks (elaboration of various methods of recruitment / selection of stakeholders).</p> <p>Communication of the change to those affected by it - 2 weeks (announcement of stakeholders, webinars, round tables, etc.).</p> <p>Transition periods - permanently.</p>	<p>Increasing the attractiveness of the Agency for potential experts, including for some deficient areas (employers, students).</p> <p>Changing the way of financing the external evaluation process.</p> <p>Improving the external quality evaluation procedure by involving representatives of different categories of stakeholders in it.</p> <p>Register of ANACEC evaluation experts, completed with competent experts, well trained in the field of quality assurance, from different fields.</p>	<p>Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE)</p>
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		<p>Preventing the domination in the dialogue with the stakeholders of the representatives of the academic environment.</p> <p>Engaging graduates and business representatives in the open dialogue on clarifying the concepts of quality assurance.</p>	<p>with stakeholders.</p> <p>Ensuring a different approach to the concept of quality assurance in education.</p> <p>Presentation in the process of modification and external evaluation procedure of the position, expectations and attitudes of the representatives of the students, the business environment and the civil society.</p>			
5.	Organizing a transfer of knowledge with regard to higher education and (internal and external) quality assurance	<p>Stakeholder engagement in the governance and work of the quality assurance agency will increase.</p> <p>Strengthening knowledge about higher education and quality assurance.</p> <p>Developing knowledge about higher education and (internal and external) quality assurance among student representatives and employers, experts in the field.</p> <p>Training, development and improvement of knowledge and skills in expert</p>	<p>Seminars on various topics, practical sessions, online training, role-playing games, case studies, online sessions, knowledge transfer simulations organized for all categories of stakeholders involved at different levels of activity of the agency.</p> <p>Regular training policy and knowledge transfer developed.</p> <p>Training adapted to specific topics, adjusted to achieve certain goals.</p> <p>Providing feedback.</p> <p>Assessment of skills and competences</p>	<p>Short-term training.</p> <p>Organizing a 90-hour course.</p> <p>Thematic webinars.</p> <p>Change planning - 2 weeks (elaboration of methodological support for the effective organization of the training process of stakeholder representatives).</p> <p>Communication of the change to those affected by it - 3 weeks (announcement of stakeholders).</p> <p>Transition periods - permanently.</p>	<p>Large workload within the Agency and incomplete number of staff, which are negative factors in the process of organizing and conducting training activities for parties involved in quality assurance activities.</p>	<p>Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE)</p>



		<p>evaluators necessary for the efficient conduct of the external evaluation process.</p> <p>The need to transmit knowledge in the field of internal and external quality assurance in higher education to all categories of stakeholders involved in the external evaluation process.</p>	<p>acquired, including digital.</p> <p>Active involvement of all relevant stakeholders in external evaluation activities.</p> <p>Opportunity to register in the Register of evaluators.</p> <p>Completion of the ANACEC Register of evaluators with competent and competitive evaluators.</p>			
6.	<p>Equal treatment of the views of all members of the evaluation panel both in the external evaluation process and in decision-making, regardless of the different roles and tasks of the stakeholders involved</p>	<p>The added value for the external evaluation process, but also for the evaluated study program will be realized.</p> <p>Ensuring an objective / fair and transparent external evaluation process.</p> <p>Ensuring decision-making by consensus.</p> <p>Ensuring the correct and objective realization of the external evaluation process.</p> <p>Avoid promoting the interests of stakeholders.</p> <p>Ensuring the transparency, objectivity and</p>	<p>The members of the external evaluation panels are equally involved (e.g. workload, responsibilities, etc.) and have equal rights in the external evaluation and decision-making process.</p> <p>Active participation of all stakeholders in the decision-making process, which develops the feeling of belonging to the group.</p> <p>Qualitative realization of the external evaluation process.</p> <p>Increasing the individual responsibility of the expert evaluator.</p> <p>Minimizing the chances of</p>	<p>Permanently in the external evaluation process.</p> <p>For the implementation of this provision it is not necessary to provide a certain time interval, given the fact that this is already a started process.</p> <p>However, it is possible that it will take time for each of those involved to become aware of the reality of this provision.</p> <p>Planning for change, communicating change to those affected by it, transition periods - permanently.</p>	<p>Favorable impact on the general climate, the atmosphere of mutual trust and active participation in the initiated processes.</p> <p>Adequate decrease in the level of responsibility of the evaluation coordinator.</p> <p>Different levels of training of evaluators in the field of education and quality assurance (student and employer representatives are less trained than teachers' representatives).</p>	<p>Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE)/ Governing Board and Profile Committee in Higher Education of ANACEC</p>



	<p>correctness of decisions taken as a result of external evaluation.</p> <p>Increasing the role of student representatives (members of the External Evaluation Panel and interviewed students) in the external evaluation process.</p>	<p>making wrong decisions as a result of the external evaluation procedure, by increasing the individual responsibility of each individual expert.</p> <p>Increasing the quality of the form and content of the Visit Record Sheets and External Evaluation Reports prepared by the members of the External Evaluation Panel.</p> <p>Active and productive involvement of all members of the External Evaluation Panel in the activities organized during the external evaluation visit (interviews, expertise of educational and research spaces, technical-material basis, etc.).</p>			
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7.	<p>Identification and involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the Agency's internal and external quality assurance activities</p>	<p>Stakeholders will be actively involved in the internal and external quality assurance, as well as the continuous improvement of the quality of the Agency's activities.</p> <p>Ensuring the continued participation of relevant stakeholders in the Agency's internal and external quality assurance activities.</p> <p>Ensuring the continuity between the internal and external evaluation processes, respectively the participation of the stakeholders during the entire quality assurance process.</p> <p>Influence on national education policies and strategies through the evaluation of study programs by representatives of different categories of stakeholders.</p> <p>Possibility of involving stakeholders in the elaboration of thematic studies on general fields of</p>	<p>Regular meetings with representatives of all stakeholders.</p> <p>Community of stakeholders in the field of QA created.</p> <p>Support service / "Green Line" on questions regarding quality in education and related activities - online service created.</p> <p>Different categories of stakeholders invited and involved (as participants and authors) in thematic analyzes on various topics.</p> <p>Active involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the Agency's internal and external quality assurance activities.</p> <p>Specifying and engaging in quality assurance of stakeholders depending on the field considered. In this way, the relevance of the involvement of certain categories of stakeholders will be highlighted.</p> <p>Increasing the trust of the representatives of all categories of stakeholders in the quality of the educational services provided within a study</p>	<p>Permanently in the process of external evaluation.</p> <p>Webinars before each submission period of external evaluation dossiers.</p> <p>Planning for change, communicating change to those affected by it, transition periods - permanently.</p>	<p>The image of ANACEC.</p> <p>Results of external evaluations.</p> <p>Competitiveness of the Agency in the field of external evaluation services.</p> <p>The average level of popularity of the Agency among the representatives of students, business and civil society.</p>	<p>Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE)/</p> <p>Public Relations and International Cooperation Office</p>
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		<p>study in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of study programs in different fields.</p> <p>Organizing the structures, policy and internal quality assurance system within the higher education institutions in accordance with the requirements established by ANACEC.</p> <p>Modification / improvement of the external evaluation procedure and the activity of ANACEC depending on the requests received from different categories of stakeholders.</p>	<p>program / educational institutions.</p> <p>Ensuring the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the Agency's activity in the field of quality assurance.</p> <p>The essential improvement of the normative-legislative basis in the field of national education and in the field of quality assurance in education.</p> <p>The normative-legislative basis in the field of quality assurance improved and adapted to the needs of the labor market and civil society.</p>			
8.	<p>Increasing the independence of the quality assurance system, governance and the Agency's activities by involving stakeholders</p>	<p>Involving stakeholders in the agency's governance and internal and external quality assurance activities will enhance its organizational, operational and decision-making independence.</p> <p>A higher degree of independence would facilitate the updating of the regulatory framework depending on</p>	<p>Stakeholders act within the limits of their personal capacity when they are formally and structurally involved in decision-making and other QA activities of the Agency.</p> <p>International actors involved (temporarily) at consultative level.</p> <p>Representation of all categories of stakeholders in the external evaluation panels, as well as in the decision-making bodies,</p>	<p>It is an extended activity for a longer period of time, due to the specificity of the Agency's statute.</p> <p>Planning for change, communicating change to those affected by it, transition periods - permanently.</p> <p>The implementation of this process has already been started by ANACEC, by attracting experts (ARACIS, FINEEC, EKKA)</p>	<p>Reducing dependence on some political-based decisions.</p> <p>Increasing the financial and organizational independence of the Agency from MECR, Government of the Republic of Moldova.</p> <p>Availability and attractiveness of participation, for external experts, in ANACEC evaluation missions. These are determined by the normative</p>	<p>MECR / Management of the Agency / Governing Board and Profile Committee in Higher Education of ANACEC / Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE)</p>



	<p>changes in the field.</p> <p>Increasing the independence of the Agency from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR), Government of the Republic of Moldova.</p> <p>Possibility to develop the External Evaluation Methodology independently from the national political aspects in the field of education.</p> <p>Transfer and capitalization of good practices within the European Agencies</p>	<p>governance and advisory boards of the Agency is ensured.</p> <p>Fluidization of the activity and decisions taken at the level of the Agency, faster implementation of any stipulations in the normative-regulatory acts with reference to the field.</p> <p>Elaboration of methodological acts resulting from the experience gained by different categories of stakeholders in the external evaluation process.</p> <p>Stakeholders actively involved in the process of elaboration and approval of the normative basis in the field of quality assurance.</p> <p>De facto and de jure independence of the Agency recognized by the Government and stakeholders.</p> <p>Involvement in the process of external evaluation of expert-evaluators from Agencies abroad of the Republic of Moldova (European).</p> <p>Carrying out training on the particularities of the evaluation</p>	<p>and their active participation as members of the external evaluation panels.</p>	<p>framework of the Republic of Moldova that they need to know.</p>	
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			process in the Republic of Moldova (for experts from abroad)			
9.	Ensuring communication and a high level of transparency with all categories of stakeholders	<p>Communication with and transparency towards all stakeholders will create a positive impact on their involvement, increase mutual trust and understanding, and create a model of effective stakeholder involvement.</p> <p>An efficient quality assurance system.</p> <p>The communication would make it possible to streamline feedback following both the evaluation missions and the Agency's other areas of activity.</p> <p>Such effects are felt, in particular, in the case of two-way communication.</p> <p>Informing all categories of stakeholders about the concept and quality</p>	<p>Communication with and transparency towards all stakeholders included as specific areas in the agency's internal quality assurance.</p> <p>Clear and accessible language not only in relation to those in the field of QA, but also to non-specialists used.</p> <p>Communication channels adjusted to the particularities of different categories of stakeholders.</p> <p>Experience and expectations of stakeholders towards the activities of the Agency communicated and shared by them, for example, through newsletters.</p> <p>Feedback on the effects of stakeholder involvement provided.</p> <p>Meetings, at least annually, with local and national authorities (including</p>	<p>Permanently in the process of external evaluation.</p> <p>Given the fact that such a communication is already initiated, we consider that the time to ensure transparency is minimal. What would, however, take some time, is the degree of transparency, the level of which in some cases is more difficult to ensure by virtue of the existence of a certain resistance to change (sometimes determined by low confidence).</p>	<p>Transparent communication will create conditions for more intense collaboration with educational institutions.</p> <p>Increasing the level of importance of the Public Relations and International Cooperation Office.</p> <p>Dominance of official classical methods of informing participants and society about the conduct and outcome of the external evaluation process (Agency website, Facebook page) and lack of interactive methods of informing stakeholders (school graduates, students, business representatives are often not interested in Agency's activity)</p>	Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE) / Public Relations and International Cooperation Office



	<p>assurance system.</p> <p>Increasing the level of involvement of stakeholder representatives in the process of drafting acts in the field of ensuring accountability.</p> <p>Publication of External Evaluation Reports of study programs on the Agency's website for the purpose of transparent information to all stakeholders (primarily students and employers).</p> <p>Open and truthful information of the society, in the broad sense of the word regarding the quality of the educational services provided within the framework of a study program / educational institution.</p>	<p>parliamentarians, other political representatives) are organized.</p> <p>Common language on quality issues and quality assurance in education (without the use of jargon or technical language).</p> <p>Activities and environments for disseminating the processes and results of external evaluation activities, summaries, annual reports, thematic studies organized.</p> <p>Trust, support and involvement from all categories of stakeholders.</p> <p>It will ensure transparency throughout the process, so that any gaps can be identified in a timely manner.</p> <p>The normative framework in the field of quality assurance in education, thematic studies on fields is elaborated with the active participation of the representatives of the stakeholders. Stakeholders (students, graduates, teachers / managers, representatives of the business environment)</p>			
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			<p>who have been involved in the process of developing the regulatory framework in the field of quality assurance are able to apply in practice the external evaluation procedure correctly and effectively.</p> <p>All categories of stakeholders receive up-to-date truthful information, through classical sources of information on the result of the external evaluation of study programs / educational institutions.</p> <p>Diversification of methods and means of transmitting information on the Agency's activity (creation of the Youtube channel, Instagram page, participation of Agency representatives in radio and TV shows, etc.)</p>			
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10.	Integrating the effective involvement of stakeholders in the Agency's strategic policy, and other policies related to internal quality assurance	<p>This will bring a qualitative impact on mutual trust, increase legitimacy and competence of the Agency in terms of internal and external quality assurance.</p> <p>Demonstrating appropriate confidence that an entity meets the quality requirements.</p> <p>Stakeholder participation in the development and promotion of the Agency's strategic objectives.</p> <p>Developing and implementing the stakeholder involvement strategy related to the Agency's strategy and national policies in education.</p> <p>Accurate identification of the role of stakeholder representatives in the process of developing quality assurance policies.</p> <p>Respectful attitude and understanding of the importance of each category of stakeholders in the development of quality assurance and</p>	<p>The strategy on stakeholder involvement developed and implemented, with a clear specification of the role and expectations of each category of stakeholders in the development of a qualitative QA system in HE.</p> <p>Stakeholder representatives invited as participants, speakers at knowledge transfer events (e.g. seminars, webinars, conferences, forums, etc.), but also informal events (e.g. team building) organized by the agency.</p> <p>Ensuring the premises for the alignment of education in the Republic of Moldova to the rigors of European education. This ensures similarity between specialists trained in the country and those trained beyond its borders.</p> <p>Developing cooperation relations in the field of quality assurance between different categories of stakeholders (students-teachers / managers-employers) and</p>	<p>It is a process that is in its early stage and needs support, including by adjusting the legal framework. For this reason, it is probably a topic for the future.</p> <p>Change planning - 4 weeks (elaboration and implementation of the stakeholder involvement strategy), communication of the change of those affected by it - 2 weeks (announcement of stakeholders, organization of webinars, round tables, etc.).</p> <p>Transition periods - permanently.</p>	<p>The benefits are determined by the creation of a "body spirit" in which the Agency and the stakeholders involved form a whole.</p> <p>Correction of the Agency's strategies and objectives.</p> <p>The high level of influence of the political system and situation in the country on the content and objectives of normative acts both in the field of education and in the field of quality assurance in education (extremely frequent change in the composition of the Government, including the Minister of Education, Culture and Research which leads to the permanent change of the ministry's strategies and priorities).</p>	<p>Management of the Agency /</p> <p>Governing Board and Profile Committee in Higher Education of ANACEC /</p> <p>Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE)</p>
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	<p>higher education.</p> <p>The reflection in the political strategy of ANACEC and in the normative acts in the field of quality assurance in education of the position of different categories of stakeholders.</p> <p>Development and coordination by the Agency of basic acts in the field of quality assurance.</p>	<p>understanding the purpose of external evaluation objectively.</p> <p>Involvement of stakeholders in the development of the agency's strategic policies and stakeholder communication networks.</p> <p>Organizing seminars, conferences, webinars, etc. in order to provide support to educational institutions in organizing the internal quality management system and the elaboration of internal documents in the respective field.</p>			
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**The 10 themes proposed in the Guideline on the involvement of stakeholders' in quality assurance activities:*

Theme 1: Sharing underlying concepts of quality in HE and QA systems

Theme 2: Diversity of categories of stakeholders and their different roles, especially in consultations

Theme 3: Objectives of stakeholders' involvement

Theme 4: Recruitment/Selection of stakeholders

Theme 5: Training of stakeholders

Theme 6: Involvement of stakeholders in reviews

Theme 7: Involvement of stakeholders in the governance and organisation of QA agencies

Theme 8: Independence vis-a-vis stakeholders' involvement

Theme 9: Communication and transparency towards stakeholders

Theme 10: Strategic approach to stakeholder engagement and supporting activities

** Students and student associations, teaching staff and other categories of staff from higher education institutions, employers and employers' associations, graduates, the national authority in the field of higher education, the rector's council, university associations, local authorities, civil society, etc.



2. Action plan for the effective involvement of the stakeholders in the quality assurance activities carried out by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research

The action plan for the effective involvement of the stakeholders in the quality assurance activities carried out by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (hereinafter - ANACEC) within the project “Effective Involvement of Stakeholders in External Quality Assurance Activities (ESQA)”, based on the „Analysis on the needs for change at the level of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research”.

A working group of representatives of the following stakeholders has been set up to develop this action plan:

2.1. Representatives of ANACEC:

- ✓ Andrei Chiciuc, President
- ✓ Elena Petrov, Vice President
- ✓ Sergiu Baciuc, Secretary General
- ✓ Alexandr Cauia, member of the Governing Board
- ✓ Liliana Postan, member of the Governing Board
- ✓ Stela Guvir, Head of the Public Relations and International Cooperation Office
- ✓ Felicia Banu, Head of the Department of Evaluation in Higher Education
- ✓ Natalia Danila, Main Specialist, Department of Evaluation in Higher Education

2.2. Representatives of the profile committee in higher education:

- ✓ Petru Todos, PhD, university professor, Chairman of the Profile Committee
- ✓ Angela Solcan, PhD, assoc.prof., member

2.3. Representatives of academia:

- ✓ Irina Tutunaru, Technical University of Moldova (Deputy Head of the Academic Management and Quality Assurance Department)

2.4. Student representatives:

- ✓ Irina Cojocar, PhD student, Moldova State University

Methodology. The team members were involved both in the elaboration and in the consultation (two online sessions) of this action plan, between May 1 and June 21, 2021.

Main results. During the discussions held, it was decided that the action plan follows the logics and the topics covered in the analysis on the needs for change that were inspired from the Guideline on the involvement of stakeholders’ in quality assurance activities. Since the involvement of stakeholders in the quality assurance activities of the Agency is not a one or two times activity, but actually represents a continuous process at all levels of activities carried out, the timeline specified in the action plan is mostly focused on permanent involvement, with

some actions, like their involvement in the (re)design of the QA system or their recruitment / selection methods, to be performed upon necessity.

Conclusion. The members of the working group agreed that the involvement of different categories of stakeholders is of great importance for the Agency's quality assurance activities (e.g. external evaluations, drafting of methodologies, guidelines and procedures, decision-making, dissemination etc.) so that they become meaningful and lead to the continuous improvement and enhancement of both internal and external quality assurance, creating the premises for the instilment of a quality culture in education in our country.

The action plan for the effective involvement of the stakeholders in the quality assurance activities carried out by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research, that was developed based on the Analysis on the needs for change at the level of the National.

Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research, is published for public consultation on the website of the Agency - <https://www.anacec.md/en/projects>.

No.	Proposed action	Timeline	Responsible for the activity
1.	Organizing open dialogue with stakeholders to clarify the concepts of quality assurance	Yearly (2-3 information sessions per year)	Management of ANACEC, Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE)
2.	Systematic involvement of stakeholders in (re) designing the quality assurance system	Upon necessity	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR), Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE), Profile committee
3.	Creating a greater and more explicit level of transparency regarding the different objectives of involving different categories of stakeholders	Permanently	Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE), Public Relations and International Cooperation Office
4.	Applying various methods of recruitment / selection of stakeholders	Upon necessity	Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE)
5.	Organizing a transfer of knowledge with regard to higher education and (internal and external) quality assurance	Yearly (2-3 sessions per year)	Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE)
6.	Equal treatment of the views of all members of the evaluation panel both in the external evaluation process and in decision-making, regardless of the different roles and tasks of the stakeholders involved	Permanently (in the external evaluation process)	Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE), Governing Board, Profile Committee
7.	Identification and involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the Agency's internal and external quality assurance activities	Permanently (in the external evaluation process)	Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE), Public Relations and International Cooperation Office
8.	Increasing the independence of the quality assurance system, governance and the Agency's activities by involving stakeholders	2023	MECR, Agency's Management, Governing Board, Profile Committee, Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE)



9.	Ensuring communication and a high level of transparency with all categories of stakeholders	Permanently	Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE), Public Relations and International Cooperation Office
10.	Integrating the effective involvement of stakeholders in the Agency's strategic policy, and other policies related to internal quality assurance	Permanently	Management of the Agency, Governing Board, Profile Committee, Department of Evaluation in Higher Education (DEHE)

Andrei CHICIUC,
President of ANACEC

ARACIS - Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

1. Introduction

The present document is elaborated within The Effective Involvement of Stakeholders in External Quality Assurance Activities (ESQA) project (607068-EPP-1-2018-1-RO-EPPKA3-BOLOGNA), co-financed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, within the ERASMUS+ Programme. The project runs for a period of 2 years and is coordinated by the Romanian Ministry of Education, in partnership with the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education ARACIS, as well as with European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), European Students' Union (ESU), the High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher education (HCERES) - France, National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) - Bulgaria, The Danish Accreditation Institution (DAI), National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC) - Republic of Moldova

The **Action plan** is based on **Analysis of the needs for change at ARACIS** – identified following the structure of the *Guide for effective involvement of stakeholders in external quality assurance* providing guidelines and practice-based guidance, primarily to the QA agencies and national authorities in the EHEA, to strengthen dialogue and co-operation with stakeholders, as well as for their effective involvement in QA processes. The **Analysis of the needs for change at ARACIS** was discussed in the session of the ARACIS Council on 27.05.2021. The Council approved also the structure of the online Questionnaire to be sent to the different categories of stakeholders aiming to learn their opinions on the proposals of needs of change. The results of this consultation indicate, with few exceptions, a wide agreement with the proposals in the *Analysis* and therefore supported the drafting of the *Action plan* based on the analysis. The answers to the Questionnaire include also inputs/proposals from the consultation, taken into consideration in the Action plan.

The **Action plan** was elaborated by ARACIS members in ESQA team.

2. Action plan based on analysis of needs of change and public consultation of stakeholders

Theme		Action required	Key persons involved	Proposed timelines
Theme 1: Sharing underlying concepts of quality in HE and QA systems	The underlying concepts of quality and quality assurance system, as embedded in the higher education system, should be shared and co-created by involving relevant stakeholders. This way a commitment is built which is embedded in a quality culture that is based on trust and mutual understanding. Relevant stakeholder categories are all those that reflect the opinions present in the wider society linked to the quality of higher education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Enhance public communication related to QA and ARACIS role <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Periodical press releases - Presence in social media (FB) - Organize workshops with the participation of different categories of SH. ✓ Permanent dialogue to be organised with the Consultative Commission. ✓ Organise periodic consultations with a broader range of stakeholders to learn about their expectations and opinions, raise their interest in higher education and quality assurance, explain the main concepts related to quality assurance in higher education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ARACIS to select and hire additional permanent staff at <i>Direction of international relations, projects, cooperation and research</i> (DRIPCC), with competence in communication and interaction with mass media ✓ Direction of QA of ARACIS, speciality inspectors; Consultative Commission ✓ DRIPCC, with participation of Department of Quality external evaluation and Department of Accreditation, Permanent speciality commissions, Employers' register, students, other representatives of employers and teacher unions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ September 2021 ✓ Permanent, at least twice a year ✓ Twice a year: November and April (face-to-face events or online meetings/workshops)
Theme 2: Diversity of categories of stakeholders and their different roles, especially in consultations	All identified and relevant stakeholders that have an interest in the quality of higher education should be systematically involved,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Establish a framework for the continuous consultation with the main categories of stakeholders, through meetings or working groups/committees, that would allow co- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ See Theme 1, in conjunction with Theme 6, related to results obtained in implementing measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ October 2021



Theme		Action required	Key persons involved	Proposed timelines
	especially when (re)designing a QA system. This may lead to more openness, transparency, and effective stakeholder involvement based on co-ownership.	<p>creation of QA procedures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Setting a working group, with the participation of the National Authority for Qualifications (ANC) and the Ministry of Education, related to the development of a methodology for learning outcomes. ✓ Core curriculum for higher education institutions (HEI). 	<p>following from Theme 1, in conjunction with Theme 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The executive Board shall nominate a Working Group (1) ✓ ARACIS to select and hire additional permanent staff at DRIPCC – research office, to study and develop a curriculum for the use HEIs to support IQA and engagement of stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ September 2021 ✓ September 2021; <p>Development of first draft of curriculum by the end of 2021</p>
Theme 3: Objectives of stakeholders' involvement	Be transparent and explicit in collectively sharing the different objectives of the involvement of stakeholder categories in order to raise the effectiveness of their involvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Draw a list of the agency objectives for engaging different categories of stakeholders in evaluation activities and within the governing bodies of the agency. ✓ Prepare stakeholder category - tailored presentations of the objectives, in view of approaching the diverse categories in clear and attractive manner, with reference to their role and involvement in external QA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Working group (2) nominated by the Executive Board; Permanent specialty commissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ December 2021 first drafts – permanent activity



Theme		Action required	Key persons involved	Proposed timelines
	As stakeholders are not a single, homogenous group, dealing with them requires a diversified approach; this may imply that their involvement is 'unequal' and happens at different stages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Develop and run a survey to investigate the expectations of different categories of stakeholders in what it concerns their role in QA procedures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Executive Board and DRIPCC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ July 2021 (results available)
Theme 4: Recruitment/ Selection of stakeholders	<p>The selection methods should be clear, publicly known and used consistently by the agency and all stakeholders, including the national authorities.</p> <p>The recruitment methods may vary among the stakeholder groups. While nomination by the stakeholder's organization is a sign of greater trust and independence, selection by the agency based on clear criteria can help find a better candidate as far as vision,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Revision of the selection criteria through consultation with the respective categories of SH. A selection criterion should be related to the person's individual commitment. ✓ Preparatory meetings should best be held with the nominating stakeholder organizations to clarify roles and expectations of the future representatives. Stakeholder category - tailored presentations (as per Theme 3) should be used as starting points of the discussions. Explaining their role and defining together their type(s) of involvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ See Theme 3 - Working group (2) nominated by the Executive Board; Permanent specialty commissions ✓ Executive Board and DRIPCC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Spring 2022



Theme		Action required	Key persons involved	Proposed timelines
	<p>knowledge, experience and commitment are concerned. A combination of both has better chances of selecting more engaged stakeholders. Preparatory meetings should best be held with the nominating stakeholder organizations in order to clarify roles and expectations of the future representatives.</p>			
Theme 5: Training of stakeholders	<p>Well-prepared knowledge transfer about higher education and quality assurance should be organised in order to raise the commitment of stakeholders in the governance and work of the QA agency. Trainings for review panel members should be obligatory for admission to pools of new</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The content and format of training should be further revised, in order to allow more interactivity and hands-on sessions. ✓ Common training sessions, involving all kinds of stakeholders and the experts' evaluators should be organized, in order to enhance the cohesion of evaluation panels, and the understanding of each other's role. ✓ A core curriculum for training should be developed, eventually recognised as a postgraduate course, so that certificates could be issued. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Working group (2) nominated by the Executive Board; Permanent specialty commissions ✓ ARACIS shall organize training sessions, including new categories of stakeholders, identified as per Themes 2,3,4 ✓ See Theme 2 - ARACIS to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Spring 2022



Theme		Action required	Key persons involved	Proposed timelines
	experts as well as before actual evaluations. The trainings should be informative and develop the trainees' review skills in practice. Briefings must be held before any review.		select and hire additional permanent staff at DRIPCC – research office, to study and develop a curriculum for the use HEIs to support IQA and engagement of stakeholders	
Theme 6: Involvement of stakeholders in reviews	Review panels should contain all perspectives of the institution, programme and/or topics under review. If the subjects are the QA processes and the output of a HEI or study programme, the perspectives are those of learners (students), teachers (academic peers/experts), the leadership of the institution (senior leaders or managers), the professional field and of the future lives of the graduates (employers and/or alumni). The opinions of all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The agency should pay more attention in the evaluation process to the involvement of stakeholders in the internal quality assurance procedures in HEIs. ✓ The possibility to extend involvement of employers in evaluation panels should be investigated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Related to results obtained in implementing measures following from Themes 2,3,4. Diversify the categories of stakeholders involved in evaluations. New Methodology in preparation/under approval at MoE; ARACIS Council to organise a support group for stakeholders to set guidelines in external evaluation according to Theme 2, with participation of Direction of QA of ARACIS, speciality inspectors; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ December 2021; Permanent



Theme		Action required	Key persons involved	Proposed timelines
	<p>review panel members should receive equal attention during the review and decision processes, irrespective of their different roles and duties.</p> <p>The international perspective is important in a review panel in the context of global higher education and certainly when the HEI or study programme has a specific international strategy and/or dimension.</p>			
Theme 7: Involvement of stakeholders in the governance and organisation of QA agencies	<p>The categories of the stakeholders and their degree of engagement are related to the mission and strategy of a QA agency as well as to the national QA system. Consequently, all relevant and identified stakeholders should be involved in internal and external QA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The presence of employers' representatives should be extended to all Commissions of permanent experts ✓ Elaborate thematic analysis on subjects of interest for different categories of stakeholders (e.g. student centred learning). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Department of Quality external evaluation and Department of Accreditation of ARACIS ✓ ARACIS Council to decide on subject of Thematic Analyses. ✓ ARACIS to select and hire additional permanent staff at DRIPCC – research office, to collect and process data for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Permanent ✓ First TA in spring 2022



Theme		Action required	Key persons involved	Proposed timelines
	activities of the agency.		Thematic analyses.	
Theme 8: Independence vis-à-vis stakeholders' involvement	The involvement of stakeholders should be organized in such a way that the independence of the QA system, the governance and activities of the agency are enhanced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Setting an advisory council involving different stakeholders' representatives should be investigated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ARACIS Executive Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ December 2021
Theme 9: Communication and transparency towards stakeholders	Communication and transparency with all stakeholders should be considered as essential and strategic building blocks of quality assurance that functions as an effective stakeholders' model, in which there is a culture of co-creating and sharing of knowledge and practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Developing a communication strategy with stakeholders, to address the different categories, aiming to create a community of stakeholders interested in QA in HE, as well as to make largely known ARACIS current activities. ✓ Intensify public communication related to ARACIS activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ See Theme 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ DRIPC - permanent
Theme 10: Strategic approach to stakeholder engagement and supporting activities	Stakeholder involvement which is aimed at having a qualitative impact should be integrated in the agency's strategic policy, and should also be linked to other policies,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Inclusion in the future Strategic plan of the agency the enhanced engagement of stakeholders. ✓ Strengthen the stakeholders' involvement dedicated office. ✓ Organising yearly conferences, that can be subject specific, with the participation of experts and different 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ARACIS Council; ✓ DRIPCC; ✓ ARACIS to select and hire additional permanent staff – Compartment of relations with socio-economic environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ December 2021



Theme		Action required	Key persons involved	Proposed timelines
	such as structural development, networking, communication and the agency's own internal quality assurance.	<p>stakeholders, to discuss and analyse data, as well as to propose directions for quality improvement in the field.</p> <p>✓ For each study domain, organise a yearly conference/workshop, where representatives of the permanent specialty commissions, academics and evaluators from the domain present syntheses/statistics/analyses regarding evaluation processes in the current year, make proposals for enhancing the educational process, consider feed-back from the representatives of universities.</p>	<p>✓ Department of Quality external evaluation and Department of Accreditation of ARACIS; Direction of QA; DRIPC; Permanent Specialty Commissions</p>	

3. Results of the consultations in the ESQA project regarding the Analysis of the needs for change at ARACIS

We present the results of the analysis of the responses received with the **SURVEY ON THE ACTIONS FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS IN EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ACTIVITIES**.

The survey was aimed for stakeholders in the higher education and quality assurance area, such as representatives of students and teachers, employers, public institutions, civil society, mass media. The purpose of the survey was to find out the views of the stakeholders, in order to identify new lines of action that ARACIS can pursue to increase stakeholder involvement in its activities.

Stakeholders were invited to review the analysis and action proposals, available at <https://www.aracis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ARACIS-Analiza-nevoilor-de-schimbare-Proiect-ESQA-mai-2021.pdf>, as well as the [Guide for effective stakeholders' involvement in quality assurance activities](#).

The presentation of results in section B follows the order and the notations used in the survey.

A. Statistical data on the number of responses

Total number of persons who accessed the survey: **103**

Total number of responses received from the representatives of the 52 institutions, from the categories mentioned below: **97** (some institutions provided more responses from teaching staff and/or university administrators). Students are presented separately. The number of responses received for some of the questions was smaller.

Percentage of responses out of the total number of persons who accessed the survey: **94.17%**

Number of persons who responded and agree to their personal data being processed: **90**, meaning **92.78%**

A1. Total number of contacted institutions that responded: 52, out of which

- ✓ Universities: **32**, out of which **20** public and **12** private (61.5%)
- ✓ Research institutes: **3** (5.8%)
- ✓ Employers: **14**, out of which **2** representatives of media institutions (26.9%)
- ✓ Other institutions: **3** (5.8%)

A2. Number of students/student associations that responded: 24 (24.7% out of the total number of respondents (97))

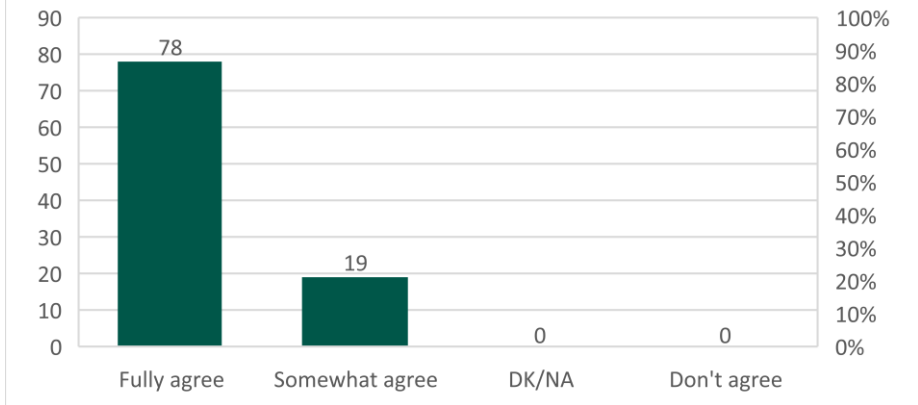
B. Statistical data on the nature of responses (total validated responses: 97)

I. Sharing underlying concepts of quality in higher education and quality assurance systems

I.1 Enhance public communication related to QA and ARACIS role (Periodical press releases, presence in social media, organise workshops with the participation of different categories of stakeholders).

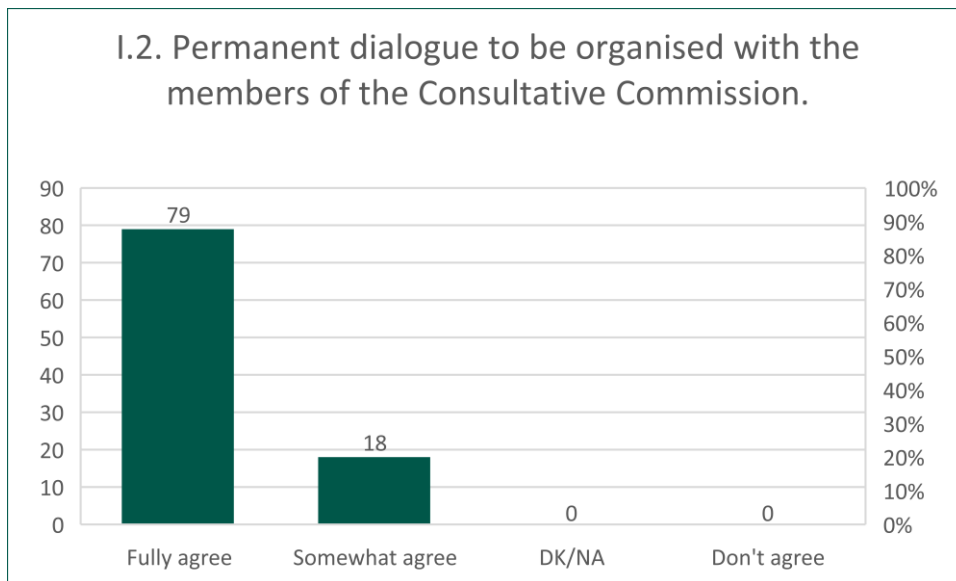
Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
78 (80.40%)	19 (19.60%)	-	-

I.1 Enhance public communication related to QA and ARACIS role (Periodical press releases, presence in social media, organise workshops with the participation of different categories of stakeholders.



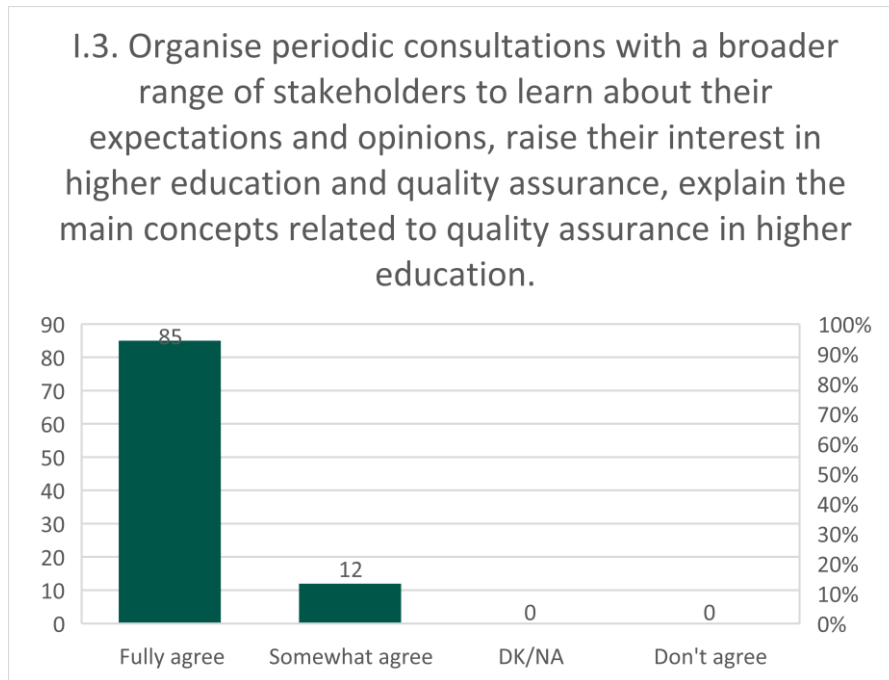
I.2. Permanent dialogue to be organised with the members of the Consultative Commission.

Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
79 (81.40%)	18 (18.60%)	-	-



I.3. Organise periodic consultations with a broader range of stakeholders to learn about their expectations and opinions, raise their interest in higher education and quality assurance, explain the main concepts related to quality assurance in higher education.

Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
85 (87.60%)	12 (12.40%)	-	-



PROPOSALS

I. Sharing underlying concepts of quality in higher education and quality assurance systems		
Category	Proposal	Remarks
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	Delineate research activities and educational activities	
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	Consult the religious denominations that organised confessional higher education institutions	*) <i>Proposals from several people from the same confessional higher education institutions, from which proposals were received for all the questions.</i>
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	Each university is a distinct entity. It is important to take into account the specificity, the mission, and the objectives of each university - especially the dogmatic and canonical specificity of confessional universities	

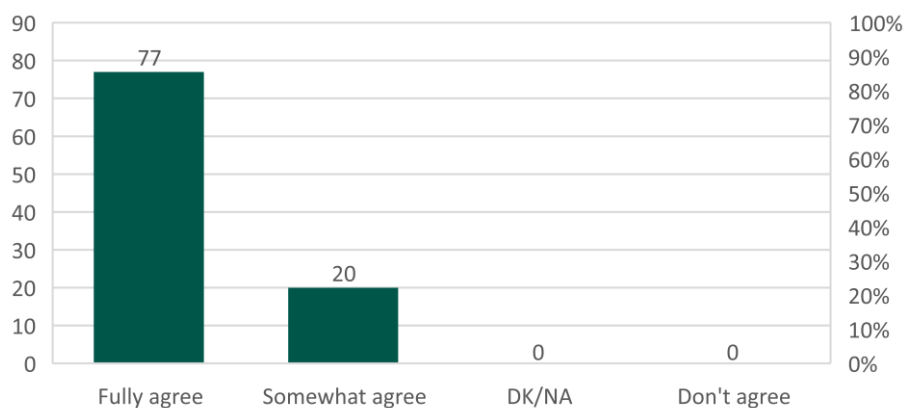
Student	I agree with any meetings where issues are discussed and debated, new ideas are shared for the improvement of higher education in Romania	
Employer	A more active presence of ARACIS in the public space by participating in interviews, debates in the mass media (more than press releases, which nobody believes)	
Employer	Include representatives of the Employers, as stakeholders, in the membership of the Consultative Commissions (the representatives to be appointed by the employers based on specific professional criteria), to communicate the needs related to educating and training students for the purpose of reaching the objective “current students, future employees, with specific skills, built for a specific Employer, based on a list of demands, defined through the portfolio of actions, in correlation with the institutional development policy and strategy”	
Employer	A greater opening towards employers would essentially contribute to a more accurate evaluation of universities in Romania	

II. Diversity of categories of stakeholders and their different roles, especially in consultations.

II.1. Establish a framework for the continuous consultation with the main categories of stakeholders, through meetings or working groups / committees that would allow co-creation of QA procedures.

Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
77 (79.40%)	20 (20.6%)	-	-

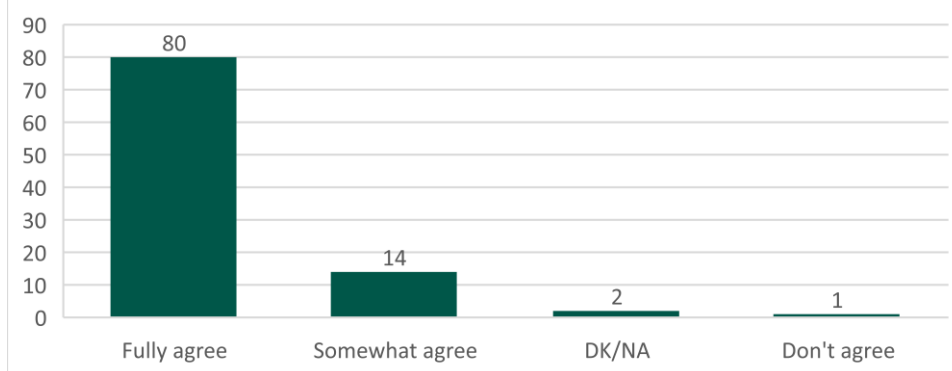
II.1. Establish a framework for the continuous consultation with the main categories of stakeholders, through meetings or working groups / committees that would allow co-creation of QA procedures.



II.2. Set a working group, with the participation of the National Authority for Qualifications (ANC) and the Ministry of Education, related to the development of a methodology for learning outcomes.

Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
80 (82.5%)	14 (14.4%)	2 (2.1%)	1 (1%)

II.2. Set a working group with the participation of the National Authority for Qualifications (ANC) and the Ministry of Education, related to the development of a methodology for learning outcomes.



PROPOSALS

II. Diversity of categories of stakeholders and their different roles, especially in consultations.		
Category	Proposal	Remarks
Permanent expert, employers' representative, in commission C10	Maintain a continuous dialogue with the business environment	
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	Observe the confessional, dogmatic and canonical specificity within universities, pursuant to the concept of university autonomy and the provisions of the National Education Law no. 1/2011, as subsequently amended and supplemented	<i>*) Proposals from several people from the same confessional higher education institutions, from which proposals were received for all the questions.</i>
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	The quality assurance agency should use public forms in the evaluation activities, available for all evaluated institutions	<i>These forms are in place and they are public</i>
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	Correlate the ANC database, in terms of the validation and registration of the qualifications in the RNCIS, with the ARACIS database, starting from the structure of the higher education institutions, approved by Government Decisions or by Ministerial Orders	
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	My proposal is to avoid excessive bureaucratisation by creating a large number of commissions that will propose a multitude of surveys and consultations, which can take an excessive amount of the time allocated for study and for an efficient interaction with the students. I am of the opinion that graduates and employers have a key role in these consultations	
Employer	The working group should include universities too, but especially private universities. If we want to have results after graduation, the future of education is the private sector. There is such a big discrepancy between what we want and where we are, because pupils/students are enrolled in a public system for 15-17 years, and then they go to work in the private sector. When we hire them, we realise that	<i>Mass media employer specialising in information related to the confessional education</i>

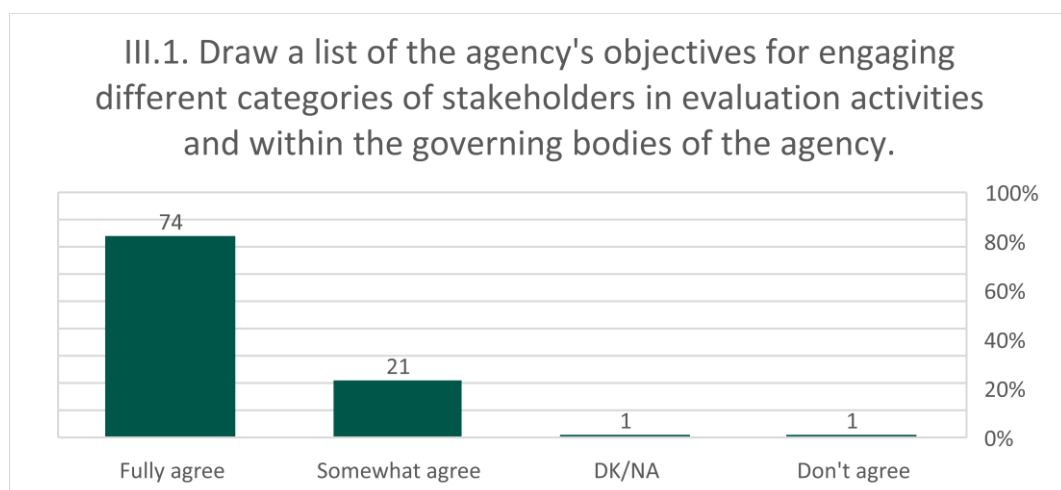


	they are disconnected from reality. We have much, much better experiences with graduates coming from private universities	
Employer	Create an extended Working Group to include representatives of the Employers, especially from among Employers who developed cooperation/collaboration relationships based on partnerships and who can hire/have hired graduates	

III. Objectives of stakeholders' involvement

III.1. Draw a list of the agency's objectives for engaging different categories of stakeholders in evaluation activities and within the governing bodies of the agency.

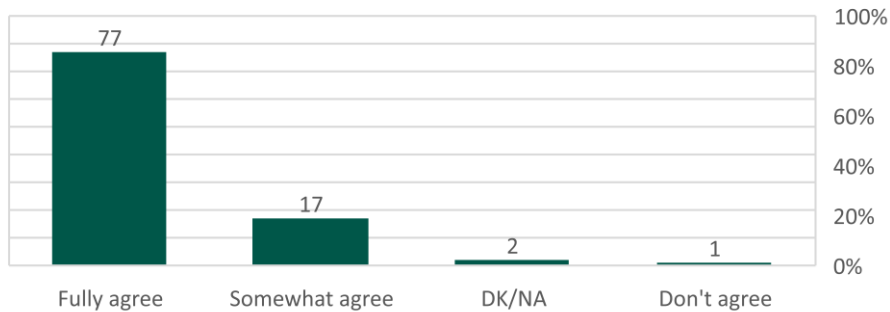
Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
74 (76.2%)	21 (21.8%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)



III.2. Prepare stakeholder category-tailored presentations of the objectives, in view of approaching the diverse categories in a clear and attractive manner, with reference to their role and involvement in external quality assurance.

Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
77 (79.4%)	17 (17.5%)	2 (2.1%)	1 (1%)

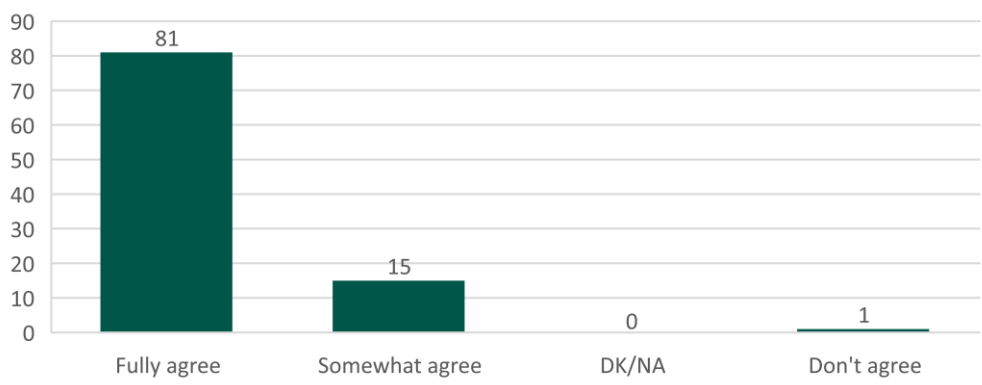
III.2. Prepare stakeholder-category tailored presentations of the objectives, in view of approaching the diverse categories in a clear and attractive manner, with reference to their role and involvement in external QA.



III.3. Develop and run a survey to investigate the expectations of different categories of stakeholders in what concerns their role in quality assurance procedures.

Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
81 (83.5%)	15 (15.5%)	-	1 (1%)

III.3. Develop and run a survey to investigate the expectations of different categories of stakeholders in what concerns their role in QA procedures.



PROPOSALS

III. Objectives of stakeholders' involvement		
Category	Proposal	Remarks
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	Collect best practices in quality assurance from universities in order to establish the objectives	
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	We request the representatives of the recognised religious denominations that organise confessional higher education institutions to be involved	<i>*)) Proposals from several people from the same confessional higher education institutions, from which proposals were received for all the questions.</i>
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	We respectfully request that, based on university autonomy and while respecting the specificity of every higher education institution, universities have the possibility to have a say in selecting the categories of stakeholders that will be involved in the evaluation processes, as well as in establishing the objectives that will be presented to them	
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	The evaluation of each university should be simplified and rendered more efficient, depending on the specificity of each university. Homogenisation with the risk of eliminating those elements that are specific may lead to a diminution of creativity in education	
Student	I fully agree with any improvements that can be brought to our attention	
Student	Outline some shared directions in the implementation of the educational process, so that all stakeholders can benefit from it	
Employer	Under the auspices of the Agency, organise meetings between employers and the higher education institution, for the purpose of continuously adapting the content of courses / seminars / laboratories to the current demands of the labour market	



Employer	Maybe a survey is not enough; we believe a more detailed analysis could provide more information	
Employer	<p>The main expectations of Employers as stakeholders are related to the needs in terms of training and preparing students, in line with achieving the objective “current students → future employees, with specific competences correlated with the specificity of the Employer, the scope of business, the institutional development policy and strategy”.</p> <p>Communication must be mutual too, in the sense of achieving information feedback, from the Employer to the Trainer/Higher Education Institution and the other way around, with a view to ensuring the compliance of curricula and vocational training with the needs established/expressed by each employer, and based on analysing how students respond / get actively engaged in meeting these demands.</p> <p>To improve the process of integration of the students as future employees in the structure of the Employer, and in order to develop (to the Employer) the benefit of added value, given the experience accumulated by INCAS as Employer, several stages are required for the students to become aware (1), (2-) and gradually involved (2+), (3), (4), (5) in the current activities of the Employer, namely: 1/ volunteering, 2/ practical internship, 3/ applied research internship for supplementing/finalising the Bachelor’s Project, for the bachelor studies cycle, 4/ applied research internship for finalising the Dissertation for the master programme, 5/ applied research internship for supplementing/finalising the significant chapters of the Doctoral thesis, for the doctoral study cycle.</p> <p>We mention that proposals (3), (4), (5) pertaining to applied research, specific for each long-term education cycles (bachelor, master and doctoral studies)</p>	

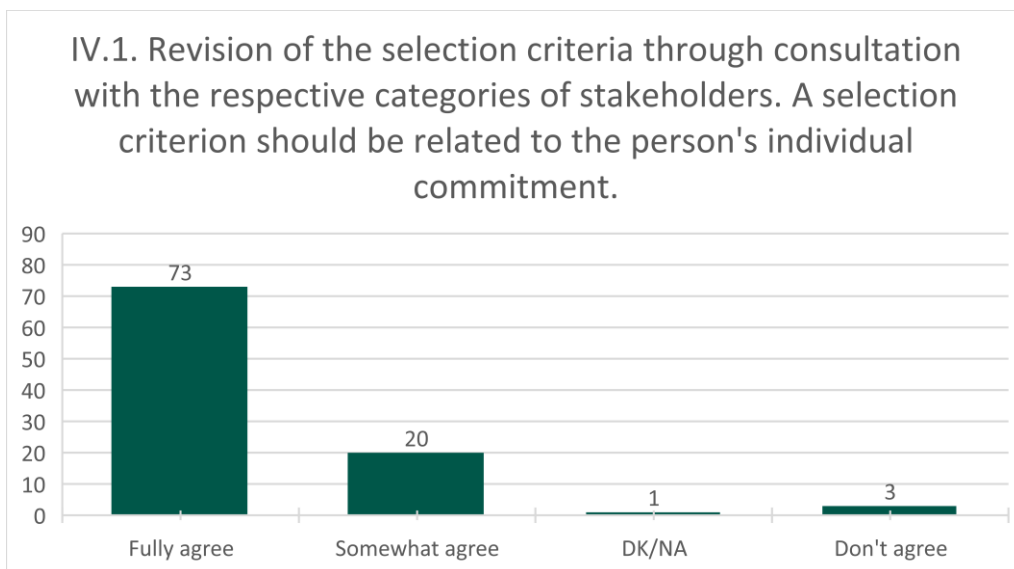


are new elements meant to add value, meaning that the research topics proposed (by the higher education unit, as the Trainer) for the bachelor project / dissertation / doctoral thesis are correlated with the current research-development projects of the Employer, and that some of the research-development projects are carried out in a collaboration based on a partnership between the employer and the higher education institution/s.

IV. Recruitment / selection of the stakeholders' representatives

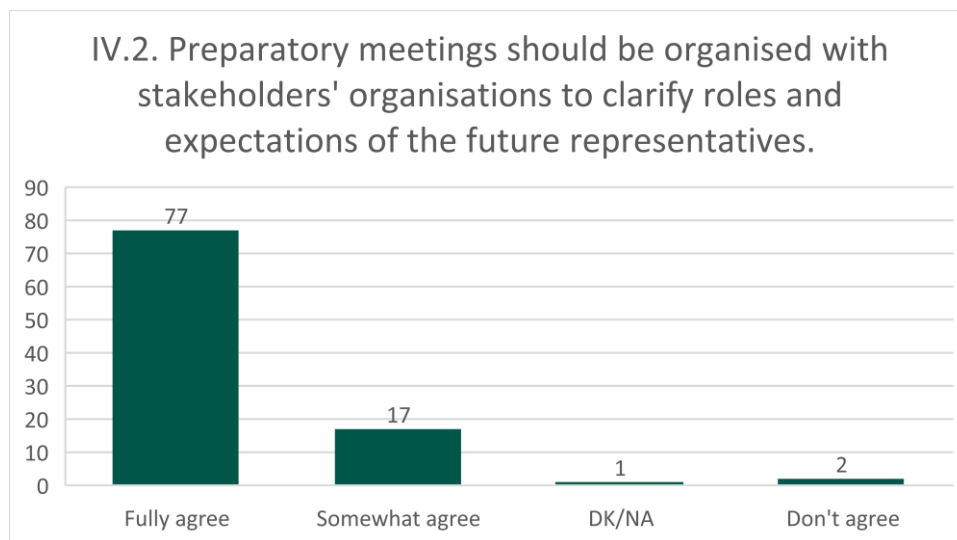
IV.1. Revision of the selection criteria through consultation with the respective categories of stakeholders. A selection criterion should be related to the person's individual commitment.

Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
73 (75.3%)	20 (20.6%)	1 (1%)	3 (3.1%)



IV.2. Preparatory meetings should be organised with stakeholders' organisations to clarify roles and expectations of the future representatives. The stakeholder category - the tailored presentations (as per Theme 3) should be used as starting points of the discussions, explaining their role and defining together their way(s) of involvement.

Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
77 (79.4%)	17 (17.5%)	1 (1%)	2 (2.1%)



PROPOSALS

IV. Recruitment / selection of the stakeholders' representatives		
Category	Proposal	Remarks
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	Representatives of private universities among the representatives of stakeholders, other than those coming from Bucharest private universities	
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	It would be useful to include the CEAC coordinators of universities among the stakeholders	
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	I propose the categories of stakeholders to be defined clearly, namely higher education institutions and the employers of their graduates. Furthermore, universities should have the possibility to select their stakeholders	<i>The stakeholders are defined in the ESG</i>
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	I propose each university to have the possibility to propose persons who are familiar with the specific nature of the	<i>*) Proposals from several people from the same confessional</i>

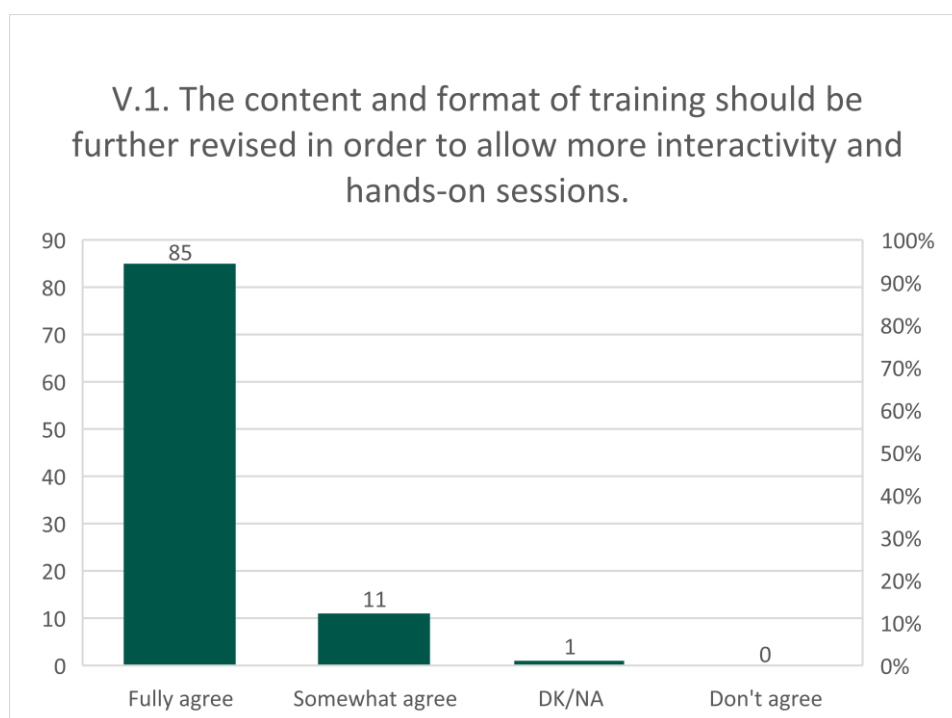
	university. In particular have in mind confessional universities	<i>higher education institutions, from which proposals were received for all the questions.</i>
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	My suggestion is that the involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation of universities be in alignment with the role they play in the narrower context of the social, economic and - last, but not least - religious environment, in the case of confessional universities	
Employer	Preparatory meetings with employers are very difficult to organise and it is difficult to ensure relevant participation, due to their large numbers and wide variety. The roles of the representatives will be communicated to them on the occasion of the organised training activities, and their expectations are specific to the organisation/industry they come from	
Employer	<p>Regarding the selection criteria for the persons who would represent the interests of stakeholders, the vocational background, abilities and experiences should be taken into account, both in terms of research-development and in terms of the education system. Taking into account the mere personal employment, which only expresses the desire for personal involvement is not sufficient and, in certain circumstances, it wouldn't even be indicated.</p> <p>It is a priori assumed that a person who wants to represent these interests of the stakeholders will express their personal involvement at the same time; however, mere benevolence is not sufficient - competences and skills are required as well, acquired both through education/training and experience</p>	



V. Training of stakeholders

V.1. The content and format of training should be further revised to allow more interactivity and hands-on sessions.

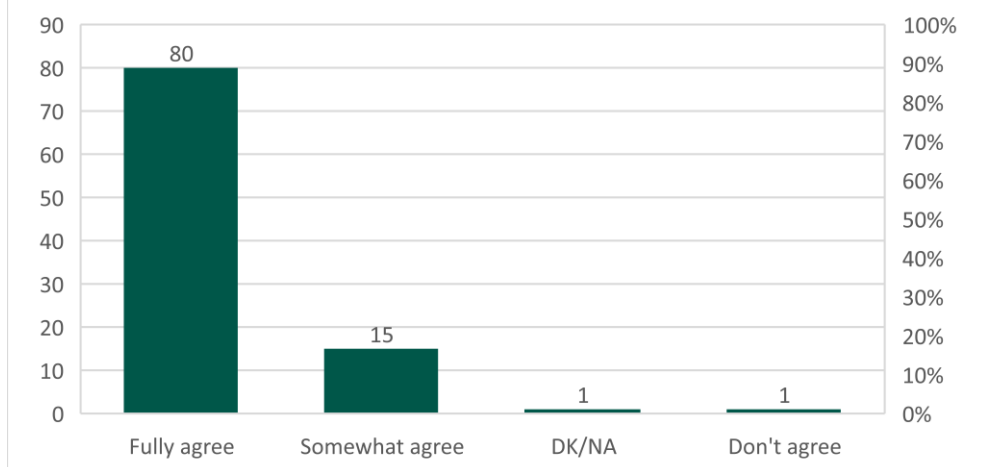
Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
85 (87.6%)	11 (11.4%)	1 (1%)	-



V.2. Common training sessions involving all kinds of stakeholders and expert evaluators should be organised, in order to enhance the cohesion of evaluation panels and the understanding of each other's role.

Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
80 (82.5%)	15 (15.5%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)

V.2. Common training sessions, involving all kinds of stakeholders and the experts' evaluators should be organised in order to enhance the cohesion of evaluation panels and the understanding of each other's role.

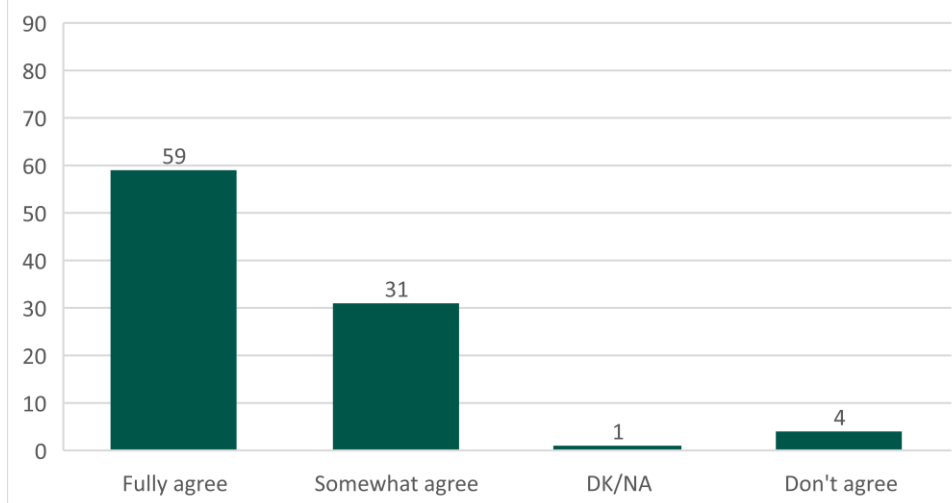


V.3. A core curriculum for training should be developed, eventually recognised as a postgraduate course, so that certificates could be issued.

Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
59 (62.1%)	31 (32.7%)	1 (1%)	4 (4.2%)

(Only 95 persons answered this question; non-responders: one person in the 'universities' category; one person in the 'research institutes' category)

V.3. A core curriculum for training should be developed, eventually recognised as a postgraduate course, so that certificates could be issued.



PROPOSALS

V. Training of stakeholders		
Category	Proposal	Remarks
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	Adopt some provisions of the American education system	
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	In the case of students, I don't think a certificate of completion is in order, because they have not completed their bachelor studies, but they could have credits added in their volunteering work portfolio	
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	Respect the university's autonomy in proposing the disciplines of the common core of the curriculum. The specificity of the confessional universities should be kept in mind when establishing the curriculum for training these specialists	<i>*) Proposals from several people from the same confessional higher education institutions, from which proposals were received for all the questions.</i>
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	Train the evaluators and the members of the evaluated institution to ensure a HOMOGENEOUS approach on the standards	



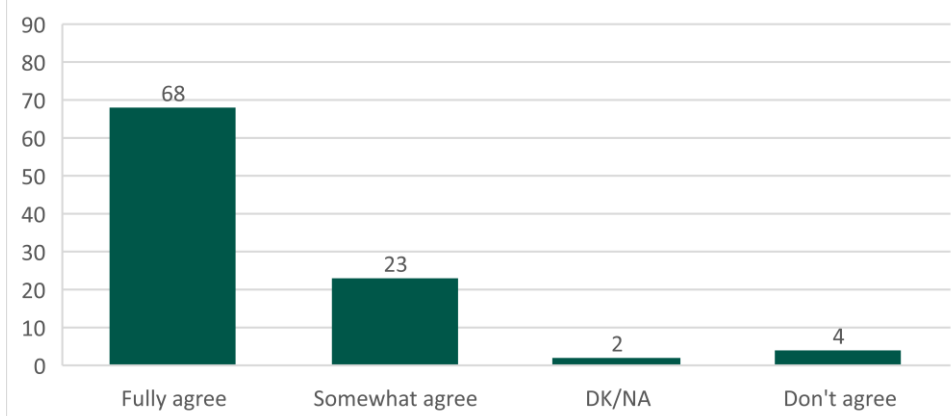
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	Respect and encourage creativity and innovation in education, depending on the specificity of the university	
Employer	Agree with the common core of the curriculum for training. But for students and employers, I don't think this could be deemed as a postgraduate course with graduation certificates issued, because the knowledge is only necessary and useful during the mandate as a member in the Permanent Speciality Experts' Commissions	
Employer	Having a pragmatic approach on the curriculum would be desirable	
Employer	The content and format of the training sessions must be updated regularly (once in 4 months or once in 6 months, correlated with the structure of the academic year) and correlated depending on the response coming from both directions (Employer to Trainer/higher education institution, and the other way around), per segments of informational feedback, in line with the compliance of the vocational training curricula with the needs established/expressed by each employer, and based on the analysis of how students integrate with the Employer's structures, for the needs to be formulated at the current level of knowledge and professional abilities of the young employees	

VI. Involvement of stakeholders in reviews

VI. 1. The agency should pay more attention in the evaluation process to the involvement of stakeholders in the internal quality assurance procedures in higher education institutions.

Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
68 (70.1%)	23 (23.6%)	2 (2.1%)	4 (4.2%)

VI. 1. The agency should pay more attention in the evaluation process to the involvement of stakeholders in the internal quality assurance procedures in higher education institutions.



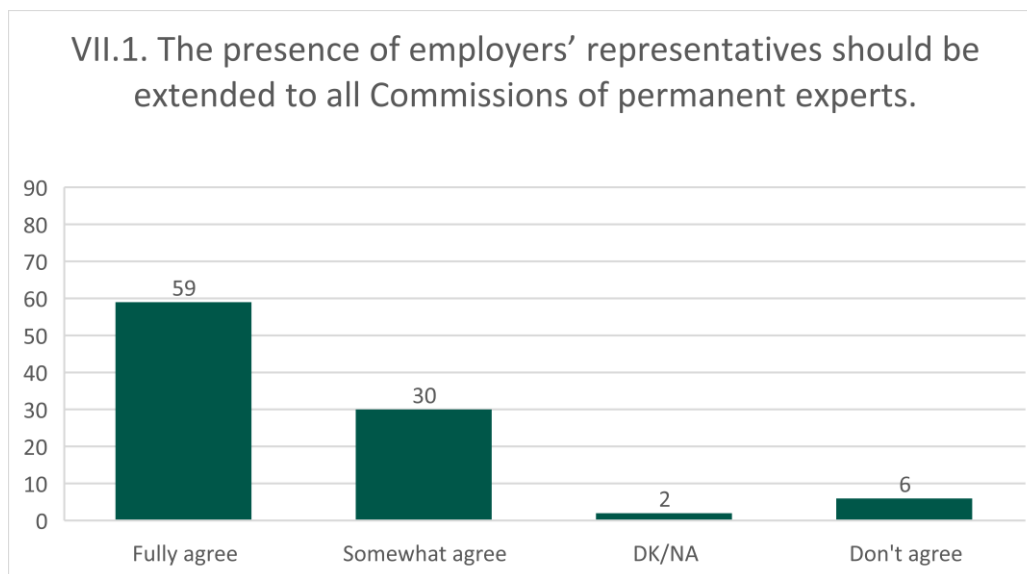
PROPOSALS

VI. Involvement of stakeholders in reviews		
Category	Proposal	Remarks
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	I think that the opinions of the graduates and the employers of the university's graduates should be primarily taken into account	
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	Greater attention should be paid to a possible tendency of excessive bureaucratisation of everything that the evaluation process entails, with all the participants involved in this activity. In time, this could prove to be counter-productive for a proper education and training process	
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	Provide a clear definition of "stakeholders" in order to avoid situations of people who are not familiar with the specificity of a university and of the study programmes becoming experts by attending a course. Increased university autonomy is a key element for obtaining high performance in the international competition	

VII. Involvement of stakeholders in the governance and organisation of quality assurance agencies

VII.1. The presence of employers' representatives should be extended to all Permanent Specialty Experts' Commissions

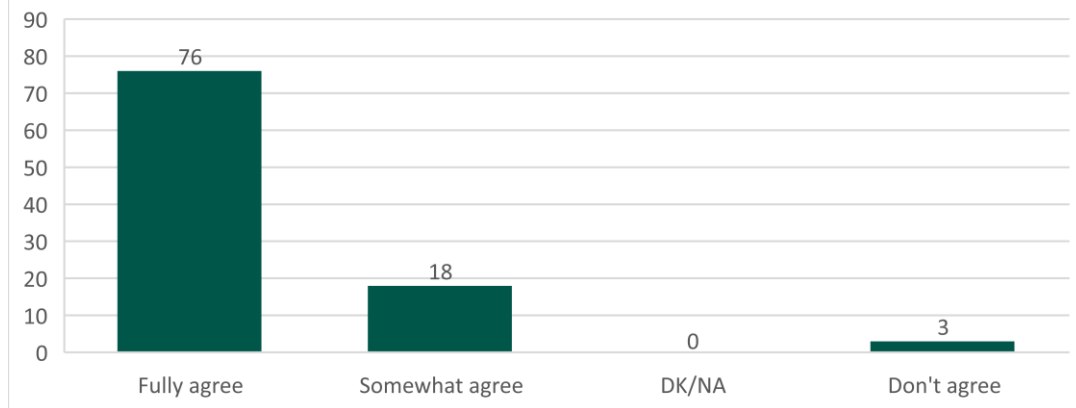
Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
59 (60.8%)	30 (30.9%)	2 (2.1%)	6 (6.2%)



VII.2. Elaborate thematic analysis on subjects of interest for different categories of stakeholders (e.g. student-centred learning).

Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
76 (78.4%)	18 (18.5%)	-	3 (3.1%)

VII.2. Elaborate thematic analysis on subjects of interest for different categories of stakeholders (e.g. student-centred learning).



PROPOSALS

VII. Involvement of stakeholders in the governance and organisation of quality assurance agencies		
Category	Proposal	Remarks
Permanent expert, employers' representative, in commission C10	Involvement of the employers' representatives should create added value, rather than being merely formal	
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	The presence of employers is not necessary in all permanent specialty experts' commissions	
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	The employers' representatives in the quality assurance commissions should be representative for each university and, in the case of confessional universities, they should be members of that religious denomination	<i>*) Proposals from several people from the same confessional higher education institutions, from which proposals were received for all the questions.</i>
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	The evaluation should be adapted to the specificity of the education institution; the employers recommendations concerning the mandatory introduction of certain disciplines that are not in the standards should be accepted, and there should be communication between the stakeholders	

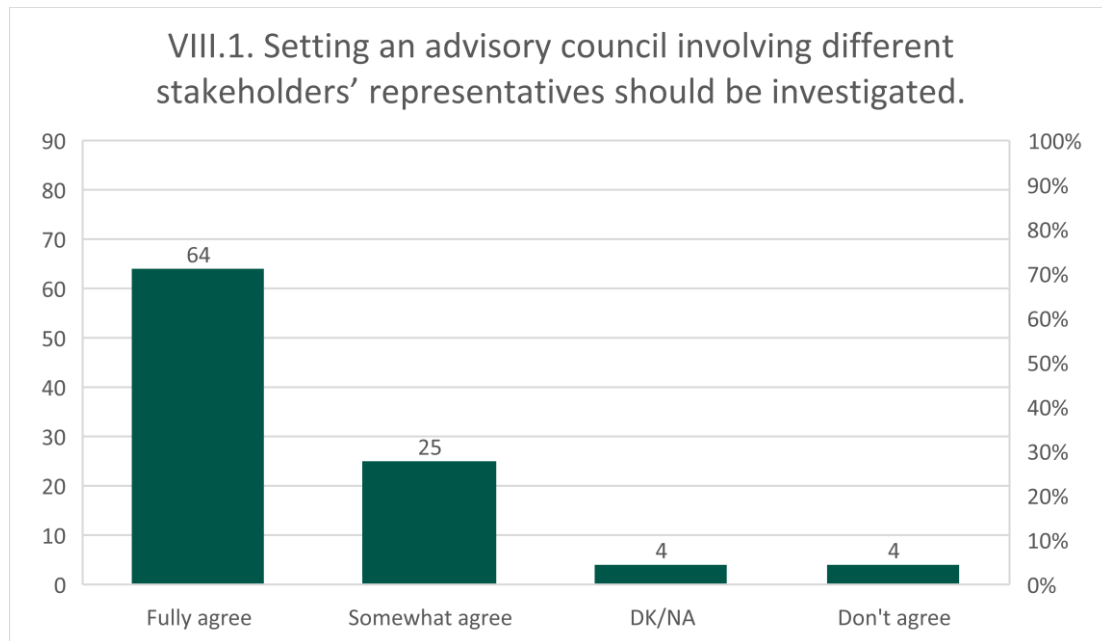
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	How would the employers' representatives be selected in all the permanent specialty experts' commissions (by pursuing national representativeness, by looking at the results obtained, the scope of business, the size of the business, etc.)? Could their permanent availability be ensured for all the activities specific to the quality assurance agency?	
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	The employers' representatives must be familiar with the standards that are specific to each domain. The entire evaluation process must be relevant, efficient, non-bureaucratic and apolitical	
Employer	The possibility of implementing actual actions and actively involving the business environment in substantiating the educational requirements, in the drawing up of the study graduation works, and in the panels that evaluate how these objectives are achieved should be analysed	
Employer	We believe that learning is too student-centred; rather, it should be graduate-centred. What does the graduate know to do? What is their capacity on the labour market?	

VIII. Independence vis-a-vis stakeholders' involvement

VIII.1. Setting an advisory council involving different stakeholders' representatives should be investigated.

Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
64 (66%)	25 (25.6%)	4 (4.2%)	4 (4.2%)





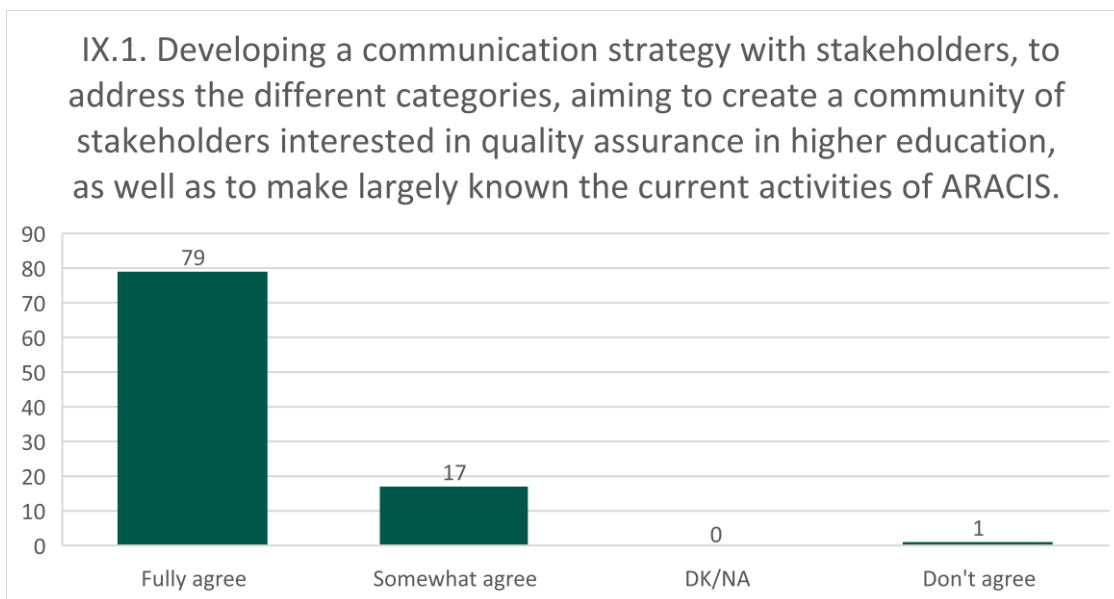
PROPOSALS

VIII. Independence vis-a-vis stakeholders' involvement		
Category	Proposal	Remarks
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	Representatives of private universities should be involved as well	
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	In the case of employers, it was already proposed that they be part of the speciality commissions	
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	We propose avoiding excessive bureaucratisation in the quality evaluation process, as that would overwhelm the educational process in higher education institutions	
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	A multitude of committees and commissions would lead to increased bureaucratisation, and they would become costly and time-consuming	
Employer	The advisory council is highly necessary	

IX. Communication and transparency towards stakeholders

IX.1. Developing a communication strategy with stakeholders, to address the different categories, aiming to create a community of stakeholders interested in quality assurance in higher education, as well as to make largely known the current activities of ARACIS

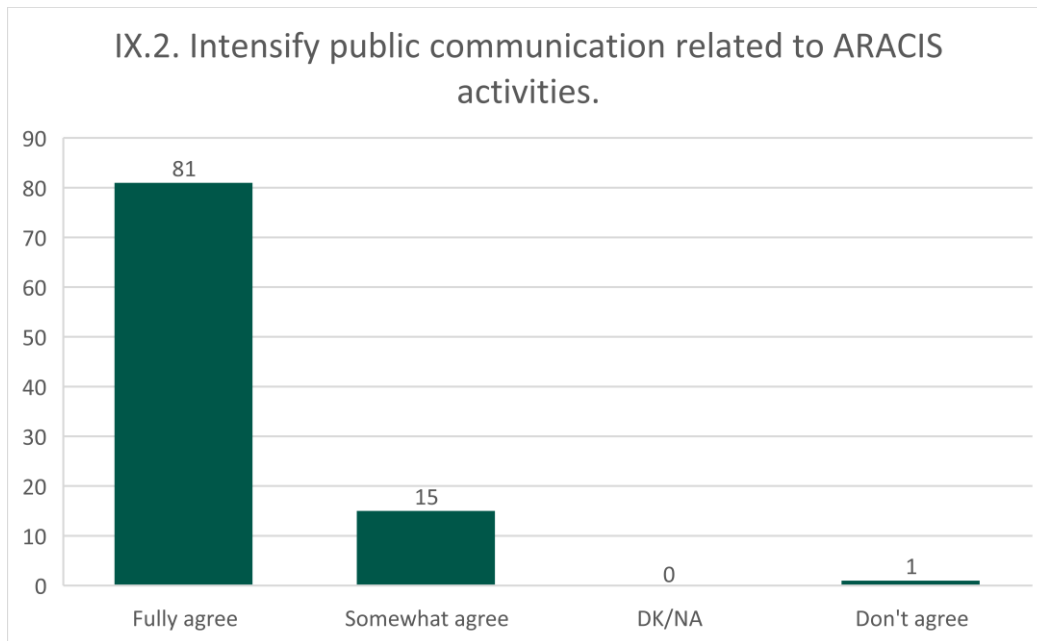
Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
79 (81.4%)	17 (17.6%)	-	1 (1%)



IX.2. Intensify public communication related to ARACIS activities.

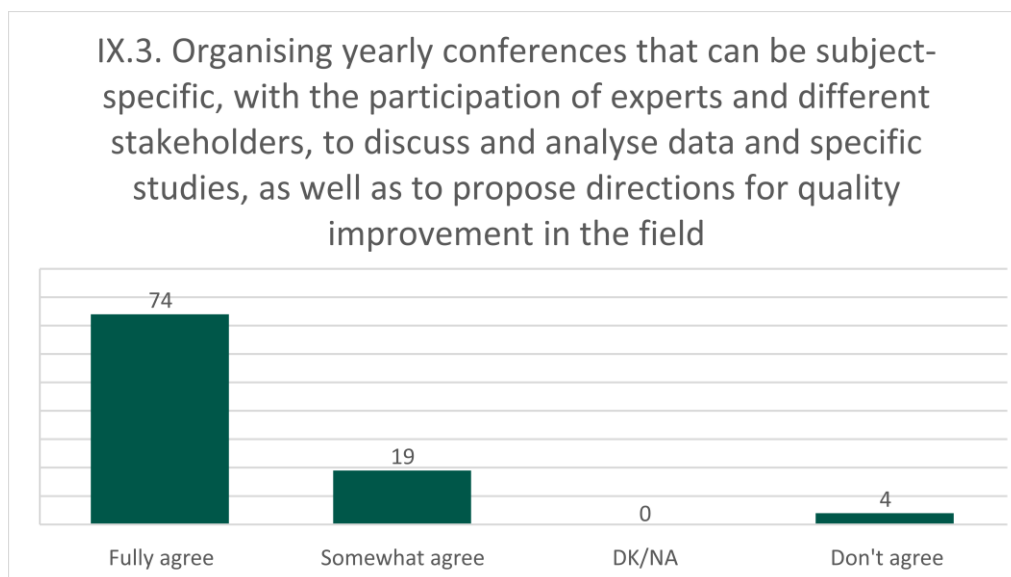
Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
81 (83.5%)	15 (15.5%)	-	1 (1%)





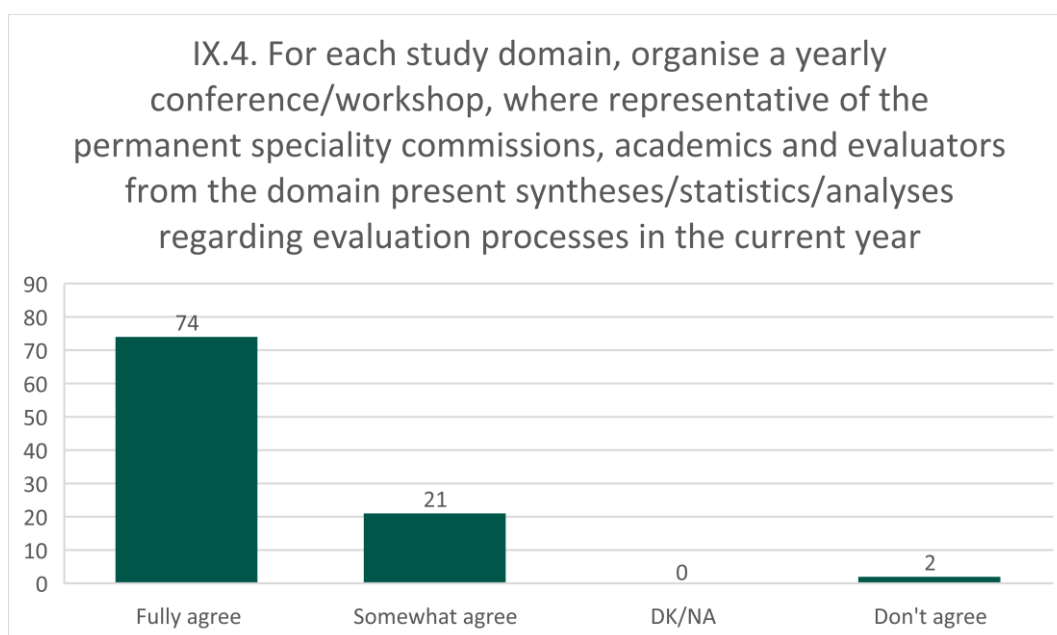
IX.3. Organising yearly conferences that can be subject-specific, with the participation of experts and different stakeholders, to discuss and analyse data and specific studies, as well as to propose directions for quality improvement in the field.

Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
74 (76.3%)	19 (19.5%)	-	4 (4.2%)



IX.4. For each study domain, organise a yearly conference/workshop, where representative of the permanent speciality commissions, academics and evaluators from the domain present syntheses/statistics/analyses regarding evaluation processes in the current year, make proposals for enhancing the educational process, consider feedback from the representatives of universities.

Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
74 (76.3%)	21 (21.6%)	-	2 (2.1%)



PROPOSALS

IX. Communication and transparency towards stakeholders		
Category	Proposal	Remarks
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	Improve the channels of direct communication with each university, depending on the specificity of that university	
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	I suggest direct communication with each university, depending on the specificity of that university	
Employer	Extend this type of surveys to cover other areas of interest	
Employer	Communities are consolidated around their own interests, which, in the case of employers, are different from the interests of the universities. The interests for a	

specific type of work force are determined by multiple factors, and they are not the same, they are not constant.	
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C. Final remarks

C1. General remarks

C1.1. For the proposals under points and sub-points (as applicable) I, II, III, IV, V.1, V.2, VI, VII.1, VII.2, IX, the minimum percentage of responses of *Fully agree* is 60.8. For all these points/sub-points, the high number/percentage of responses deemed as positive (*Fully agree* and *Somewhat agree*) **substantiate the inclusion of the proposed actions in the Action Plan.**

C1.2. The percentage of *Don't agree* answers is below 5, except for sub-point VII.1. *The presence of employers' representatives should be extended to all Permanent Specialty Experts' Commissions*, where the percentage is 6.2. This result probably indicates that the respondents are aware of the difficulties of identifying representative employers and employers who would be available to be involved in activities outside their current professional tasks.

C1.3. The percentage of *Don't know/no answer* is between 0 (for five sub-points) and 4.2 - at VIII.1. *Setting an advisory council involving different stakeholders' representatives should be investigated, where it is 4.2.* The results probably show that, in general, the respondents are interested in external quality evaluation and they deem that they can provide pertinent answers for those questions in the survey. The results of VIII.1 correlate with the specific conclusions of this sub-point, further presented under C.2.

C2. Specific remarks

We provide details below on the results pertaining to the questions for which the percentages of *Fully agree* answers were below 70, and for which the difference is included in the percentages of *Somewhat agree* answers. The tables also mention the percentages of answers from the various categories of respondents, calculated based on the total number of answers under that type of answer. For instance, for the answer *Fully agree* at question V.3, out of 59 responses received, 14 come from public universities, accounting for 23.7 % of all responses received; an equal percentage is represented by the 14 answers received from private universities.

By cumulating the percentages for the *Fully agree* and *Somewhat agree* answers, it is visible that there are no major differences between the categories of respondents that established them; this is valid for all the four questions for which the answers were analysed below:



Question V.3. A core curriculum for training should be developed, eventually recognised as a post-graduate course, so that certificates could be issued.

Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
59 (62.1%)	31 (32.6%)	1 (1.1%)	4 (4.2%)
Public universities 14 (23.7%)	Public universities 13 (41.9%)		
Private universities 14 (23.7%)	Private universities 6 (19.3%)		
Students' associations and students 19 (32.2%)	Students' associations and students 5 (16.1%)		
Research institutes 1 (1.7%)	Research institutes 2 (6.5%)		
Employers 10 (17%)	Employers 3 (9.7%)		
Other 1 (1.7%)	Other 2 (6.5%)		

Comparison of the percentages of *Fully agree* answers for C1.1 reveals a certain amount of reluctance concerning the presented proposal; however, due to the nature of the question, which cumulates a number of ideas/action proposals, the reason for such reluctance cannot be identified.

Question VI. 1. The agency should pay more attention in the evaluation process to the involvement of stakeholders in the internal quality assurance procedures in higher education institutions.

Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
68 (70.1%)	23 (23.6%)	2 (2.1%)	4 (4.2%)
Public universities 19 (27.9%)	Public universities 10 (43.5%)		
Private universities 16 (23.5%)	Private universities 3 (13%)		

Students' associations and students 18 (3 associations and 15 students) (26.5%)	Students' associations and students 6 (1 association and 5 students) (26.1%)		
Research institutes 3 (4.4%)	Research institutes 1 (4.4%)		
Employers 10 (14.7%)	Employers 3 (13%)		
Other 2 (3%)			

Comparison of the percentages of *Fully agree* answers for C1.1 shows that the proposal cannot be deemed as rejected. However, it indicates that its implementation will have to be done very carefully, preferably in a bottom-up approach, involving departments and faculties.

Question VII.1. The presence of employers' representatives should be extended to all Permanent Specialty Experts' Commissions.

Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
59 (60.8%)	30 (30.9%)	2 (2.1%)	6 (6.2%)
Public universities 16 (27.1%)	Public universities 10 (33.4%)		
Private universities 11 (18.7%)	Private universities 9 (30%)		
Students' associations and students 15 (3 association and 12 students) (25.4%)	Students' associations and students 7 (1 association and 6 students) (23.3%)		
Employers 13 (22%)	Research institutes 2 (6.7%)		
Research institutes 2 (3.4%)	Employers 1 (3.3%)		
Other 2 (3.4%)	Other 1 (3.3%)		

Comparison of the percentages of *Fully agree* answers mentioned for C1.1 shows that this question gets the minimal percentage, which indicates that the respondents are aware of the difficulties related to the actual implementation of this proposal.

Question VIII.1. Setting an advisory council involving different stakeholders' representatives should be investigated.

Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No answer	Don't agree
64 (66%)	25 (25.6%)	4 (4.2%)	4 (4.2%)
Public universities 18 (28.1%)	Public universities 9 (36%)		
Private universities 16 (25%)	Private universities 3 (12%)		
Students' associations and students 17 (3 association and 14 students) (26.5%)	Students 7 (28%)		
Research institutes 3 (4.7%)	Research institutes 1 (4%)		
Employers 9 (14.1%)	Employers 4 (16%)		
Other 1 (1.6%)	Other 1 (4%)		

We deem that, in this case too, the respondents were somewhat reluctant to the creation of an additional advisory body, the role and set of competences of which should be clearly defined.

C3. Additional remarks and proposals of the respondents.

Other proposals or remarks concerning this topic	
Category	Proposal
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	Support in the accreditation process of private universities - permanent consultant from ARACIS for each university

Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	What you want will be very difficult to implement in terms of an extended involvement of stakeholders. A close connection should first be achieved between the needs of the labour market and the higher education provision!
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	Avoid excessive bureaucratisation that would hinder the education process
Employer	Set up permanent working groups, per specialities and topics of interest
Employer	<p>About the strengthening of the ARACIS structure, the position of Employers, expressed through their representatives, should be taken into account as well; furthermore, the assigning / certification of the Employer's representatives, members in the Consultative Commission, ARACIS Working Group as experts on ARACIS matters. The motivation resides in the fact that the purpose of Higher Education Institutions as Trainers is to create, train, and shape in a specific manner the abilities and the level of professional knowledge that will allow students - future graduates - not only the possibility to get employment, but also the possibility to integrate in an efficient, targeted manner in the current activities of the Employer, based on a continuous adjustment of the curricula to the needs of the Employers, highlighted by the institutional development policy and strategy.</p> <p>Periodical analysis of the activities and the results (including monitoring + multi-directional feedback + measures / correction/adjustment plan, according to the updated needs)</p>

Other proposals or observations/comments on the participation of stakeholders in quality assurance in higher education

Category	Proposal
Member, ARACIS National Register of Evaluators	Stakeholders should just be consulted in order to find out what their needs are. Involving them should stop, because the universities and ARACIS are professionals by excellence and they take their mission seriously, and they create adequate study programmes and quality standards. What could the "stakeholders" say?
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	Our proposal is that stakeholders should be defined clearly and it should be possible to select the stakeholders also based on the confessional specificity of the universities
Personnel in a Higher Education Institution	Determine and communicate, in a standardised format imposed by the commission and in due time, all the problems that need to be solved by the institution undergoing the verification, before the on-site visit;



	Digitalise the evaluation processes within ARACIS in order to facilitate communication with the evaluated institutions (in the form of a dedicated platform)
Student	<p>The quality of higher education cannot be ensured if this education system is not connected to the reality around (labour market, the characteristics and problems of the current society, the psychological traits and needs of the current student and future professional adult). For instance, I think that perfecting a form of professional mentoring system (with students having as mentors not only professors or other students from the higher study years, but also professionals in the field) in the higher education institutions would be very helpful for the current situation.</p> <p>Furthermore, I believe that the strategies for improving the quality of higher education should be developed while looking at the problems of the pre-university system; the communication between the higher education and the pre-university education systems is essential</p>
Employer	<p>About the strengthening of the ARACIS structure, the position of Employers, expressed through their representatives, should be taken into account as well; furthermore, the assigning / certification of the Employer's representatives, members in the Consultative Commission, ARACIS Working Group as experts on ARACIS matters. The motivation resides in the fact that the purpose of Higher Education Institutions as Trainers is to create, train, and shape in a specific manner the abilities and the level of professional knowledge that will allow students - future graduates - not only the possibility to get employment, but also the possibility to integrate in an efficient, targeted manner in the current activities of the Employer, based on a continuous adjustment of the curricula to the needs of the Employers, highlighted by the institutional development policy and strategy.</p> <p>Periodical analysis of the activities and the results (including monitoring + multi-directional feedback + measures / correction/adjustment plan, according to the updated needs).</p>



DAI - The Danish Accreditation Institution

8th February 2021

The DAI strategy on stakeholder involvement builds on our core values, the ESQA project activities, and our previous experience with stakeholders. The WP2 peer-review activities have played a significant role for our reflections on how we include and involve stakeholders. Over the last three-four years, our approach to stakeholder involvement has changed significantly. Since then we have taken several steps to increase and optimize stakeholder involvement, partly thanks to the WP2 activities. Prior to the ESQA peer-review workshop in Copenhagen in December 2019, we had already started the process of taking stock of our stakeholder involvement procedures. We commenced the process of reflecting critically on how to create a strong involvement of stakeholders in the process of defining the approach to accreditation in the 2nd cycle, which was to commence in 2020. Based on positive feedback, and the experiences and lessons gained in the WP2 activities, in addition to other concurrent activities, we have strengthened our involvement of stakeholders related to external as well as internal quality assurance.

The AI practice of involving stakeholders in connection with our QA activities is reflected in our practices in many different fields of activity. To create an approach to understanding the involvement of stakeholders, we have analytically divided the activities into two broad categories. One being regular dialogue. The other being involvement in relation to specific occasions or new initiatives.

1. Regular dialogue with stakeholders

An ongoing and regular dialogue with stakeholders concerning our QA activities is critical to us, because we want to be continuously fine-tuning our activities so that they meet their objectives. And part of meeting the objectives is to ensure that the activities are accepted and perceived as legitimate, helpful and understandable to the outside world, no matter whether we are talking about activities related to our role as a control body to ensure compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines or whether we undertake activities to share knowledge with the sector.

The AI management regularly meets with the Rector's Conferences of the Universities, University Colleges and Business Academies to discuss strategic issues on EQA and to ensure a continuous and mutual adjustment of expectations.

Another regular activity where AI receives feedback relates to the agency's core activity of making institutional assessments in accreditation processes. Here, there is, following each accreditation, a systematic evaluation process with the HEIs, where we receive valuable feedback and input for our future work.

In order to ensure a student perspective in our methodologies we draw on our Students' Accreditation Council. Despite the wording, STAR is not a council per se, but a forum where AI and the student organisations share experiences related to quality assurance and issues related to higher education in general. STAR meets approximately twice a year, and over time we have received a lot of valuable feedback and relevant inputs. Central subjects of past meetings has revolved around the involvement of students in our accreditation processes, recruitment of students as expert panel members in accreditation processes, discussions on different approaches to Student Centered Learning and how to express a student perspective in the Guide to IA 2.0.

Finally, we have an ongoing dialogue with ministerial representatives in order to discuss issues of common concern.

2. Stakeholder involvement in relation to specific occasions or initiatives

In the adjustment and development of our processes and methodologies, we emphasize the consultation with stakeholders. As described in the section above, adjusting processes and methodologies can happen in relation to the ongoing dialogue with Rectors' Conferences, STAR and other stakeholders. But at several occasions we choose to involve stakeholders more broadly and provide the stakeholders with information and insight which can help to foster a mutual understanding between us and our stakeholders. While paving the way for a better perception of our activities, these initiatives provides us with valuable feedback and critical questions that leads us to reflect more critically on the development of new initiatives and the design of our activities.

- Design and development of processes and methodologies

AI also initiate activities that revolve specifically around the core processes and methodology. A recent example is the already mentioned development of a modified approach to institutional accreditation. In the development of IA 2.0, we involved several stakeholders from start to finish of the six-month long process. We hosted four separate meetings with representatives of quality staff and management from the institutions, and representing the different sectors of higher education. In addition to this, we established a dialogue group comprising of quality managers from each education sector whom we met with three times during the process to discuss development, adjustment and adaption. Because the dialogue group consisted of people working with QA on a daily basis, their input was of great importance to us and we strived to make the involvement a co-creation process.

In order to ensure differentiated views on the new accreditation procedure, we also carried out a workshop with STAR and a meeting with labour market representatives.

Following the development of IA 2.0, we received a lot of positive feedback from stakeholders, who found it valuable to be included to such a high degree. This proved to us, the many mutual benefits of high-level stakeholder involvement.

- Thematic analyses

A part of the AI's core activities is to publish thematic analyses that displays new and existing knowledge on educational quality and quality assurance. We involve stakeholders in two ways in this process: Prior to the start-up of new thematic analyses, we invite stakeholders to discuss their ideas and thoughts on the proposed subjects. Afterwards, we involve stakeholders of relevance to the chosen subject, as respondents and informants in the specific analysis.

Because the published thematic analyses are strongly based on topics and issues that are currently engaging stakeholders, they demonstrate a wide spectrum. Some of our recent published thematic analyses are:

- *Gender equality, education quality and quality assurance (2020)*
- *External Quality Assurance in Europe – a cross-disciplinary perspective on national quality assurance systems in higher education (2020)*



- *Insight: The Knowledge Base of Educations – a case compendium on the work on knowledge base at higher educational institutions (2019)*
- *First Round of Institutional Accreditation – differences, common features and consequences (2019)*
- *Calculating Quality: An Overview of Indicators used in External Quality Assurance of Higher Education in the Nordic Countries (2019)*
- *Principal in Own Learning – Student-Centred Learning in a Danish and European perspective (2017)*

The AI recently developed a new strategy for upcoming thematic analyses where we also involved stakeholders to a large extent. We hosted informal “coffee meetings”, where we invited a range of stakeholders including STAR, HEI representatives, labour market representatives and other stakeholders, to provide us with their expectations and ideas for the future work with thematic analyses. This type of stakeholder involvement in the development of a strategy has provided us with important insights. Because the thematic analyses aim at targeting subjects of importance to stakeholders, it was essential that we included them in the development of the strategy. Another important insight we have gained from stakeholder involvement in thematic analyses, is the partnership we foster with them when we involve them as respondents. This has prompted a new kind of partnership where the AI engages less in the role as a control body, and rather emphasizing the mutual interest in developing quality of education and providing knowledge sharing in the sector. The sharing of new insights brings inspiration to HEIs and other stakeholders as well as AI’s activities.

- Conferences

Another approach has been the convening of broader meetings to have a dialogue with the HEI sector on topical issues. In September 2019, the AI hosted a conference on Student-centred learning, where we invited stakeholders to discuss expectations and requirements in relation to the incorporation of SCL in QA. More than 200 people participated in the seminar including students, QA staff, teachers and management from a wide spectrum of higher education institutions, as well as ministerial representatives. The seminar received positive feedback and we received valuable input on how to incorporate SCL into future review processes. Inspired by the SCL seminar, the AI and Universities Denmark are currently collaborating on a seminar on research-based education.

- Other occasions where we meet stakeholders

Another place we interact with stakeholders is at The People’s Meeting (*Folkemødet*), which takes place every year on the island of Bornholm. The People’s Meeting is a national festival created to foster democratic dialogue and debate, attracting tens of thousands including high level decision makers such as top management of interest organisations, presidents of NGOs, ministers, vice chancellors, in addition to the general public to four days of intense discussions on a broad variety of policy issues including higher education. During the annual People’s Meeting, we are attracting a wide range of relevant stakeholders to an open conference or seminar that we organize during this largescale national event. In the most recent conference, we have together with a broad audience explored the subject of dispersion of provision of higher education programs, where we have debated recruitment and how to attract students, including young people less prone to take a higher education, and the possibilities and consequences of

quality of education when distributing higher education. And the year before, the theme was a broad discussion of the understanding the notion of quality in higher education, where we together with invited speakers discussed different perspectives on quality of education and if, and how, education quality can be rendered measurable.

Additionally, we receive valuable feedback and inspiration from our international partnerships, such as NOQA, INQAAHE, ENQA and EQAF.

The involvement of stakeholders has provided us with valuable insight on stakeholder involvement. Especially the close dialogue with stakeholders in the development of IA 2.0, has showed us the value of including stakeholders directly in the design and development of processes. However, we have also learned that collaborative partnerships can be challenging to establish and that the management of such processes is a demanding task.

Another challenge we are continuously focusing on, is the balance of our roles as an advisor on QA as well as our role to control compliance. We are obliged to control the HEIs in their QA work, but we also want the HEIs to view us as a dialogue partner that they can consult in relation to challenges and uncertainties. This challenge has already reduced significantly though, as we have become better at finding common grounds.

The Danish Accreditation Institution Strategy on stakeholder involvement

Dialogue supporting the AI core values

In recent years, the AI has worked on strengthening the dialogue with stakeholders. The AI's approach to stakeholder involvement is anchored in three out of four of AI's core values; being useful, inclusive, and exploratory. *Useful*, because dialogue makes AI's key activities even more relevant and valuable for HEIs and other stakeholders. *Inclusive*, because we believe that inviting a broad variety of stakeholders to contribute is the best approach and method. *Exploratory*, because a sense of curiosity when listening and trying to understand others' perception and line of thinking is the fundamental approach in our partnerships with key stakeholders.

The aims guiding the AI strategy on stakeholder involvement

- Maintain an open and mutual beneficial dialogue with all relevant stakeholders in the HEI sector
- Keeping a focus on continuously strengthening quality of education and our core activity: accreditation
- Establish the AI as a credible partner in dialogues supporting quality assurance
- Position the AI as a knowledge provider within the area of education and share the knowledge and insights that AI accrue through its activities with the sector
- Include stakeholders in the development of AI's activities in order to foster trust, and to provide AI with valuable information and broader understanding of the concerns and issues of HEIs, students and other stakeholders.

Future priorities

Building on the positive experience of stakeholder involvement, we will continue maintaining a strong partnership with stakeholders.

We aim to intensify the regular meetings with Rectors' Conferences to continuously ensure that our QA methodologies are fit for purpose. Furthermore, we aim to strengthen our ongoing

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dialogue with labour market representatives, and take advantage of opportunities that give rise to dialogue about labour market developments and quality of education.

We will continue to host seminars, conferences and similar events that bring together a wide range of stakeholders and which facilitate knowledge-sharing and exchange of views between the AI and stakeholders, as well as in between stakeholders. The strong involvement of stakeholders in thematic analyses will also continue. We have learned valuable lessons from our previous experiences with stakeholder involvement in thematic analyses, seminars and other activities, and we will draw on these lessons in future activities.

Finally, we will maintain a strong partnership with STAR and student organisations and employ the feedback and input they provide us with.

Regular revision of the strategy on stakeholder dialogue

The AI will evaluate on the dialogue process continuously. This includes assessment of whether the dialogue supports the outlined purposes and objectives, and whether the dialogue is adequately covering all of AI's activities.

NEEA - National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency

1. Methodology for consultations with stakeholders

In the period March – April 2021 the NEAA's Analysis of the needs for change has been revised on the basis of ENQA's feedback and on the basis of the recommendations of the coordinator of the project. Then the Accreditation council took the decision, that the final version of the document should be discussed again with the stakeholders. It was decided that this discussion will take place within the boundaries of the Commission for QA, where there is available a wide representation of different stakeholders' groups.

For the purpose of organizing the discussion within the Commission for QA, first the document "NEAA Analysis of the needs for change" has been translated in Bulgarian language. It was disseminated among the members of the Commission for QA on June 15, 2021. The specialists, involved in the discussion, have 3 weeks at their disposal to get acquainted with the document. The online discussion took place on July 7, 2021. All members of the Commission took place in the discussion. Thus representatives of different stakeholders' groups were included in the discussion.

One major result of the discussion was the recognition, that the document "NEAA Analysis of the needs for change" thoroughly elaborates the problems in front of NEAA in connection with the involvement of stakeholders in QA of HE in Bulgaria. It also contains valuable direction for strengthening the dialogue and cooperation with stakeholders in QA activities.

At the same time some critical remarks and recommendation on behalf of the members of the Commission have been made. The most important recommendations can be summarized in the following way:

1. NEAA should organize a conference on the topic of quality of HE on a regular basis, possibly every two years. For 2022, the topic of the conference is proposed to be "Digitalization and the Quality of HE".



2. Modern ICT should be more widely used in order to organize the channels for contact with stakeholders' groups. This will allow regular and constant contacts. The NEAA website should be seriously improved.
3. A system of indicators, measuring the quality of HE for each stakeholders' group should be elaborated, on the basis of which the opinion of each stakeholders' group in respect to quality of HE should be taken into account every year.
4. In the activity of NEAA and its bodies to be represented *nationally recognizable* employers organizations.

On the basis of the discussion at the Commission for QA, the document "NEAA Analysis of the needs for change" has been revised again and finally improved.

2. Analysis of the needs for change

During the last years the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency in Bulgaria (NEAA) has made a serious progress towards strengthening the dialogue and cooperation with stakeholders in QA activities. In this respect it has received support from the audits and monitoring of ENQA and EQAR, which analyzed the compliance of NEAA with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG). The improvement of the relations with stakeholders in external QA and increasing their impact, is also a milestone in the **Strategy of NEAA for the period 2018-2022**.¹

This document is a part of ESQA project “Effective involvement of stakeholders in external quality assurance activities”, 607068-EPP-1-2018-1-RO-EPPKA3-BOLOGNA. It has been prepared by Prof. Zoya Mladenova, researcher in the project and a member of the Accreditation Council. The document has been discussed by the Accreditation Council on February 4, 2021. The feedback received helped to improve the document. Then on February 8, 2021 it has been send to the coordinator of the project.

In the period March – April 2021 the NEAA’s Analysis of the needs for change has been revised on the basis of ENQA’s feedback and on the basis of the recommendations of the coordinator of the project.

A second and broad discussion on the NEAA Analysis of the needs for change has taken place on July 7, 2021. It was carried out with broad representation of all groups of stakeholders within the boundaries of the Commission for quality assurance of NEAA. The received critical remarks and constructive recommendations have been reflected in the final version of the document (applied hereafter).

The objective of the document is, when the international project is completed, to help NEAA improve its activity, to provide guidelines for strengthening dialogue and cooperation with stakeholders, as well as for their effective involvement in QA processes.

The document consists of two parts. The first analyses shortly the existing practice in respect to stakeholders’ involvement in the activity of NEAA. This part 1 serves as an introduction and helps understand the context, within which the improvement of stakeholders’ involvement in EQA should take place. Part 2 deals with the needs of change. This part is based on the “Guide for Effective stakeholders’ involvement in QA”, main document from the project. The analysis of the needs for change in this document follow the structure of the Guide and focuses on the milestones for further improvement of stakeholders’ participation in QA at NEAA. It will be used by NEAA as a strategic document for further activities.

¹ See The Strategy



IV.2.1. Part 1 - Short Review of the existing practice

NEAA distinguishes the following main types of stakeholders:

- ✓ Students
- ✓ PhD students
- ✓ Teachers
- ✓ Alumni
- ✓ Employers and their organizations
- ✓ National education authorities
- ✓ Universities and Research Institutes.

From the point of view of the experience of NEAA, the stakeholders participate:

- In the development of the QA system;
- Within the QA Agency as organization;
- As members of review panels.

Different groups of stakeholders participate (with different representation) at different levels of the internal organization of NEAA, where they share their points of view and perceptions.

1. *The Expert Groups* – 3-7 members

- 1.1. They include obligatory representatives of the students/PhD students . According to point 14 (3) of The Rules of NEAA, they can include also foreign experts, as well as experts from business organizations.
- 1.2. The students are selected by documents, but they have to be proposed by the Student Councils of HEIs.
- 1.3. Before any site visit, briefings are held and this is obligatory.
- 1.4. For the site visit there is approved a programme, which includes meetings of the members of the Expert Group with: students, PhD students, teachers, employers. In such a way the Expert Group has a direct contact with the stakeholders and the possibility to take into consideration their opinion and recommendations. Their diverse backgrounds, interests and points of view are taken on an equal basis. Each stakeholder category approached by the review panel has the same rights and responsibilities during the entire review. The positive element here is that the representation of each stakeholders' group is most wide: **the students** include not only members of the Student Council, but also individual students; **the employers** include representatives of employer organizations, but also individual employers, etc.

2. *The Permanent Specialty Commissions* – there are 8 commissions in different fields of higher education. Each consists of 5 – 9 members.

- 2.1. According to the Rules of NEAA, point 13 (7) in the Permanent Commissions there can participate representatives of professional and business organizations, as well as representatives of the students. The representation of these two categories stakeholders in the Permanent Commissions NEAA is accepted and applies as obligatory.



- 2.2. The members of the Permanent Commissions are selected by the Accreditation Council by documents on the basis of clear criteria.
- 2.3. The representatives of the students in the Permanent Commissions are nominated by the National organization of Students Councils.
3. *Accreditation Council* – consists of 11 members. Includes experts only from the field of higher education and research institutions. Two members of the Council are proposed by the Ministry of education.

The Accreditation Council carries the ultimate responsibility for the activity of NEAA and for the QA of higher education in Bulgaria.

There is no participation of other groups of stakeholders with the exception of the pointed out above in the Accreditation Council. The connection of the Accreditation Council with these groups of stakeholders is carried out through the activity of several commissions – the Commission for QA, Consultation council, Ethic commission and the Commission for complaints. The objective of these institutions is to work closely with the Accreditation Council, to support its activity, and they have mainly advisory functions.

The Consultation council – consists of 5-9 members, approved by the Accreditation council. It includes members of the stakeholders' groups. The activity of the Consultation Council includes: improving the connections of NEAA with stakeholders; discussions on the trends of development of HE; approval of new majors at Universities etc.

The Commission for QA - consists of 20 members and includes a broad representation of different stakeholders groups. These concern: representatives of students, PhD students, Universities, schools, trade unions, employer organizations, Ministry of education. The Head of the Commission is a member of the Accreditation council and the Commission includes two more members of the Accreditation Council. According to the plan for the activity of the Commission for 2020, it has carried out the following activities: organizing meetings with the University management staff, scientific organizations, Students union etc. on problems of HE of current interest; spreading information about changes in the procedures and legislation of NEAA; discussions on the Annual report of the group for internal audit etc.

Additionally, three more remarks concerning the activity of NEAA and its communication and dialogue with stakeholders in QA activities:

1. All materials (reports, analysis, letters etc.) which refer to the finished procedures for evaluation and accreditation, are uploaded on the website of the Agency. In the name of transparency of the accreditation process, NEAA publishes expert groups' reports on the Agency's website, including all of them, as well as executive summaries of their content in English.
2. Creating pools of review experts from different stakeholders' groups is a part of the activity of the Permanent Specialty Commissions. Training for review panel members is obligatory for admission to pools of new experts.
3. In the Ethic Code the necessity to avoid conflict of interests in the course of evaluation and accreditation procedures and how to accomplish this, is regulated in a clear manner.

On the basis of the above explanations it can be concluded, that NEAA shares the understanding, that the impact of stakeholders in external QA is really important. In its current practice stakeholders' involvement in QA is having a significant role, but on the basis of the international project it is revealed, that there are possibilities for further improvement.

IV.2.2. Part 2

NEAA - Analysis of needs of change following recommendations of the Guide for effective involvement of stakeholders' in quality assurance				
Theme		Needs analysis	Action required	Proposed timelines
Theme 1: Sharing underlying concepts of quality in HE and QA systems	The underlying concepts of quality and quality assurance system, as embedded in the higher education system, should be shared and co-created by involving relevant stakeholders. This way a commitment is built which is embedded in a quality culture that is based on trust and mutual understanding. Relevant stakeholder categories are all those that reflect the opinions present in the wider society linked to the quality of higher education.	Serious attention should be paid to sharing with stakeholders of values and concepts about quality in higher education and QA systems. The NEAA should be sure that it talks with stakeholders one and the same language and has one and the same understanding about HE and quality of HE. If this prerequisite is missing, there is possibility that the Agency underestimates the opinion of the different stakeholders (as being incompetent).	Carry out open dialogue with stakeholders about those underlying concepts.	Permanent
Theme 2: Diversity of categories of stakeholders and their different roles, especially in consultations	All identified and relevant stakeholders that have an interest in the quality of higher education should be systematically involved, especially when (re)designing a QA system. This may lead to more openness, transparency, and effective stakeholder involvement based on co-ownership.	Different groups of stakeholders (students, teaching staff, employers and professional bodies, alumni and national HE authorities, Universities and Research Institutes) participate with different representation at different levels of the internal organization of NEAA, where they share their points of view and their perceptions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More actively include the Council of Rectors in the design (redesign) of QA system. 2. Raise the stakeholders' interest in HE and in the nature of their contribution. Organize consultation rounds with individual stakeholders and their organizations on what they see themselves as useful stakeholder involvement in relation to the mission and strategy of a qualitative HEIs. Organize resonance and thematic dialogue groups. 3. More actively include in QA of HE and the activity of NEAA members of <i>nationally represented</i> employers organizations. 	Permanent Permanent
Theme 3: Objectives of	Be transparent and explicit in collectively sharing the different objectives of the involvement of	It is useful to have a list of agency's specific objectives for engaging with	1. Prepare such list	Permanent November 2021

stakeholders' involvement	stakeholder categories in order to raise the effectiveness of their involvement. As stakeholders are not a single, homogenous group, dealing with them requires a diversified approach; this may imply that their involvement is 'unequal' and happens at different stages.	specific stakeholders before discussing these openly with them.	2. Periodically ask stakeholders about their assessment of the quality of higher education and recommendations for its further improvement. Each group of stakeholders should possess a clear system of indicators, measuring the quality of HE.	Permanent
Theme 4: Recruitment/Selection of stakeholders	The selection methods should be clear, publicly known and used consistently by the agency and all stakeholders, including the national authorities. The recruitment methods may vary among the stakeholder groups. While nomination by the stakeholder's organization is a sign of greater trust and independence, selection by the agency based on clear criteria can help find a better candidate as far as vision, knowledge, experience and commitment are concerned. A combination of both has better chances of selecting more engaged stakeholders. Preparatory meetings should best be held with the nominating stakeholder organizations in order to clarify roles and expectations of the future representatives.	Different approaches are applied at the NEAA in respect to recruitment of stakeholders in the activity of NEAA, which are based on clear criteria. Pools of review experts are created, which are normally used in nominating stakeholders' representatives in governance functions or in decision-making bodies of NEAA.	1. Reconsideration and discussion of the criteria for the selection of members of the <i>Permanent Specialty Commissions</i> at the Accreditation Council in connection with the necessity to elaborate new members of the Commissions. 2. Continue discussion on selection criteria.	May 2021 Permanent
Theme 5: Training of stakeholders	Well-prepared knowledge transfer about higher education and quality assurance should be organized in order to raise the commitment of stakeholders in the governance and work of the QA agency. Trainings for review panel members should be obligatory for admission to pools of	Knowledge transfer can be organized through seminars, thematic meetings, online sessions. They can be organized for all stakeholders, or for a particular stakeholders' group. There is a necessity for creating digital infrastructure for communication with different stakeholders' groups. It can be	1. Sessions should be organized for the new entrants to the pool of evaluators. Sessions should include presentations of legal provisions, evaluation criteria, standard and performance indicators as well as study cases – practical work on real cases. 2. Themes with a long term significance to be discussed with stakeholders can be:	Permanent

	new experts as well as before actual evaluations. The trainings should be informative and develop the trainees' review skills in practice. Briefings must be held before any review.	used for exchange of information and also for training the stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - with students – learning outcomes, student-centered learning, satisfaction and participation in the learning process; - with teachers – the design of programmes; - with employers – placement and employability in relation to learning outcomes. <p>3. Organize a conference with the participation of all stakeholders on the topic “Online education and the quality of HE’.</p>	Permanent April 2022
Theme 6: Involvement of stakeholders in reviews	Review panels should contain all perspectives of the institution, programme and/or topics under review. If the subjects are the QA processes and the output of a HEI or study programme, the perspectives are those of learners (students), teachers (academic peers/experts), the leadership of the institution (senior leaders or managers), the professional field and of the future lives of the graduates (employers and/or alumni). The opinions of all review panel members should receive equal attention during the review and decision processes, irrespective of their different roles and duties. The international perspective is important in a review panel in the context of global higher education and certainly when the HEI or study programme has a specific international strategy and/or dimension.	It is highly recommendable to expand the involvement of <i>foreign experts</i> in the evaluation and accreditation procedures of NEAA. For now this participation takes place only in connection with institutional accreditation procedures and this happens pretty rarely. On the other hand, the involvement of foreign experts is a very important and strategically oriented part of the activity of NEAA. The process of internationalization of HE develops fast, many universities in Bulgaria already offer education in English, therefore the evaluation and opinion of foreign experts is important in assessing the quality of HE. In such a way also the integration of the Bulgarian HE in the European Higher Education Area will be stimulated. The opposite process is also very important – the participation of Bulgarian experts in QA procedures in other European countries.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carry out a selection of candidates for international evaluators. 2. Revise and update NEAA Register of international evaluators. 	December 2021 November 2021
Theme 7: Involvement of stakeholders in the governance	The categories of the stakeholders and their degree of engagement are related to the mission and strategy of a QA agency as well as to the national QA system. Consequently, all relevant and	It is important for QA agencies to have regular meetings with representatives of all stakeholders. At present an on-going process of re-design of the QA system at NEAA is	1.Organize a wide discussion with all groups of stakeholders in respect to the new Methodology before it is being approved by the Accreditation Council.	June 2021

and organization of QA agencies	identified stakeholders should be involved in internal and external QA activities of the agency.	taking place, on the basis of legal changes, undertaken in 2020 in the Law of Higher education . New Methodology with quantitative and qualitative indicators for evaluation is developed and discussed at the Accreditation Council.	2. Activate the role of the Consultation council and the Commission for QA in the governance of NEAA.	Permanent
Theme 8: Independence vis-à-vis stakeholders' involvement	The involvement of stakeholders should be organized in such a way that the independence of the QA system, the governance and activities of the agency are enhanced.	The design of a digital forum for all participating parties and a system of qualitative and quantitative indicators for QA of HE will contribute for the transparency and independence of stakeholders' involvement.		
Theme 9: Communication and transparency towards stakeholders	Communication and transparency with all stakeholders should be considered as essential and strategic building blocks of quality assurance that functions as an effective stakeholders' model, in which there is a culture of co-creating and sharing of knowledge and practice.	NEAA publishes on its website different materials: starting with informing stakeholders about processes and providing updates on the outcomes of quality assurance activities such as reviews of HEIs and thematic analysis.	1. Create new and substantially improved website of NEAA on the basis of modern ICT. Open new channels for direct communication with different groups of stakeholders. 2. Start publishing NEAA's newsletter.	2022 2023
Theme 10: Strategic approach to stakeholder engagement and supporting activities	Stakeholder involvement which is aimed at having a qualitative impact should be integrated in the agency's strategic policy, and should also be linked to other policies, such as structural development, networking, communication and the agency's own internal quality assurance.	At NEAA a strategic approach is applied in respect to effective involvement of stakeholders in EQA. The involvement of stakeholders in the activity of NEAA, for example, is one of the milestones of The Strategy for the development of NEAA in 2018-2022 .	Develop and implement a strategy about stakeholder's involvement that is linked to the general strategy of NEAA.	2022



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Effective involvement of Stakeholders in
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