

## Mobility report

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Please provide the following information about the mobility. This document, accompanied by the proof of multiplier presentation that is to be conducted after the mobility period, should be submitted to project coordinator at [goran.dakovic@enqa.eu](mailto:goran.dakovic@enqa.eu) no later than one month after the end of the mobility.

### 1. What were your expectations of the mobility? What did you want to learn or achieve?

As ACQAHE is a relatively young Agency, any exchanged experiences, practices, learning from colleagues who are much longer in field of quality assurance of higher education, can have multiple benefits for the employees of the Agency in the process of implementation of quality assurance criteria and procedures. The improvement of the external evaluation process and national criteria for external evaluation as well as the improvement of the quality of work of expert groups and greater involvement of stakeholders should be continuously implemented.

This mobility gave me the opportunity to gather the knowledge, ideas and experience, in which way to improve the procedures of quality assurance in Montenegrin higher education system. Specially because, as a young Agency with the goal to implement all ESG's but having in mind the specificities of the country's higher education system the exchange of the knowledge was of great importance. Some of the topics that were important for our future work in the ACQAHE and for which I got the answers and ideas how to implement them in our system were: clear and precise procedures for the external quality assurance, indicators for external evaluation, criterias etc.

What was most important for me, since I work at the quality control department was the external evaluation of higher education institutions with all procedures, review panels, the evaluation and all elements of the process. This was specially important because the first external evaluation cycle of higher education institutions in Montenegro was in the end during my mobility at ANVUR.

### 2. Please provide a detailed description of activities during your mobility

Mobility lasted three days, 21-23 June 2022. The Agenda was as follows:

#### Tuesday, June 21

- Welcome meeting with people for the ANVUR
- Activities of the Agency (Daniele Livon, director; Marilena Maniaci, member of the ANVUR Governing Board; Massimo Tronci, member of the ANVUR Governing Board)
- Presentation of the activities:
  - Initial accreditation of new study programmes (Alessio Anciani, Evaluation of Universities and Higher Education in Art, Music and Dance Manager (AFAM) Manager; Morena Sabella, Head of the Self-assessment, Periodic Evaluation, Accreditation (AVA) unit)
  - Periodic accreditation of HEIs and study programmes according to the AVA3 model (Alessio Ancaiani; Morena Sabella; Anna Marchetti and Antonella D'Apollò, AVA officers)

#### Wednesday, June 22

- Evaluation tools:

- Monitoring indicators (HEIS, study programmes) – Giampiero D’Alessandro, AVA Officer
  - Annual form for study programme (SUA-Scheda Unica Annuale dei corsi di studio) Emilia Primeri, AVA Officer
  - Selection and training of evaluation experts for Universities and AFAM institutes’ assessment (Cecilia Bibbo, AFAM Officer; Stefano Santoli, AVA Officer)
  - Student’ opinions survey (Alessio Ancaiani, Giampiero D’Alessandro)
- Thursday, June 23
- Activities and guidelines for the Evaluation Units of Universities and AFAM (Cecilia Bibbo, AFAM officer; Paolo Labianco, AVA Officer)
  - Meeting with representatives of ANVUR for concluding remarks (Alessio Ancaiani; Emilia Primeri)

Representatives of ANVUR provided all information about the presentation as well as documents related to specific topics we have discussed during these three days. These materials and information will be useful for future planning and improvements of by-laws and procedures in ACQAHE.

3. To which topics/objectives of the SEQA-ESG was your need for peer support linked? Please check all that apply.

- legal frameworks in line with ESG compliance;
- alignment of the QA processes to the ESG peer-review method;**
- connection of national criteria with the ESG;**
- appropriate methods and criteria for the involvement of peer reviewers;**
- stakeholder involvement in external QA;
- other.**

3.1 Please elaborate on how the mobility increased your knowledge of the topic(s)/objective(s) mentioned above:

The quality assurance system of higher education in Montenegro is still under development. Although the Agency for Quality Control and Assurance has existed since the end of 2018, we are now, in mid-2022, completing the first cycle of external evaluations of higher education institutions. In addition to evaluations of higher education institutions, during the past three and a half years, the ACQAHE also carried out evaluations of study programs, which resulted in the harmonization of programs to the new model of studies, after the adoption of the Law on higher education, as well as new programs proposed by institutions.

In this sense, every experience and all the information collected by colleagues from Agencies from the region are very important.

After receiving a positive feedback about the approval of mobility from project coordinator, two online meetings were organised with the colleagues from ANVUR with the aim of defining the important topics that would be covered during the mobility. In that time period (before realizing the mobility), we have exchanged documents and information about our Agencies, in order to gather more knowledge and information about how our systems work, but also to raise additional questions on specific topics that were of interest for ACQAHE.

The visit itself was organized in such a way that during my stay at ANVUR, all employees presented the specifics of their sector, with open conversations and discussion during the presentations. When it comes to follow-up procedures, based on the information on how this is realized in ANVUR, how are they chosen, i.e. which programs enter this type of evaluation procedure, how is it monitored, what is the process of preparing materials both by the ANVUR and higher education institutions, etc., were extremely useful and some of the elements were immediately applied upon returning to the ACQAHE with the aim of improving our procedures.

The very useful topic was about the review panels, and the involvement of expert coordinators, as members of the panels. This is specially important in the evaluation procedures in the systems with a large number of programs and institutions in order to ensure consistency in the implementation of procedures. In the process of gathering and inviting experts to participate in evaluation procedures, the situation is very similar to the procedures in the ACQAHE. The criteria that ANVUR use when choosing experts to work in review panels are very similar to those used by ACQAHE, namely:

- experts are hired on a rotating basis – this is something that ACQAHE is improving constantly, since Montenegrin higher education system is small, and all reviewers from the neighbouring countries are from the same speaking area. This is a benefit because we do not need to rely only on reviewers from Montenegro, but we can engage the reviewers from Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Slovenia.
- The principle of territoriality - as in ACQAHE, the ANVUR do not hire experts from the same region as the institution they are evaluating. Montenegro is a small country and in that sense, it is very difficult to establish a review panel with expert that do not know each other, or even haven't work together on project or similar. The good thing is that there is no language barrier when it comes to the experts from the neighbouring countries, so they can participate easily in the review panels.

What is particularly useful, and what ACQAHE will apply in the coming period, are the measures that are taken in the event that the experts do not fulfill their obligations. Namely, according to the rules and regulations of the commission's work, it is possible to replace an expert in Akokvo in case he does not fulfill his duties, at the proposal of the president of the commission. However, there are no measures that would be taken if the expert is late in fulfilling his obligations, if he repeatedly refuses the invitation to participate in commissions, etc. The experience and practice of ANVUR in covering these issues will be very useful for ACQAHE, specially in defining a specific measures and situations in the work of the review panels. In addition, the lack of expert training is a challenge we face. In the accreditation process, the training of experts, which would be an integral part of the rules, depends on the competent institutions that make the rules. In the process of evaluation of institutions, training is planned and implemented, but the number of these procedures is significantly smaller and they are conducted periodically.

The challenge is also reflected in the harmonization of individual elements of ESG with the current law and by-laws. Here, first of all, it means the implementation of subsequent evaluations (especially the absence of this type of evaluation in the evaluation procedures of study programs), and then the procedure and methodology based on which it is determined which programs/institutions must undergo mandatory follow-up. The experience of ANVUR was very useful in this part, because after the end of the mobility, in ACQAHE a plan of follow-ups was prepared for all institutions that were reaccredited in the previous period. The institutions were informed, an opinion and elaboration of the level of implementation of the recommendations of the expert commissions was requested. According to the plan, from September 2022 first information and reports on the degree of implementation are expected.

The presentation of the information system and platform within which electronic records are kept (and the procedure is carried out) in connection with the evaluations of study programs and institutions is a challenge and a great need and challenge that ACQAHE is facing with. Such a system is needed both from the aspect of timely collection of information, display and use of performance indicators, etc., as well as and from the aspect of easier sharing and access to information related to current and previous procedures. In today's time, when digitization and the digital way of doing business is an integral part of all work activities, the lack of such a system that would be developed under the initiative of the highest management level, but also the obligation to use it by all institutions is the need and obligation of an efficient way of working and quality improvement of the institutions that deal with quality assurance.

4. How has/will the mobility impact(ed) the implementation of the national action plan/agency review action plan?

Mobility will impact the implementation of the national action plan, through the creation of policies and activities that will imply a clear and even better elaboration of the needs for harmonizing ESGs with the legal and by-law regulations of the ACQAHE. Improvement of national criteria for external QA, by-laws (procedures) for external evaluations that will be harmonized with ESGs, mandatory introduction of training, not only for experts, but first training for coordinators and then for all experts are something that ACQAHE must introduce as an indispensable element of the procedure if it wants to ensure consistency and clarity in the assessment and evaluation of study programs and higher education institutions. In addition, through the improvement of the by-laws and the introduction of mandatory follow-up procedures, which would be included in the evaluation procedures of study programs, it will contribute to the harmonization of ESG, but also to the improvement of procedures for ensuring the quality of higher education.

5. What was your overall experience of the quality of the mobility offered? Please select one of the below options.

- excellent;**  
 good;  
 sufficient;  
 poor;  
 very poor.

5.1 Please elaborate on your answer. What was (excellent, good, sufficient, poor, very poor) about the mobility? Were your expectations on the knowledge shared met?

The organization of the mobility by ANVUR was excellent. During three days, I had meetings with representatives of all sectors, on topics that I marked as important in the process of gathering information. After three days spent at the agency, I gathered information and knowledge and had a complete picture of the quality assurance process in the Italian agency. What was particularly significant was that I received answers to all the questions and dilemmas I had in our quality assurance processes, as well as ideas how certain elements could be included in the procedures at ACQAHE.

After mobility, certain improvements will be made and some have already started to be implemented in ACQAHE - the process of follow-up for all institutions of higher education that have been evaluated so far, preparation and improvement of the list of experts with the aim of greater internationalization and the inclusion of experts outside of the Montenegrin speaking area in evaluation processes, improvement of the rules of procedure on the work of review panels in

order to more clearly define the selection of panel members and use of the list of experts, improvement of the process of training of panel members by agency employees, first in the evaluation procedures of higher education institutions and then in the evaluation processes of study programs, defining the structure and method of conducting student surveys in the domain of preparing guidelines for the implementation of these activities, etc.

6. How have you disseminated the learning outcomes of the staff mobility within your organisation?

Dissemination has already been partially realized. The report after the realization of mobility has already been forwarded to the Agency's management and the Agency's employees, and on the basis of it, improvements have begun in the part of certain procedures that were previously discussed. Also, it is planned to prepare a presentation with detailed conclusions and proposals that will be forwarded to the employees of the Agency with an open possibility for additional discussion on all the elements covered by the mobility.

As annual vacations are in progress and a small number of employees are present at ACQAHE, the second part of the dissemination will be relayed in September, after the employees return from vacation.

7. How could the mobility and the learning experience have been improved (relevant for possible SEQA-ESG2 project)?

A longer period of mobility would definitely be a better option. The three days that my mobility lasted were very intense. Although the mobility lasted for a short time, the knowledge and information gathered during these three days will surely be of great use for the improvement of the quality assurance process in the ACQAHE.

Another way to improve mobility could be to consider the option that two employees from one agency use mobility, in order to collect more information on topics, especially those specific to certain individual processes. The sharing of experience is of great importance because one learns not only from good but also from bad examples, so any information in these processes is welcome in order to improve the procedures.



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