

## Mobility report

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

The National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC) of the Republic of Moldova is an administrative authority, established by the Government, thus a legal public body responsible for quality assurance in the field of education and research in the country. Currently, taking into account that the agency has set as a goal, and also provided it as an activity/objective to be achieved both in the National action plan and in its own Action plan for 2022, is making the necessary efforts to apply and hopefully become a full member of ENQA.

The objective of the mobility to the Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study Programmes (AQAS), Germany, was mainly focused on an exchange of experience and taking over of the best practices from AQAS, their dissemination and implementation, in order to better align ANACEC procedures to the ESG.

Thus, it was expected to have the possibility to learn as much as possible about AQAS and its national and international procedures, their implementation in the daily work of the agency, what are the challenges faced and how the agency manages to overcome them, job shadow an external evaluation procedure.

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

The mobility to AQAS took place from 7th to 10th June 2022 during which period I was involved in a series of activities. Mainly, I attended, as an observer, the online site visit to the Brawijaya University, where a cluster of study programmes “Fisheries & Marine Science” was under the international external evaluation conducted by the German agency (June 6-10). A week before the mobility, first I had the opportunity to learn about the university and the evaluated study programmes from the self-evaluation report that was kindly provided by AQAS for examination. In this way, I had an insight on the structure of that self-evaluation report. Then, at AQAS, I was already observing the work of the external evaluation panel and the work of the designated consultants who were responsible for managing the procedure. Namely, I observed the discussions held by experts with the management staff of the university, with the teaching staff, students and graduates, labour market representatives and the concluding remarks / overall feedback of the experts to the university. As a result, I *learnt about the international external evaluation procedure* applied by AQAS and which is ESG based.

Apart from participating in an international online site visit I *job-shadowed the host agency’s activities* in its head office and *discussed to the people* that were there *on different topics of interest* to ANACEC.

Thus, I had discussions with:

- Doris Herrmann on the overall activity of the agency and her vision on the future of quality assurance in the German context;
- Ronny Heintze – the involvement of stakeholders in agency’s external quality assurance activities, including the involvement of peer-reviewers; the external evaluation of joint study programmes (procedure, challenges, and practical issues);
- Alexandre Wipf – consultant in the international evaluation procedure at the Brawijaya University, the tasks carried out by a consultant;
- Annette Büning – national and international evaluation procedure, general overview;
- Patricia Liesenfeld – insight into the national external evaluation procedure, the changes implemented since 2018;
- Sarah Jenischewski – evaluation of the internationalization domain of universities.

Also, AQAS shared with us the relevant documentation, that is available in English, about its procedures and the national legal framework in place for comparison with the Moldovan ones.

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 mobility done at AQAS resulted in a fruitful exchange of experience between the German agency and ANACEC. I found that, for the most part, the external evaluation procedure is very similar, common to both agencies. With regard to the legal frameworks in line with ESG compliance and connection of national criteria with the ESG, I noticed some differences, namely in terms of external quality assessment at national level, which, after the restructuring of the German accreditation system in 2018, has changed, not at the level of procedure (stages of evaluation) in general, which has largely remained unchanged, but in terms of evaluation standards and the decision-making procedure. Thus, according to the new regulations, AQAS evaluates study programs according to the Interstate Treaty that sets which criteria apply to study programmes and are the subject of quality assurance in a way imposed by the German Accreditation Council, which is also the decision-making body regarding the evaluation results. These evaluation standards / formal and academic criteria take into account the ESG recommendations.

Stakeholders are involved in the Standing Commission of AQAS, including in the panels of experts, and comprise representatives from universities, professional practice and students. AQAS has also good relationships not only with higher education institutions and organizations, but also with business associations, the Student Accreditation Pool. There is a constant exchange with and feedback from stakeholders on different aspects related to the accreditation system applied.

When it comes to the external evaluation in the national context, according to the Interstate Treaty, the German Rectors' Conference should develop a procedure which ensures that academia is adequately involved in the appointment of all experts taking part in accreditation procedures. AQAS, like any other German QA Agency, has to comply with this procedure. The German Rectors' Conference adopted the guidelines on the nomination of professors for review panels in 2018. In addition to the appointment procedure itself, the guidelines also define the criteria for selecting experts. The university can make a proposal for the professional profile of the experts, but it may not name specific individuals it wishes to have nominated as experts. The Head Office contacts the experts in question and compiles a proposal for a panel of experts. According to the guidelines of the German Rectors' Conference, this proposal is initially sent to the university, which may point out any possible lack of impartiality on the part of the selected experts. The panel of experts is then confirmed by members of the Standing Commission: the rapporteur (usually a professor who assumes this role for the assessment procedure concerned), the Chair, a representative of professional practice and a student representative. This procedure ensures that all stakeholder groups are involved in the nomination and appointment of experts.

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

By carrying out all these activities, analysing and comparing the QA laws, regulations, procedures, methodologies and standards applied in the Republic of Moldova and by AQAS in relation to the external QA in higher education led to achieving new knowledge, sharing of experience and taking over best practices to be implemented by ANACEC in order to achieve the objectives / activities set out in the national and institutional action plans. This will also result in the dissemination of the knowledge gained to be also used in the formulation of the recommendations necessary to improve the agency's internal and external QA activities and the national legal framework so that they become eventually ESG compliant.

The implementation of the activities provided in both the national and agency's action plans is an ongoing activity, some of them being more or less carried out. For example, the agency developed and approved a regulation on the effective involvement of stakeholders in its QA activities. Another important activity now is the review of the national quality standards with regard to institutional accreditation and the external evaluation of joint study programmes in line with the ESG and the European approach. All of these aspects were also discussed during the mobility at AQAS and the relevant information was shared with ANACEC management and staff from the Department of Evaluation in Higher Education.

Another important aspect, also provided in the action plans, is that ANACEC has applied for an external review against ESG in order to become a member of ENQA and to be registered in EQAR.

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 mobility at AQAS was very well organized so that I could have an insight into agency's international accreditation procedure of study programmes at the Brawijaya University where I had the possibility to job-shadow this activity, even discuss with the members of the expert panel and receive guidance from the consultant in the international evaluation procedure at the Brawijaya University. In a separate discussion, the consultant told me about the roles, responsibilities and tasks carried out by a consultant at AQAS. All the people I met in the office and online were very open and keen to share their knowledge and experience so that I could learn as much as possible about the agency and its work. Thus, I learned about the overall activity of the agency, the involvement of stakeholders in agency's external quality assurance activities, including the involvement of peer-reviewers, the national and international evaluation procedure, the national external evaluation procedure, the effect of the changes implemented since 2018, which were my expectations initially. But it is worth mentioning that this mobility to AQAS proved to be beyond my expectations, because, apart from what it was planned, I also learnt about the external evaluation of joint study programmes and the evaluation of the internationalization domain of universities.

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

The first dissemination of the staff mobility at AQAS, objectives, and general learning outcomes were disseminated on the Facebook page of ANACEC on June 13<sup>th</sup>. The objective of this dissemination was to inform the general public about the activity carried out and the results of this activity.

Then, on June 20<sup>th</sup>, a dissemination seminar was organized within the agency. The seminar was attended by the president, vice-president of ANACEC, staff from the Department of Evaluation in Higher Education, and also staff from other departments that were interested to learn more about the results of the mobility. The President of the agency highlighted the importance of such staff mobilities for the further development of ANACEC through best practices and knowledge gained from other EU quality assurance agencies. Thus, a PPT presentation was made with the activities carried out, the findings and conclusions made to be taken into account when it comes to implementing our own procedures, including the experience and best practices from AQAS that could be implemented by ANACEC. Also, relevant documentation that was provided by AQAS was shared with the agency's staff. A session of questions and answers followed, colleagues being interested in more details about AQAS accreditation procedures and the external evaluation of joint study programs.

A report was also written and sent to the Human Resource Department for recording the activity of staff mobility into their register for keeping track of agency's staff activities outside the agency and annual reporting.

The PPT presentation and photos are attached and will be also placed on the agency's website in the section dedicated to the SEQA-ESG project.

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

Taking into account that staff mobilities provide a great opportunity for people to learn about the experience of peers from other agencies and the possibility to share it with colleagues it would be a good idea to provide agencies with the possibility of sending not only one, but at least two people on mobility, including a representative of the managerial staff of the agency.

Job-shadowing is a great experience when it comes to observing an external evaluation procedure and I strongly recommend it in the future for all staff mobilities.

It would be also really nice if the host agency has the possibility to also visit the agency they hosted to be able to learn more about it, about the challenges they face and about their good examples and practices, as well.



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