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NACIONALNA AGENCIJA REPUBLIKE SLOVENIJE
ZA KAKOVOST V VISOKEM ŠOLSTVU

SLOVENIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

NAKVIS STRATEGY 2026–2030

THEMATIC ANALYSES

THE USE OF AI IN QUALITY ASSURANCE

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NACIONALNA AGENCIJA REPUBLIKE SLOVENIJE ZA KAKOVOST V VISOKEM ŠOLSTVU
SLOVENIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

About the Agency

Overview of the Agency's work in 2025

1. About the Agency

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia established the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter: the Agency/NAKVIS/Nakvis) in 2010 as a public body for quality assurance in higher education and for development and advisory work. The Agency is a direct non-governmental budget user. Acting under public authority, it issues general acts for the exercise of public authorities and individual administrative acts. In carrying out its work, the Agency is independent and autonomous and committed to the principles of professionalism, impartiality, legality and political neutrality. The Agency is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European Register of Agencies (EQAR), the Europeran Accreditation Consortium (ECA), Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA), and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). Its membership in international associations for quality assurance in higher education proves the compliance of its operation with European standards and guidelines.

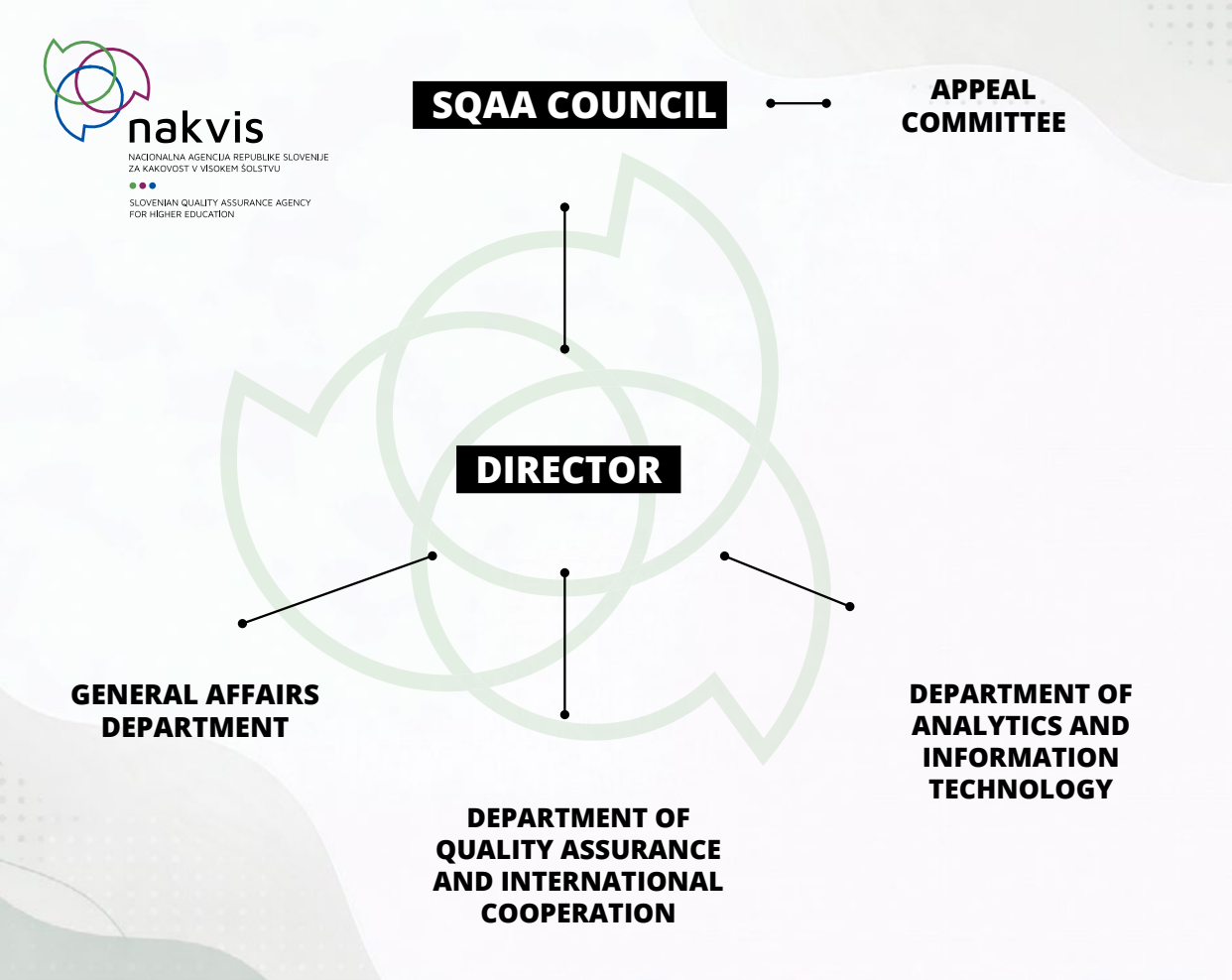
Mission

The Agency provides for comparability and international recognition of Slovenian higher education area and strives for continuous improvement of its quality. It operates with substantive and formal responsibility, in expert, professional and independent manner, and provides counselling for all stakeholders in tertiary education in accordance with the European and global development orientations.

Vision

By activities in the implementation of processes in the field of assuring and improving quality in higher education, the Agency will change the national and international higher education area.

Organisational structure of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education



Agency's departments

The Agency's departments perform tasks in the basic areas of the Agency's operation, which means that they draft criteria and other regulations, conduct accreditation and evaluation procedures, update the Agency's information system, prepare analyses and guidelines to support the systems and quality assessment, engage in international networking, oversee the transparency of work and communication with stakeholders, and prepare materials for decision-making of the Agency Council and for the Appeal Committee. One of the basic activities is constant international cooperation with related agencies and associations of agencies, as well as development and consulting work.

The Agency's work is organised in three departments – the Quality Assurance and International Cooperation Department, the Analytics and Information Technology Department, and the General Affairs Department. Each department has its own head. The tasks carried out by individual departments are intertwined or closely linked. As a result, they must often be performed by professional staff from various departments.

The Agency's main activities, accreditation and evaluation procedures, are conducted by staff from both the Quality Assurance Department and the International Cooperation and the Analytics and Information Technology Department.

Table 1:
Overview of tasks related to the external quality assessment of higher and higher vocational education by departments:

Director: Franci Demšar,PhD, alternate Klemen Šubic

Quality Assurance and International Cooperation Department

Head of the department: Gregor Rebernik, alternates Nataša Kramar and Anita Kajtazović
Staff: Martina Mravlja, Maruša Trobec, Julija Uršič, Špela Zakrajšek, Oskar Opassi and Meta Bajželj

Fields of work:
- criteria and other provisions from the field of quality;
- accreditations and evaluations;
- modifications of study programmes;
- cooperation with stakeholders (institutions/colleges, experts);
- communications and public relations;
- international activities;
- organisation and cooperation in different national and international events (conferences, consultations, training courses, workshops);
- keeping and updating records (on accreditations, evaluations, modifications, transnational higher education – THE, etc.);
- project-based collaborations and activities (microcredentials, European universities, etc.);
- intersectoral cooperation (integrity, promotion of health, self-evaluation, etc.);
- archiving applications and other documents.

Analytics and Information Technology Department:

Head of the department: Maja Milas, PhD, alternates Andrej Krček and Filip Draženović
Staff: Matjaž Štuhec, PhD, Tatjana Horvat and Tilen Heco

Fields of work:
- plans and reports (annual work plan and report on the work and operations of the Agency, strategy);
- analyses, documents, publications;
- self-evaluation of the Agency;
- manuals, guides;
- organisation and cooperation in different events (conferences, consultations, training courses, workshops);
- translation;
- eNakvis information system and links with databases (SICRIS, IZUM);
- internal information system iNakvis;
- intersectoral cooperation (integrity, promotion of health, etc.);
- keeping and updating records (on accreditations, evaluations, modifications, THE, etc.);

General Affairs Department:

Head of the department: Barbara Zupančič Kočar, alternates: Mateja Bajuk Malešič and Snežana Mačar
Staff: Slađana Tomić, Prudencija Perat and Zala Sečnik

Fields of work:
- legislation, preparation of internal Agency acts;
- assistance in the implementation of activities from the field of quality assurance;
- work for the Appeal Committee;
- financial affairs (budget implementation);
- human resources affairs;
- access to public information;
- business and administrative tasks (contracts, receiving and sending mail, document records etc.);
- participation in external and internal supervision procedures;
- intersectoral cooperation (integrity, promotion of health, self-evaluation, etc.);
- keeping and updating human resource and other records within its powers.

Agency Council

The Agency Council is the highest decision-making body. The 11 members appointed to the Agency Council by its key stakeholders ensure politically independent decision-making and the participation of all relevant stakeholders:

- three members are appointed by the Rectors' Conference,
- one member is appointed by the representative association of independent higher education institutions,
- one member is appointed by the representative association of higher vocational colleges,
- two members are appointed by the representative organisation of students in cooperation with student councils,
- one member is appointed by representative employers' associations by agreement,
- one member is appointed by representative trade unions in the field of higher education by agreement,
- two members are appointed by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia based on public invitation (one is an expert in the field of higher education or its quality assurance and one is an expert in the field of higher education or its quality assurance who studies or works abroad).

The Agency Council:

- determines and adopts criteria for accreditation and external evaluation of higher education institutions, study programmes, higher vocational colleges and other regulations related to it; all are published on the Agency's website;
- decides on the following:
  - initial accreditation of higher education institutions and their reaccreditation, which may be granted for a maximum of five years,
  - accreditations of study programmes, including international joint study programmes, for an infinite period;
  - accreditation of transformations of higher education institutions;
  - compliance with conditions for the entry of a transnational higher education in the public records;
  - notifications of international study programmes accredited abroad;
- adopts opinions about compliance with quality standards of higher vocational colleges;
- issues recommendations to higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges to improve the quality of all their activities, and especially self-evaluation, updating and delivery of study programmes.

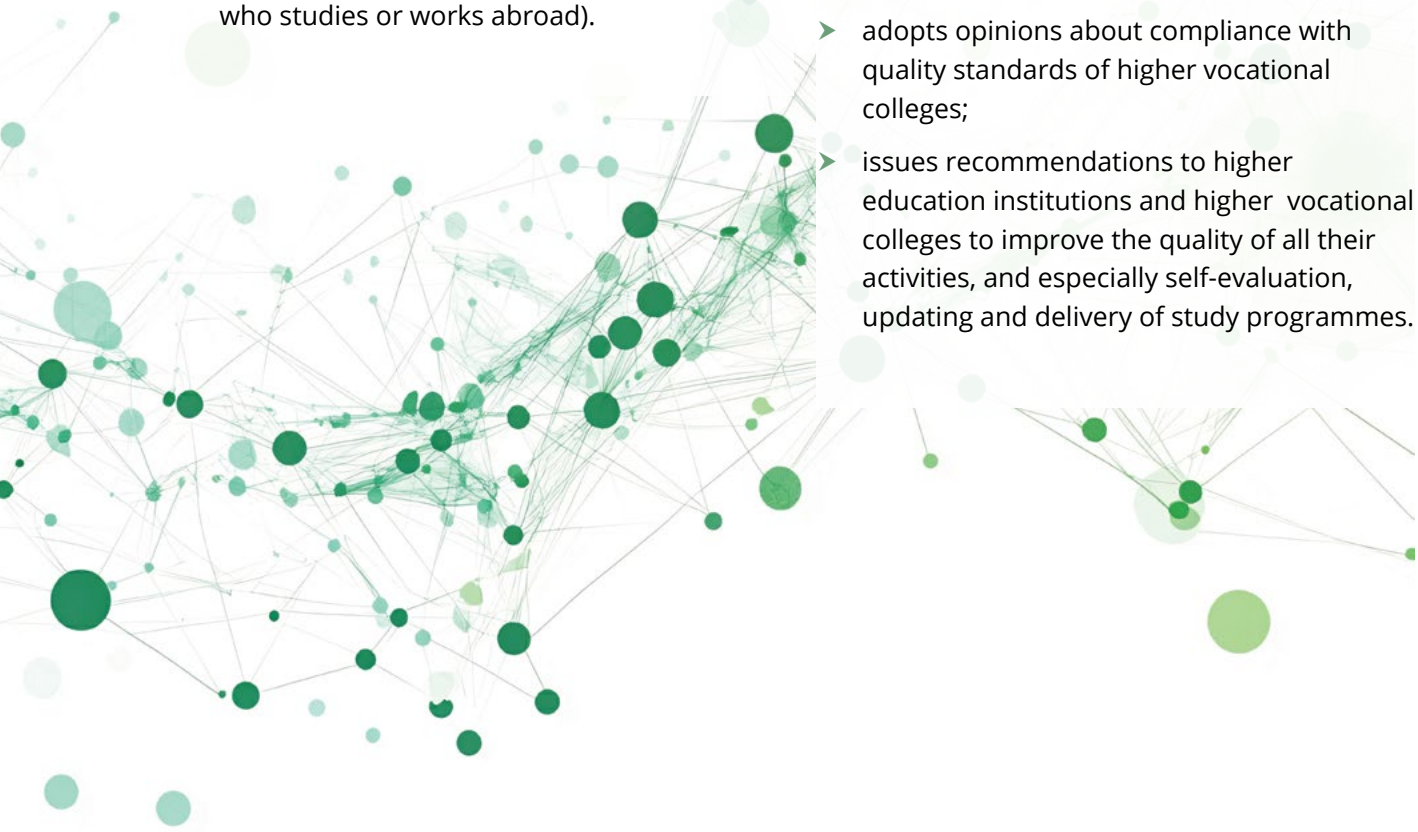


Table 2:
Council members in 2025

MEMBERS	Institution appointing the member
Boris Dular, PhD, President of the Council	Representative employer association by agreement
Marjan Mernik, PhD, Agency Council Deputy President (until February 2025)	Rectors' conference of the Republic of Slovenia
Goran Turk, PhD	Rectors' conference of the Republic of Slovenia
Klemen Širok, PhD, Agency Council Deputy President	Rectors' conference of the Republic of Slovenia
Sebastjan Kristovič, PhD, from 21 May 2025 Jaka Vadnjal, PhD	Representative association of independent higher education institutions
Branko Škafar, PhD	Representative association of higher vocational colleges
David Bohar	Representative organisation of students in cooperation with student councils
Jure Ciglar	Representative organisation of students in cooperation with student councils
Slavko Gaber, PhD, from 18 December 2025	Representative trade unions in higher education
Julijana Kristl, PhD	Government of the Republic of Slovenia
Peter Verovšek, PhD	Government of the Republic of Slovenia

The Appeal Comittee

The Appeal Comittee is a second-instance body deciding on appeals against decisions adopted by the Agency Council in the procedures for accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes.

The Appeal Committee is appointed by the Agency Council on the basis of a public invitation. The Appeal Committee consists of three members, each of whom has an alternate. The members elect from among themselves a chair and deputy chair. Alternates replace members in decision-making procedures in the event of their absence or exclusion.

Table 3:
Appeal Committee members in 2025

MEMBERS	Alternates
Uršula Habe Nagode, member	Robert Marolt, M. Sc.
Marko Novak, PhD, alternate Chair of the Appeal Committee	Tina Tratnik
Andreja Rakuša	Katarina Vatovec, PhD

2. Overview of the Agency's work in 2025

In 2025, the Agency continued to deliver on the objectives set out in its Development Strategy 2021–2025. It focused on key priority areas related to the amendments to the new Higher Education Act (ZVIS-1) and the improvement of the assessments according to quality standards as well as the accreditation and evaluation procedures themselves. In addition, it worked extensively on in-depth analytical work, the establishment of up-to-date databases on selected activities, the Sustainable Development Goals, active international cooperation and the communication of its activities to higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges. At the end of 2025, the Agency drafted a new Strategy for the 2026 to 2030 period.

Decisions in accreditation and evaluation procedures – on granting accreditation or rejecting an application for it, reaccreditation or possible withdrawal – are decisively influenced by the compliance with quality standards by the areas of quality assessment. The Agency constantly strives to ensure and improve professional and objective quality assessment in accreditation and evaluation procedures. To this end, it appoints independent groups of experts – each must include at least one foreign expert and one student – who carry out an in-depth assessment of compliance with quality standards in all areas of assessment.

The Agency regularly trains experts and candidates for experts in specialised sessions and workshops, and keeps them informed about changes to the Agency's regulations and international standards for quality assessment. In doing so, it consistently stresses the need for impartial and in-depth substantive assessment of quality and for providing information on the characteristics of and satisfaction with these assessments. It also familiarises experts with the protocol for visiting higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges and the importance of meeting other key conditions for participation, such as the ability to work in a team and a respectful attitude towards interlocutors.

The findings of the group of experts stated in the accreditation and evaluation reports are the basis for decisions on accreditations and external evaluations, or important recommendations for quality improvement.

Table 4:
Areas of quality assessment according to the types of accreditations or external evaluations

Initial accreditation of a higher education institution

- 1. Operation of the higher education institution
- 2. Human resources
- 3. Material condition

Reaccreditation of a higher education institution and external evaluation of a higher professional college

- 1. Operation of the higher education institution or higher vocational college
- 2. Human resources
- 3. Students
- 4. Material conditions
- 5. Internal quality assurance and improvement, modification, updating and delivery of study programmes

Accreditation of a study programme

- 1. Structure and content of a study programme
- 2. Study programme delivery concept

Evaluation of a study programme or a sample of study programme

- 1. Internal quality assurance and improvement of the quality of a study programme
- 2. Modification and updating of a study programme
- 3. Study programme delivery

Importance of cooperation

In Slovenia, external assessment of the quality of higher and higher vocational education is firmly linked to the active participation of students, teachers and researchers. The Agency and its predecessor, the Council for Higher Education, were one of the first in Europe and beyond to actively introduce students in their operation. Students are compulsory members of the Agency Council and all groups of experts, and their organisations participate in drafting legislation, criteria and other regulations. External quality assessment primarily addresses students, as well as teachers and researchers. The Agency's main task is to contribute to a high standard of education in state-approved study programmes. The state-approved status or validity of diplomas is guaranteed by a granted accreditation, which is within the competence of the Agency.

The task in the 2025 Agency's Annual Work Plan were defined by taking into account the following:

Strategic objectives of the Agency from 2021 to 2025:

- adoption of the Act on Quality in Higher and Higher Vocational Education;
- improvement of assessment according to quality standards and accreditation and evaluation procedures;
- in-depth substantive analytic work in selected areas;
- establishment of up-to-date databases on selected activities at higher education institutions;
- pursuing sustainable development goals;
- in-depth international cooperation;
- proactive communication;

Areas of assessment according to the Quality Manual:

- accreditations and external evaluations,
- internal quality assurance system of the Agency,
- external quality assurance system of the Agency,
- criteria and other provisions of the Agency,
- information system and provision of information;

Values of the Agency:

- professionalism,
- transparency,
- development.

The Agency organised a number of thematic and coordination meetings and events over the past year, providing an important hub for the exchange of ideas and experiences. It is the collaborations with a wide range of colleagues and other stakeholders in the Slovenian higher and higher vocational education area that have yielded important insights and principles underpinning the Agency's work.

The Agency builds links with different stakeholders, which enables it to design and improve accreditation and evaluation procedures. This collaborative approach is also the basis for quality relationships, which are crucial for the development and progress of the Slovenian higher and higher vocational education system.

Self-evaluation is also an important aspect of the Agency's work. The analysis of its own progress is inextricably linked to its vision. Self-evaluation as an important factor for quality development is also promoted in Slovenian higher and higher vocational education, following European standards and guidelines.

Legislation and other provisions from the field of quality

The Agency was heavily involved in the preparation of the ZViS in 2025. The Agency staff members met several times with representatives of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation to coordinate the individual provisions of the draft ZViS-1. The ZViS-1 was adopted in July 2025 and entered into force on 9 August 2025. The key innovations introduced by the new ZViS-1 in the field of the Agency's work are the following: the period of validity of the accreditation of a higher education institution is extended from five to seven years, procedural provisions for accreditation and evaluation procedures are introduced in the Act, allowing the Agency to perform accreditations and external evaluations abroad; external evaluations in accordance with the ZViS-1 and the Agency Council criteria may also be performed by foreign agencies registered in EQAR; introduction of a composition of the Agency Council balanced in terms of departments and gender; only compliance with specific provisions of the Act or the Agency Council criteria may be assessed in the procedures for the extraordinary evaluation of a higher education institution

or a study programme and in the evaluations of samples of study programmes; the Agency is no longer responsible for accrediting the study programme of a university reaccredited twice in a row for a full period; a legal basis is provided for linking research data on higher education teachers and data on graduate employability for analysis, accreditation and evaluation procedures; the termination of accreditation of study programmes that have not been delivered for a long time is foreseen, etc.

In its transitional provisions, the Act repealed all the Agency Council criteria and provided that they would remain in force until the adoption of new criteria, which must be adopted by the Agency Council within six months of the entry into force of the Act. The criteria had to be brought into line with the new Act, which the Agency undertook as soon as the Act was adopted.

Criteria for External Evaluation of Higher Vocational Colleges will be drafted in early 2026, following the adoption of the Criteria for the Accreditation and External Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes.

After coordination with stakeholders, it adopted in 2025:

- Criteria for the Allocation of Credits under the ECTS;
- Criteria for experts of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education;
- Minimum Standards for the Appointment to the Title of Higher Education Teacher, Researcher and Faculty Assistant at Higher Education Institutions;
- Draft Criteria for the Accreditation and External Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes;
- Draft Criteria for International Cooperation in Higher Education.

Documents relating to the Agency's operations

The Act amending the Act governing internal organisation and classification of posts in the Agency adopted in late May 2025 deleted vacant posts and created three new posts.

In July, the Act amending the Working Time Rules was adopted, deleting the entry of break time during working hours, following an amendment to the Labour and Social Security Registers Act (ZEPDSV-B). At the end of the year, the strategic planning documents and the overarching information security policy were also adopted.

In September, the new Rules on the remuneration of experts in NAKVIS accreditation and evaluation procedures were adopted on the basis of the new ZViS-1. The Rules set the remuneration of groups of experts participating in NAKVIS procedures, introduce a flat fee for all procedures, and increase the fees for the most undervalued procedures – in particular the accreditation of study programmes and the elimination of existing disproportions between procedures. The Rules are subject to the consent of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia.

In order to comply with the new ZViS-1, new Rules of Procedure for the work of the Agency Council were prepared in September and will be adopted after the Government of the Republic of Slovenia has given its consent to the Rules on the remuneration of experts in NAKVIS accreditation and evaluation procedures.

In June 2025, an updated and revised NAKVIS Communication Protocol was adopted. Some measures in the electronic risk register maintained by the Commission for the Prevention of

Corruption (KPK) and in the annual report submitted to the KPK in June 2025 have also been updated. In the framework of the Health Promotion Programme, which the Agency implements in accordance with the legislation, the 11th Action Plan for the new calendar year was adopted in April 2025. The education plan for 2025 was adopted as well.

Analyses, documents, publications

In 2025, the Agency completed its third systemic analysis of accreditation and evaluation practices. The analysis encompasses the review of expert group reports in accreditation and evaluation procedures and self-evaluation reports of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges in the period from 2018 to 2022.

More than 200 reports have been reviewed in total. System analyses are carried out over longer periods (three to five years) on the basis of pre-defined methodological frameworks. It is a thorough analysis of the accreditation and evaluation procedures in higher and higher vocational education, as well as the self-evaluation procedures of institutions and colleges during this period. The results of the analysis support the Agency, experts and higher and higher vocational education institutions in strengthening the quality of the education system and in improving accreditation, evaluation and self-evaluation procedures.

The substantive analysis of the reports of groups of experts based on the evaluations of samples also continued, this time in the area of study programmes, fields and plans to address non-compliances in the doctoral programmes sampled in 2022 and 2023. Both analyses will be presented to the NAKVIS Council in January 2026 and later to the wider public. The presentation of the analysis of the evaluation reports of doctoral programmes was made at the NAKVIS Consultation in May. The experts have also started to analyse the reports of the groups of experts in the field of health sampled in 2025.

In 2025, an analysis of the responses of stakeholders and experts to the questionnaires sent to them at the end of the procedures was also prepared. The aim of the analysis was to find out how satisfied the participants were with the way the procedures were carried out and what suggestions they had for improvement. Stakeholders' and experts' opinions are extremely important for the Agency's work, as they provide insight into the procedures from the perspective of other stakeholders.

In February 2025, the Agency launched its annual publication, which, in addition to presenting its activities and an annual report, also includes an analysis of the reports of the groups of experts based on the sample evaluations, this time in the field of teaching study programmes, as well as reports on the progress of these programmes. The publication also includes analyses of the duration of accreditation and evaluation procedures and guidelines for modifications of study programmes. The second part of the annual publication contained lectures presented at the international consultation on graduate career paths organised by the Agency.

The Agency strives to make its key documents and publications accessible to the international public, while at the same time ensuring that the publications of other players in the European Higher Education Area are translated into Slovenian. Particular attention has been paid to the terminological consistency of terms in the field of quality assurance in higher education, which contributes to the standardisation of key concepts in both languages.

International cooperation

Through its activities in European and international quality networks and associations, international projects and bilateral partnerships, the Agency aims to bring fresh insights and good practices to Slovenian higher education area. Thus it contributes to strengthening quality culture and ensures the comparability of the Slovenian higher education area with the European one.

The Agency is active in the European associations ENQA, CEENQA and ECA, and is also a member of the International Network of Quality Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), which gives it an insight into practices and innovation development in higher education beyond the European area. It also regularly cooperates with the European Registry of Agencies (EQAR) to share and publish up-to-date information on accredited higher education institutions and study programmes (DEQAR information database).

In 2025, in addition to its activities in ENQA, ECA, EQAR and CEENQA – the latter based, among other things, on the joint organisation of thematic events and the preparation of publications – the Agency continued its participation in the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG).

The Agency is involved in the European SMEQA project, which focuses on improving quality assurance systems in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the context of the project, it has participated in events in Banja Luka, Split, Neum, Ljubljana and Sarajevo, made presentations on different areas of the Agency's work, and took active part in round tables and discussions, all with the aim of strengthening quality assurance mechanisms in the region in the long term. The project's activities will end in 2026.

Among the international events attended by the Agency's employees, two bilateral meetings were held with the Croatian and Hungarian agencies, aimed at regional networking, learning about systems, exchanging good practices and identifying common challenges and solutions. In April, the employees attended the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA Members' Forum) and presented a proposal for a national award to recognise best sustainable practice in higher education institutions.

In June, an ENQA workshop on the use of artificial intelligence in higher education and the General Assembly of the international CEENQA network took place in Tallinn, where the employees also actively participated in a panel discussion. The employees also attended the EQAF Forum at Corvinus University in Budapest, which focused on the challenges of the future, as well as the EQAR and ENQA seminars, where additional ESG

standards and revised ESG standards were presented and on which the Agency provided substantive comments. The Agency representatives remain active in the BFUG as well. The Agency Director attended a conference at the European Parliament in Brussels, aimed at strengthening regional alliances in the Mediterranean and establishing a structured dialogue between the European Union and the Southern Mediterranean.

As a member of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) Board, the Deputy Director is responsible for the design and implementation of the ECA Expert Exchange Platform (ECA EEEP), which will allow all members to easily find and exchange experts in accreditation and evaluation procedures. The platform was born out of the need for qualified experts in different fields, with experience in external quality assurance systems, and brings together experts with different profiles and from different countries. To this end, a working group of ECA members was set up to co-design and test the functionalities of the platform, which will go live in a production environment at the beginning of February 2026.

The Agency hosted several foreign delegations in 2025. It was visited in May by representatives of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Agency (AVORS), in September by representatives of the Kosovo Agency (KAA) and the Georgian Agency (NCEQE), and in November by representatives of the Estonian Agency (HAKA). In November, the Agency was visited by representatives of higher education institutions from El Salvador, and a working visit of CMEPIUS representatives was organised. The employees also visited the Catalan agency AQU Catalunya, where the focus was on the digitalisation of processes, information systems, databases and the use of artificial intelligence.

Information system of the Agency (eNakvis and iNakvis)

In 2025, the Agency carried out a major development of the new NAKVIS portal, the central upgrade in the field of information technology. The portal provides a modern, transparent and publicly accessible display of all records kept by the Agency on the basis of Article 51 of the ZViS. It replaces the previous publication of data in the form of tables and establishes uniform and up-to-date access to information on higher education institutions, study programmes and accreditation and evaluation procedures. Users can search, sort and display data in a transparent format, and get more detailed insights into individual institutions, programmes and procedures, along with history of considerations and related records.

A particular added value of the portal is the creation of publicly available statistical overviews on the higher education area based on aggregated data from the Agency's records. The displays provide a better understanding of the situation of higher education institutions, study programmes and the scope of accreditation and evaluation procedures. The portal also includes additional records, such as consents granted for transnational education and consents for modifications of study programmes, which makes an important contribution to the transparency of the Agency's work. We expect the NAKVIS portal to become a key tool for external users – higher education institutions, students, professionals and the general public – as it provides easy access to comprehensive and up-to-date information in Slovenian and English. The development of the portal has been aligned with the existing iNakvis system, which remains the primary tool for internal records management, with the portal retrieving data directly from its updated and harmonised databases. This reduces the need for manual work and increases the efficiency of publishing records. The launch of the portal is an important step in the further digitalisation and transparency of the Agency's work. The portal is a stable and sustainable solution that contributes to better accessibility of data, greater openness of information and more effective support to higher education stakeholders.

Although the iNakvis application itself has not changed significantly during this period, significant progress has been made in the integration of information systems in higher education.

An agreement has been reached with higher education stakeholders to establish a unique identifier for study programmes – the so-called enakvis code – which will be a permanent identification code linked exclusively to one study programme, without the possibility of re-assignment. This agreement provides a key foundation for improved interoperability, more reliable data exchange and harmonised record-keeping between different information systems.

Communication

In 2025, the Agency continues to devote a lot of time and attention to active, clear, accurate and timely communication with internal and external stakeholders. The Agency's website remains the main channel of communication, providing up-to-date information to the public. As complementary tools, the Agency uses the social networks X, YouTube and LinkedIn, as well as regular email updates through a monthly e-newsletter with news, events and other important announcements. In 2025, a new feature was the creation of a LinkedIn profile to extend the Agency's reach and strengthen its engagement with stakeholders.

An important milestone in the development of communication was the organisation and implementation of the ED.VITA Award – the first and only national award that recognises and rewards achievements in the field of sustainability in higher education. A specific communication strategy was developed to support the successful launch of the award, to strengthen its visibility and to promote the active involvement of stakeholders. The strategy defined clear guidelines for targeted, comprehensible and credible communication that supports the strategic objectives of the project and at the same time takes into account the challenges and opportunities that the award opens up for the Slovenian higher education area.

At the same time, the organisation of the award has stimulated reflection on improvements and upgrades to the overall communication plan, including the development of digital channels, greater interactivity with target audiences and consistent monitoring and measurement of the effectiveness of individual communication activities. At the same time, the award represented an important opportunity to strengthen the visibility, influence and reputation of the Agency in the higher and higher vocational education area.

In the past year, particular attention was paid to upgrading the eNakvis online platform, which is a key tool for applications and changes to study programmes. Based on user feedback, the platform was improved both technically and in terms of content to make the user experience as simple as possible and the processing of applications up-to-date and transparent. In parallel, the Agency upgraded its internal IT system, iNakvis, which enables employees to share information in a timely manner, adapt to work processes and carry out procedures in a high-quality manner. In addition, a dedicated public records portal was set up to provide users with access to the Agency's activities, the progress and outcomes of procedures, and the records of higher education institutions and study programmes in a transparent and open way.

As part of its communication activities, the Agency ensured that news about events and key messages were prepared and published on a regular basis on its website and social media. The website was updated with the final reports of the groups of experts and the final decisions of the Agency Council, and a dedicated sub-page for the ED.VITA Award was created. The Agency monitors media coverage of its activities on a daily basis through a press clipping system covering print, online and other media, which ensures that employees are always informed of current media developments and possible public reactions.

In all its communication procedures, the Agency consistently applies the principles of integrity, independence and professionalism, taking into account the Communication Protocol, which clearly sets out the communication modalities, the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and the handling of possible undue pressure.

Organisation and participation in events

In 2025, the Agency organised a series of events and meetings, focusing on strengthening cooperation with different higher education stakeholders at home and abroad. It organised several thematic meetings, hosted representatives of other agencies and participated in a number of important national and international events. In doing so, it has worked to build and consolidate links with a diverse range of stakeholders, a key element of its strategy for continued quality work and fruitful cooperation.

In response to the changing needs of higher vocational colleges in the external evaluation procedures, the Agency launched the so-called targeted reviews, where the first findings based on expert reports are expected in early 2026. In May, the Agency held a consultation with higher education institutions to present the Agency's draft strategy and vision for the period 2026–2030 and the challenges of evaluation practices.

Training of candidates for the Agency's experts was also carried out in 2025. The sessions included presentations on the relevant regulations, how to work in expert groups, findings from past assessments and the use of the Guide to External Assessments. The compulsory training includes the practical training of candidates in the procedure of accreditation or evaluation of a specific institution, college or study programme. The Agency also provided additional training for the student professionals included in the Register.

In October, the Agency organised its regular annual international web consultation on the use of artificial intelligence in higher education.

Table 5:
Events held and participation in various meetings in 2025

Participation in SMEQA project activities	The SMEQA project, which is being implemented under the Erasmus+ programme, is based on the needs of Bosnia and Herzegovina to address the issues of accreditation of study programmes, to improve the quality assurance system in higher education institutions and to strengthen the capacity of all institutions to carry out accreditation and evaluation procedures. Project activities focus on institutional and national strengthening of accreditation mechanisms, harmonisation of processes and systematic implementation of European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). NAKVIS participated in various activities in 2025, including events in Banja Luka, Split, Neum, Ljubljana and Sarajevo.
Participation in a conference on quality in higher vocational education (23 January)	The Agency introduced a new concept for external assessments called targeted reviews. These provide colleges with a detailed and targeted overview of their performance. The main purpose is for colleges themselves to identify the key challenges they want to improve and to focus on the opportunities identified in recent assessments. This approach encourages proactive solution-finding, provides greater flexibility in evaluations and supports continuous quality improvement.
Seminar on ESG interpretation (EQAR) (28 February)	The webinar, organised by the European Registry of Agencies EQAR, focused on updates to the interpretations of the current ESG standards.
NAKVIS and AZVO meeting (7 April)	The purpose of the bilateral meeting between the Slovenian and Croatian national agencies was to strengthen cooperation between the two institutions, to exchange professional experience and to address common challenges in the field of the education system quality assurance and development. The main part of the event was the sub-group workshops, where participants explored specific challenges and exchanged examples of good practice within each area of expertise. The workshops aimed to promote an open professional dialogue and to develop proposals for further cooperation and improvements.
Participation at ENQA Members' Forum (9–11 April)	Sustainability in quality assurance was a central theme of the event, which was reflected in a number of plenary and parallel sessions, as well as a special session dedicated to poster presentations. In this context, the Agency launched a national initiative on best sustainable practices in higher education institutions. The presentation focused on the importance of integrating sustainability into higher education, the role of external quality assurance and the possibilities of transferring such practices to other national contexts.
Study visit by AVORS (6–8 May)	A representative of AVORS from Bosnia and Herzegovina visited the Agency. The purpose of the visit was to familiarise herself with the activities of NAKVIS in preparation for full membership of AVORS in ENQA. During the meetings with the experts, the guest was informed about the Agency's organisational structure, the different external assessment procedures, international cooperation, the computerisation of work processes and analyses in the field of quality assurance in higher education.
Visit to the AQU Catalunya Agency (19–21 May)	The purpose of the visit to the Catalan agency was to exchange good practices in the field of IT and digitalisation, the organisation of the IT department, the management of data records and the ways of processing databases for the preparation of analyses and reports. The discussion also focused on the support mechanisms provided by the IT Department to the Agency in the implementation of the accreditation and evaluation procedures, with particular emphasis on the introduction of compatible IT systems for the submission of applications, the preparation of reports of groups of experts and the broader optimisation of work processes.

Consultation with higher education institutions
(29 May)

A thematic consultation with representatives of higher education institutions was held, focusing on the challenges of evaluation practices and other topical issues in the field of the Agency's work. The Agency also presented its draft strategy and vision for the period 2026–2030. The focus of the consultation was on thematic workshops covering external assessments, changes to study programmes, accreditation and evaluation procedures from a legal perspective, scientific and research, professional and artistic work, self-evaluation and strengthening the internal quality system, microcredentials, the green transition, digitalisation and the Award for Greening Higher Education.

Workshop on the responsible use of artificial intelligence
(11 and 12 June)

Organised by ENQA, the workshop explored agencies' perspectives on the integration of artificial intelligence in quality assurance and the role of agencies in supporting higher education institutions in the use of AI in learning, teaching and assessment, using practical examples and sharing experiences among participants.

CEENQA General Assembly
(13 and 14 June)

Participation in the CEENQA General Assembly took place in Tallinn in June this year, hosted by the Estonian Agency for Quality in Higher Education (HAKA). The main themes focused on the results of the EUROGRADUATE survey, the importance of higher education for Europe's economic competitiveness and digital inequality issues. Participants were also presented with an analysis of labour market needs and competences to support Estonia's economic development, and a representative of the Agency took an active part in the panel discussion.

ECA General Assembly
(16 and 17 June)

The Deputy Director attended the ECA General Assembly meeting in Cologne, which was held on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the European Approach to Joint Study Programmes, and which was also attended by EQAR representatives. The main topics included a review of the results and situation of the past decade and challenges for the future.

NAKVIS and MAB meeting
(23 September)

The purpose of the bilateral meeting between the Slovenian and Croatian national agencies was to strengthen cooperation between the two institutions, to exchange professional experience and to address common challenges in the field of the education system quality assurance and development. The main part of the event was the sub-group workshops, where participants explored specific challenges and exchanged examples of good practice within each area of expertise. The workshops aimed to promote an open professional dialogue and to develop proposals for further cooperation and improvements.

Participation at the 8th Eurasian Forum
(26 September)

The Director of the Agency attended the 8th Eurasian Forum on Quality Assurance in Higher Education organised by the Kazakhstan Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (IQAA). His presentation focused on the possibilities and scope of using AI in the Agency's internal work processes, in particular the development and use of AI tools in the different phases of the accreditation and evaluation procedures, in checking the stylistic and terminological appropriateness of reports, in the evaluation of progress reports, in the preparation of thematic analyses, and in the support of the internal IT system.

Participation in a CEENQA staff mobility project
(29 September–1 October)

In 2025, the Agency also participated in the CEENQA international network staff mobility project, in which representatives of the Kosovo (KAA) and Georgian (NCEQE) agencies visited the Agency. The visit covered a range of topics in the Agency's fields of work. Interviews were also organised with other stakeholders, such as council members.

Participation in the BFUG Working Group
(8 and 9 November 2025)

On 8 and 9 November, in Brașov, Romania, a representative of the Agency attended a meeting of the Bologna Process Thematic Peer Group on Quality Assurance (BFUG TPG C), which supports the implementation of the European Higher Education Area. At the meeting, members reported on progress in the implementation of the Quality Assurance Action Plan, with a particular focus on the revision of the ESG.

International consultation: Use of artificial intelligence in quality assurance
(15 October, online consultation)

The Agency organised its regular annual web consultation on "Applying Artificial Intelligence to Quality Assurance", which brought together national and international experts. The discussions highlighted the key challenges in the use of artificial intelligence and the current state of its integration into the regular work of selected agencies.

Training of student experts
(22 October)

The Agency provided training to student experts from the Register of Experts, focusing on common dilemmas in assessments. Two experienced student experts also made substantive contributions, presenting their views on the role of the student expert in assessments. A practical workshop was held and students actively participated in a guided discussion.

ENQA General Assembly
(23 and 24 October)

At the General Assembly, the Agency Director presented the use of generative tools such as ChatGPT, Perplexity and GitHub Copilot in accreditation procedures, external evaluations, reports, thematic analyses, and in the field of information technology and analytics, stressing the importance of preserving the core values such as data protection, professionalism and transparency. One of the main topics of the event was the ESG review.

Participation in a consultation on the future of education and the labour market
(27 October)

The consultation "Connected in knowledge: co-shaping the future of education and the labour market" was organised by the University of Maribor in the framework of the Agile Development of Education and Microcredentials (RRP) project. The event was aimed at strengthening cooperation between the University of Maribor and the working environment. The main theme of the consultation was the creation of shorter education and training courses on microcredentials, with greater involvement of staff in lifelong learning and of practitioners in the teaching process.

Visit by Estonian agency HAKA
(7 November)

The Agency hosted two representatives from the Estonian Agency for Quality in Higher Education (HAKA). The aim of the meeting was to exchange experiences and practices in the field of quality assurance and quality improvement in higher education and to discuss current challenges, including the introduction of the microcredentials system, standards of excellence, reporting procedures, differences between systems and the design of accreditation and evaluation procedures that are fit for purpose.

Consultation on higher professional education – Talent development in higher professional education
(12 November)

The Deputy Director was invited to a consultation to present the development of an external quality assurance system for microcredentials in higher education. Lessons learned from higher education will serve as a basis for the establishment of a microcredentials system in higher professional education.

EQAF Forum
(12–14 November)

A key event for higher education and quality assurance professionals, the EQAF 2025 Forum took place this year at Corvinus University in Budapest. The Forum focused on the challenges of the future, i.e. how higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies can sustain their systems in a challenging modern context. Topics such as the challenges to higher education autonomy, the climate crisis, the geopolitical situation and the limited level of international cooperation in higher education were addressed. The Forum included plenary sessions and thematic workshops with in-depth discussions on research, guidelines and practical examples related to the provision of high-quality higher education.

Webinar on ESG revision
(24 November)

Agency staff took part in a webinar presenting the new features of the revised ESG standards. Challenges already perceived in the different interpretations of the new provisions were also highlighted and participants were invited to provide substantive comments on the proposed revision of the ESG.

Webinar (ECA Members Seminar)
(10 December 2025)

The Deputy Director participated in a webinar of ECA members, where he presented an example of good practice of the cooperation of NAKVIS with the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning in the establishment of the first national award in the field of sustainability in higher education. He also presented to ECA members the progress made in the development of the ECA Expert Exchange Platform (ECA EEEP).

Participation at the Bridging Continents conference
(12 December)

The Agency Director attended the conference “Bridging Continents: higher education as a tool for EU-Southern Mediterranean cooperation”, organised by the Euro-Mediterranean University EMUNI and the Euromed University of Fez, in cooperation with the Brussels-based Slovenian Business and Research Association (SBRA), with the support of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), at the European Parliament in Brussels. The conference was aimed at discussions on strengthening regional alliances in the Mediterranean and establishing a structured dialogue between the European Union and the Southern Mediterranean.

II.

STRATEGY 2026-2030

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF NAKVIS FOR THE 2026–2030 PERIOD

Introduction

Franci Demšar, PhD, Director of NAKVIS

Upon the expiry of its latest Strategic Plan (2021–2025), the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (the Agency) is entering a new development phase focusing on the current challenges of the higher education area and the continuation of good practices. Over the past five years, the Agency has consolidated its role as a central stakeholder in the field of external quality assurance, while also strengthening its advisory and analytical role to further support higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges. In developing the new Strategy, stakeholders expressed the expectation that the Agency would build on its mission and strengthen its quality culture through flexible and collaborative approaches. The quality culture should go beyond compliance checks and systematically promote improvement, innovation and strategic development of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges.

We will continue to strive to meet these expectations in the future development of the Agency.

The strategic vision for the new period 2026–2030 builds on what has been achieved so far, while shaping the Agency's development in line with the new needs of the education environment.. The Strategy's substantive framework is based on key national and international development documents that set the directions for the development of higher education, research and the sustainable and digital transition. In this context, the Strategy, in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), also takes into account the expectations of stakeholders to be involved, to reduce administrative burdens and to strengthen development-oriented, simplified and cross-border comparable quality procedures.These interlinked starting points, which are presented in more detail in the next chapter, form the substantive core of the new Strategy, which focuses on improving the quality of higher education activities, enhancing the Agency's responsiveness to social, environmental and technological change, and strengthening the role of education and science in co-creating a sustainable, inclusive and innovative society. In line with stakeholder expectations, the Agency's new Strategy focuses even more strongly on strengthening partnerships, ongoing dialogue and consultative mechanisms that will contribute to the development of a trusted, collaborative and inclusive quality ecosystem. The Strategy aims to maintain successful existing practices and develop new activities. The accreditation and evaluation procedures will remain a core activity of the Agency, enhanced with the experience of the previous period and with more in-depth thematic and analytical approaches. The Agency's operations will continue to be supported by modern internal and external IT systems (iNakvis, eNakvis), enabling further digitalisation and improving the quality of processes. An aspect that continues to be important is international cooperation, which the

Agency is strengthening within the EU, the Western Balkans and beyond. In the future, the Agency will implement the legislative solutions arising from the reformed higher education legislation and systematically update the criteria and rules of procedure. In the process, it will regularly consult with higher education institutions and provide clear expert support for the implementation of changes. It will further develop analytical tools as an important part of the Agency's support and advisory role and establish reliable databases for higher education institutions, higher vocational colleges and other stakeholders in the higher education area.

One of the key orientations is the progressive integration of the standards of excellence into the external assessment procedures, which will help the Agency to promote a higher level of quality and the strategic development of institutions. Particular attention will be paid to following European guidelines, in particular the planned revision of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) in 2027, as this will have a significant impact on the further development of quality standards and on the criteria for accreditation and external evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes. It should be noted that certain content related, for example, to the information system, the Guide to External Assessments, the organisation of international activities and communication with the public, is repeated in several sections of the Strategy as appropriate. This content is important for various areas of the Agency's operations and is a key element for the high-quality implementation of accreditation and evaluation procedures.

In the coming strategic period, the Agency will continue to focus on implementing the principles of sustainable development and digitalisation, which have already been successfully implemented in the past. It will, among other things, participate in national awards for the greening of higher education and projects promoting digitalisation, sustainability and assessment of sustainable practices in accreditation and evaluation procedures based on standards of excellence. Through these activities, the Agency aims to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of the European Green Deal while remaining an example of good practice in the field of quality assurance in higher education.

An important part of the strategic objectives also relates to the Agency's internal operations, in areas such as digital transformation, data quality and accessibility, standardisation of processes and organisational development. The Agency will continue to invest in its work processes, culture of collaboration and care for its employees, recognising internal stability as a prerequisite for effective operation. The new Strategy reinforces the Agency's commitment to a quality culture that goes beyond formal compliance with standards. One of the key focuses for the coming period is to strengthen the Agency's advisory role in order to be able to support higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges even more actively in the development of their internal quality assurance systems. In doing so, it will strive to co-create a level of quality culture in Slovenian higher and higher vocational education that will ensure that non-compliance with standards will only exceptionally be identified in accreditation and evaluation procedures. In the period 2026–2030, the Agency aims to become an example of a learning and responsive agency that contributes significantly to the development of quality in the Slovenian and wider European higher education area through its professionalism, independence and integrity.

1. Strategic plan in the framework of quality in the European and global higher education area

The central strategic orientations of NAKVIS are built on the objectives set out in the National Programme of Higher Education 2021–2030 (NPVŠ)[1], which set out the vision of the higher education area as a high quality, inclusive and internationally comparable system. They are also based on the Resolution on the Slovenian Scientific Research and Innovation Strategy 2030 *(ReZrIS2030)*,[2] which guides the development of scientific excellence, knowledge transfer and cooperation with the economic sector, and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area *(ESG)*[3] (hereinafter: ESG), which provide a common reference framework for the operation of national quality assurance agencies at European level. Modern analytical tools, including Perplexity, have also been used to support the collection and comparison of strategic orientations, contributing to a more systematic overview of European and global trends.

Quality in higher education is one of the core values of the European education area, delivered through coherent initiatives, standards and policies at European Union level and beyond. The Agency's Strategy follows the guidelines of key international organisations that set standards and promote the development of quality assurance systems. Among these ENQA, EQAR, UNESCO and OECD stand out. European initiatives such as the European Universities Initiative, the European Degree and microcredentials initiatives, which operationalise the objectives of the European Higher Education Area, also have an important role to play in shaping a common vision for higher education.

In addition, the Strategy takes into account the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[4] with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals,[5] which have been adopted by the United Nations General

1 *National Programme of Higher Education 2021–2030 (NPVŠ). https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MIZS/Dokumenti/Visoko-solstvo/Strokovni-sveti/SVS/Zapisniki-2021/Priloga-2-k-6.-e-seji-NPVS_2021_2030.docx*

2 *Resolution on the Slovenian Scientific Research and Innovation Strategy 2030: https://pisrs.si/pregledPredpisa?id=RESO133*

3 European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG): https://www.nakvis.si/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Slovenski-prevod-ESG-2015.pdf

4 *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development https://www.gov.si/zbirke/projekti-in-programi/uresnicevanje-agende-2030/*

5 17 sustainable development goals 17 (17 SDGs): https://sdgs.un.org/goals .

Assembly and provide a universal framework for promoting social justice, environmental responsibility and economic development. It also follows the orientations of the national Reform of Higher Education for a Green and Resilient Transition to Society 5.0,[6] which emphasises the importance of digitalisation, interdisciplinarity, integrating research and education, and responding to complex societal challenges.

ENQA brings together national quality assurance agencies and is a key player in developing standards and promoting quality culture in the European Higher Education Area. Its work is based on the ESG standards, which define a common framework for internal and external quality assurance. These standards are the basis for assessing the performance of agencies and higher education institutions and ensure comparability and trust between European systems.

ENQA promotes the inclusion of the academic community and stakeholders in quality assurance processes, fosters innovative approaches and supports the implementation of digital transformation and sustainable development principles. It places particular emphasis on the distinction between quality assurance and continuous quality enhancement. NAKVIS fully adheres to these principles in its work, understanding quality as a dynamic process aimed at developing excellence, not only at assessing compliance with standards.

EQAR maintains a register of agencies in the European Higher Education Area that assess the quality of universities, higher education institutions and study programmes. The register includes only those agencies that have been proven to comply with the ESG, which ensures the credibility and international comparability of their processes. The EQAR 2024–2028 Strategy emphasises the importance of digital interoperability, open databases and analytical tools for quality monitoring, increasing the efficiency and transparency of accreditation systems. Through its membership in EQAR, NAKVIS is strengthening its international visibility and pursuing the principle of open data, which is in line with its plans to upgrade its digital tools (iNakvis, eNakvis).

6 Reform of Higher Education for a Green and Resilient Transition to Society 5.0: https://www.gov.si/zbirke/projekti-in-programi/reforma-visokega-solstva-za-zelen-in-odporen-prehod-v-druzbo-5-0/

UNESCO is creating a global framework for the recognition of qualifications in an equitable, transparent and non-discriminatory manner through the *Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education* https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/global-convention-recognition-qualifications-concerning-higher-education?hub=70286 The Convention promotes international mobility, cooperation and confidence-building in the quality of higher education systems. It is linked to European strategies in terms of content, as it is based on the principles of fairness, transparency and accessibility.

The OECD contributes to the development of systemic analysis and policies that go beyond regulatory quality frameworks. Its documents stress the importance of external quality assurance systems that both ensure standards and promote teaching excellence. The OECD advocates the inclusion of different stakeholders – from students to employers – and the integration of higher education and vocational education. It places particular emphasis on digital transformation, diversity and sustainable development as components of quality practices. NAKVIS, through its analytical and advisory activities, is moving closer to these principles, seeing quality as a development tool and an enabler of improvement, not just as a control mechanism.

European higher education policies are increasingly focusing on concrete forms of cooperation and innovation. The European Universities Initiative brings together more than a hundred higher education institutions in transnational alliances enabling joint programmes, research collaboration and international mobility of students and staff. The European Diploma is intended to enhance international connectivity and student mobility within the European Union, while shorter education and training courses for obtaining microcredentials (hereinafter: courses for obtaining microcredentials) represent a new form of flexible learning designed to respond quickly to labour market needs and develop competences.

The common denominator of all above orientations and initiatives is the promotion of quality culture based on trust, cooperation, inclusion, transparency and continuous improvement. The Agency followed these orientations when drawing up its Strategic Plan for the period 2026–2030, and also took into account the results of the implementation of the strategic objectives from the previous period, which are reviewed below. Findings on where the Agency has made progress in the past and where improvements would be welcome form the basis not only for assessing the effectiveness of existing approaches, but also for formulating new strategic objectives aimed at (further) strengthening the quality of higher and higher vocational education. In doing so, the Agency focused particularly on development challenges and the sustainable, digital and internationally oriented operation of the Agency.

2.

Strategic objectives achieved in the 2021–2025 period

The strategic objectives adopted by the NAKVIS Council (Agency Council) at its 157th session on 17 December 2020.[7]

1. **Adoption of the Act on Quality in Higher and Higher Vocational Education (D)**
2. **Improving assessment according to quality standards and accreditation and evaluation procedures (P)**
3. **In-depth substantive analytical work in selected areas (P)**
4. **Establishing up-to-date databases on selected activities in higher education institutions (T)**
5. **Pursuing sustainable development goals (D)**
6. **Enhanced international cooperation (P)**
7. **Proactive communication (T)**

7 The letters D, P and T stand for the Agency's values – development (D), professionalism (P), transparency (T). See more in Chapter 3 – Strategic objectives for the 2026–2030 period.

2.1 Adoption of the Act on Quality in Higher and Higher Vocational Education

In its Strategy for the 2021–2025 period, the Agency set as a key strategic objective an independent act on the Agency – the act on quality in higher education, which would consolidate the Agency's independence, provide a legal basis for the Agency to perform international accreditations abroad, and lay down procedures in an act rather than in implementing regulations, as the Administrative Inspection Service also warned the Agency. In addition, the act would amend the regulation of the appeal procedure, focusing on substantive review in accreditation and evaluation procedures, and would remove some inconsistencies in the current legal framework. The Agency took a very responsible approach to the drafting of an independent act: a working group at the Agency spent more than a year preparing a draft act to regulate the areas highlighted and submitted it to the competent ministry to be taken into account in the reform of the higher education legislation. The Agency, represented by its Director, was actively involved in the working group on the reform of higher education legislation at the ministry responsible for higher education. As the majority of the members of the working group for the reform of the higher education legislation were of the opinion that the Agency's work would be regulated within the framework of the reform of the existing Higher Education Act (ZViS) and not in a separate act, the idea of a separate act was no longer relevant, but most of the solutions foreseen in the draft Act on Quality are included in the proposal for a new Higher Education Act.

The new Higher Education Act (ZViS-1) was adopted in July 2025 and entered into force on 9 August 2025.

The key innovations introduced by the new ZViS-1 in the field of the Agency's work are the following: the period of validity of the accreditation of a higher education institution is extended from five to seven years, procedural provisions for accreditation and evaluation procedures are introduced in the Act, allowing the Agency to perform accreditations and external evaluations abroad; external evaluations in accordance with the ZViS-1 and the Agency criteria may also be performed by foreign agencies registered in EQAR; introduction of a composition of the Agency Council balanced in terms of departments and gender; only compliance with specific provisions of the Act or the Agency criteria may be assessed in the procedures for the extraordinary evaluation of a higher education institution or a study programme and in the evaluations of samples of study programmes; a legal basis is provided for linking research data on higher education teachers and data on graduate employment for analysis, accreditation and evaluation procedures; the termination of accreditation of study programmes that have not been delivered for a long time is foreseen.

In its transitional provisions, the Act repealed all the Agency criteria and provided that they would remain in force until the adoption of new criteria, which must be adopted by the Agency Council within six months of the entry into force of the Act. The Agency started drafting the new criteria immediately after the adoption of the Act and, after coordinating with stakeholders, prepared the following documents:

- Criteria for the Allocation of Credits under the ECTS;
- Criteria for experts of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education;
- Minimum Standards for the Appointment to the Title of Higher Education Teacher, Researcher and Faculty Assistant at Higher Education Institutions;
- Criteria for the Accreditation and External Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes;
- Criteria for International Cooperation in Higher Education;

2.2 Improvement of assessment according to quality standards and accreditation and evaluation procedures

In line with the objectives set in the previous Strategic Plan, the Agency has taken important steps towards improving assessment according to quality standards in all of its procedures. The basis for this was the preparation of the ***Guide to External Assessments,*** which the Agency published in early 2023 after extensive coordination with stakeholders. It is a manual primarily aimed at experts and staff, but also at higher education institutions, and its content provides a transparent and unified view of the understanding of quality standards, taking into account the nature of the procedure.

In addition to eliminating inconsistencies in assessments, the idea of the Guide is to raise the quality of assessments to a higher level by guiding stakeholders in detail towards assessments with a greater focus on content that take into account the specifics of individual institutions and provide these institutions with valuable feedback for improvement and development. The document has been very well received by key stakeholders, as evidenced both by the results of the surveys and by the quality of the reports of groups of experts, as reflected in the Agency's analyses.

In order to improve transparency and consistency of assessment, the Agency Council continuously updates the Rules of Procedure of the Agency, which clearly shows the manners of addressing applications, decision-making, cooperating with expert services of the Agency and adopting decisions.

The Agency's analytical work, in particular the analysis of past non-compliances, supports the substantive discussion at the Agency Council sessions, providing the Agency Council with insight into past practice on substantive discussion and ensuring consistency in decision-making.

Another important tool to ensure consistent and autonomous decision-making is a communication protocol for the procedures, which guarantees the independence and objectivity of the work of

both the Agency Council and the experts, and provides for corrective measures in the event of undue pressure.

Over the past period, the Agency has updated its rules of procedure, which specify and set deadlines for all steps in the procedure while also including new steps, mainly to improve support to applicants in the procedure and to gather feedback. In the context of updating the rules of procedure, the Agency has improved the content and design of the forms for reports of groups of experts. In the past period, it has also introduced language reviewing of experts' reports, which is carried out at three levels (experts – staff member – Agency language reviewer) on the basis of the relevant linguistic guidelines.

It has piloted the inclusion of additional staff members in certain procedures to support the work of the experts and to improve coordination between the different procedures. The internal information system iNakvis has also played an important role in supporting staff and ensuring the efficient management of procedures, enabling them to monitor procedures, create databases and make analyses.

The Agency has continued to pursue its objective of raising awareness of the importance and impact of external assessments and quality in general. In this context, the communication activities are important – meetings with stakeholders, which are part of the procedures or organised at regular intervals, numerous promotional activities (e.g. animations, presentation films, participation in events), which represent the importance of the Agency's work and quality assurance, as well as numerous events organised by the Agency, including the annual event of awarding institutions demonstrating the highest quality in education.

The Agency regularly trains experts who are key stakeholders in the Agency's procedures. Their initial training is complemented by practical work in the form of writing a test report, so that at the end of the intensive and extensive training, the expert candidates are already adequately trained to work in groups of experts. In order to maximise the coherence and quality of the groups of experts, the Agency has also developed over the past period the rules of procedure for work with experts, which sets out the persons responsible for the Register of Experts and for the training and selection of experts in the procedures.

2.3 In-depth substantive analytic work in selected areas

In line with the objectives set in the previous strategic period, the Agency has consistently developed and implemented comprehensive analytical activities, following the guidelines both in terms of the substantive depth of the work and the operational applicability of the analyses. The objective of making the register data and analysis useful to experts, higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges, and thus contributing to a broader understanding of quality in higher and higher vocational education, has been achieved through several key achievements.

The Agency published a comprehensive *Guide to External Assessments* in Slovenian and English, fulfilling its commitment to produce guidance documents that support high-quality external assessments. The Guide is a reference tool for experts, higher education institutions and colleges, providing concrete guidance and interpretations of the quality standards. In line with its commitment to in-depth analytical work, the Agency has produced several thematic analyses based on data from accreditation and evaluation procedures (analysis of teaching and doctoral study programmes, analysis of reporting procedures, analysis of the duration of the procedures) as well as guidelines for modifications of study programmes. These analyses have enabled the Agency and its experts to better focus their external assessments and to reflect more carefully on the quality of tertiary education, its evaluation and improvement.

In line with the strategic objectives, a systemic analysis for the period 2018–2022 has been prepared. Like all systemic analyses, this one focuses on reports of experts and self-evaluation reports. It focuses on identifying good practices, areas for improvement and segments where more effort is needed, both on the part of higher education institutions and colleges and on the part of experts. Similar to the two previous analyses (for the periods 2007–2013 and 2013–2018), it provides an insight into the quality of Slovenian higher and higher vocational education.

In preparing its analyses, the Agency made use of the internal information system iNakvis, which provides access to data in various modules, thereby enabling work with more transparent information. Various databases used – on scientific research, library activities and employment – provided a professional and objective basis for external assessments and planning the further development of quality processes.

The Agency's analytical work provided an important basis for the organisation of thematic consultations and training sessions to discuss the results of the analyses and the substantive dilemmas in the procedures. The close cooperation between the Analytics and Information Technology Department and the Quality Assurance and International Cooperation Department has been crucial for the Agency's progress, as it has allowed for the effective implementation of the results of the analyses into concrete accreditation and evaluation procedures, as well as for additional professional support to the Agency's experts. Of particular importance has been the development of the guidelines in assessments of programmes in sample evaluation procedures, such as assessment of doctoral programmes, fields and modules in study programmes and health and medicine study programmes, which helped the experts in their work.

The Agency has also paid particular attention to disseminating the results and findings of its analytical work to both professionals and the general public. Each year, the Agency produced, among other things, an annual publication in Slovenian and English, whose topics were aligned with the content of the Agency's annual international consultations. The content of the consultations published in the annual publications provided a structured insight into the key challenges and trends in quality assurance and quality improvement. It addressed topical issues such as graduate employment rates, the development and courses for obtaining microcredentials and the library activity.

Regular presentations of thematic analyses at national and international expert meetings and conferences have also contributed to the dissemination of results and good practices.

Equally significant has been the promotion of the analyses within international networks and associations in the field of quality assurance, such as ENQA and Central and Eastern European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (CEENQA), which has, after all, strengthened the visibility of the Slovenian higher education and higher vocational education quality system and deepened international cooperation.

2.4 Establishment of up-to-date databases on selected activities at higher education institutions

The creation and development of up-to-date databases to support the implementation of procedures, enable advanced analytics and contribute to greater transparency and operational efficiency were among key objectives of the Agency in the previous strategic period. It has become apparent that reliable, structured and up-to-date data support has a decisive impact on the adequacy and effectiveness of quality assurance in higher education. In recent years, significant progress has been made in laying the technical and substantive foundations for the Agency's IT-supported operations. The first major upgrades of the eNakvis information system, which is a key entry point for external users, especially higher education institutions, started already in 2021. The upgrades included the integration of a new interface, changes to the programme accreditation forms, the optimisation of the web-based data transfer services and – which is of particular importance – the start of the development of a data model that formed the basis for the subsequent analytical upgrades.

In addition, significant coordination of change communication protocols have been carried out with the main users of the system, such as the University of Maribor, the University of Ljubljana

and the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training. Packet data transmission has been introduced, allowing smoother and more automated monitoring of modifications of study programmes and their components.

In the period 2021–2025, iNakvis has also undergone extensive upgrades and developments that have significantly improved the Agency's internal operations. Key modules for monitoring and keeping records of higher education institutions, study programmes and experts have been put in place, including the automatic generation of events, tasks and reminders. A self-evaluation module with a data model has been developed, and functionalities for recording employee attendance, internal communication and document archiving have been integrated. Particular emphasis was placed on optimising the rules of procedure, which includes precise steps, deadlines, and relevant documents in accreditation and evaluation procedures, as well as on integrating non-compliance analyses for greater consistency in decision-making. During this period, iNakvis has become a central tool for operational, record-keeping and analytical support to the Agency's processes, as well as a platform for systematic monitoring of the implementation of tasks and for effective internal communication.

In 2023 and 2024, the Agency also focused on structuring and standardising data, in particular in terms of XML structure, enforcing codes and categorisations, and preparing for greater connectivity with other national databases. A basic database on graduate employment has been set up, based on the integration of external sources, which is an important step towards the development of data-supported quality monitoring.

The objective of establishing and developing up-to-date databases has been achieved in technical, organisational and substantive terms. Today, the Agency has two stable IT systems (internal and external), several databases, an efficient data structure and established procedures for regular updates. Further development will focus on further interconnection of the bases, additional automation and strengthening the analytical use of data.

2.5 Pursuing sustainable development goals

In the past strategic period, the Agency has formulated its sustainable development goals taking into account the strategic Sustainable Development Goals (17 SDGs) adopted at the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, the *Resolution on the National Programme for Higher Education 2030* (ReNPVŠ30) of 2022 and the action plan attached to the Resolution, and in line with the Reform of Higher Education for a Green and Resilient Transition to Society 5.0 (2022–2026). In the light of the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, these orientations have been further refined.

In line with European and international development guidelines, the Agency has taken the Sustainable Development Goals into account in its day-to-day operations and in the way it organises and carries out its procedures. The biggest impact on the Sustainable Development Goals is seen in the digitalisation of processes and procedures. With the development of an internal IT system (iNakvis), the Agency has set up a web-based environment that allows employees to work remotely and accreditation and evaluation procedures to be carried out in remote mode (combined or fully remotely). It also allows for a hybrid conduct of the Agency Council sessions. These measures contribute to a quality working environment and effective communication between experts, employees, Council members and investors while significantly reducing the environmental footprint and delivering time and financial savings. They also allow for better involvement of domestic and foreign stakeholders in the Agency's procedures.

In the past period, most of the events, meetings and sessions were conducted using videoconferencing tools (e.g. annual international conferences, training of candidates for the NAKVIS Register of Experts, preparatory meetings of groups of experts, meetings with higher education institutions, higher vocational colleges and other stakeholders).

By moving to new and smaller premises, the Agency has further promoted teleworking, systematically reducing the daily environmental burden and the carbon footprint of its employees. Each employee is only required to be present at the Agency's premises twice a week and can work from home on the other days. As an employer, the Agency has reduced its environmental impact by around 60% and, together with other measures, the Agency's overall environmental footprint has been reduced by more than 80%.

During this period, the Agency was awarded the full Family Friendly Enterprise Certificate, issued by the Ekvilib Institute in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MDDSZ), which confirms the Agency's commitment to the health and well-being of its employees.

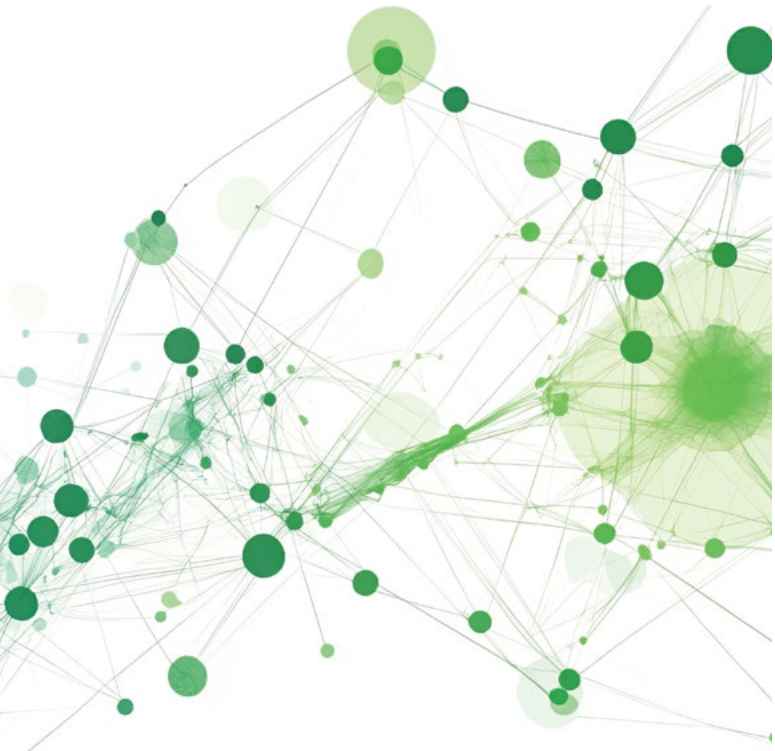
The Agency also pays special attention to the professional development of its employees, including by funding additional education and training and enabling teleworking to facilitate the reconciliation of professional and private life. These values were also taken into account in the Agency's choice of new premises.

2.6 In-depth international cooperation

During the previous strategic period, the Agency continued and further strengthened its extensive international cooperation, focusing both on meeting its strategic objectives and on responding rapidly to new international challenges.

The Agency's regular evaluation by the ENQA in 2023 confirmed that it fully meets European quality standards. Following the evaluation, the Agency's membership of ENQA was renewed for five years, and its membership of the EQAR was renewed on the same basis. Meeting European quality standards, which certify the Agency's good work and give it legitimacy in the European Higher Education Area, has been one of the Agency's key objectives, and participation in ENQA has been one of its overarching international tasks. The Agency has contributed to the ENQA's annual Member Forums and to the Working Group on Guidelines on Academic Integrity for Higher Education Institutions and Quality Assurance Agencies.

For most of the strategic period, the Agency Director chaired the CEENQA, which resulted in the Agency's deepening cooperation with the network. The Agency staff contributed to publications, papers at conferences and bimonthly meetings, and to the annual staff mobility. The Agency has also been active in the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), where it is represented in the Council. The staff thus took part in the Consortium's regular activities, which focused on training and coaching in internationalisation and the European approach.



By organising annual international conferences, the Agency has kept its stakeholders up-to-date with current practices in the European area, such as distance quality assessment, quality assurance of European universities, the development of a quality system for courses for obtaining micro-credentials, etc.

The Agency participates in the European SMEQA (Strengthening Capacities and Mechanisms for Enhancement of Quality Assurance System in Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina) project of the Erasmus+ programme, which is dedicated to improving quality assurance systems in higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period from 2024 to 2026.

The NAKVIS's tasks are mainly advisory and supportive, with the staff supporting the quality assurance agency in Bosnia and Herzegovina by transferring knowledge and good practices.

Throughout the strategic period, the Agency intensely strengthened bilateral cooperations and made a number of study visits to foreign agencies, which are primarily aimed at strengthening cooperation in the European area, identifying common problems of agencies and proposing appropriate solutions.

A review of the objectives set for the 2020–2025 strategic period shows that the Agency has met the objectives to enable it to carry out accreditation and evaluation abroad, as the ZViS-1, adopted in July 2025, provides the Agency with a legal basis for performing accreditations and external evaluations abroad.

2.7 Proactive communication

The Agency has devoted a lot of time and attention to active, clear, accurate and timely communication, both with internal and external stakeholders. The key communication tool used to inform the public is the website, with accompanying tools such as social networks (X and YouTube) and email (e-newsletter). The Agency publishes a variety of text and multimedia articles, event information, news and other relevant announcements on its website and social media channels. It also organises coordination meetings with both domestic and foreign stakeholders to deepen cooperation, and meets with some stakeholders on a regular monthly basis.

In the past strategic period, the Agency overhauled its rules of procedure, which define the key steps in all procedures, with a particular focus on improving cooperation and communication with key stakeholders – especially experts and institutions. These, as well as other stakeholders and the general public, are among the targets of the Agency's multimedia presentations, which show its operations and procedures. The content is available on the Agency's website (https://nakvis.si/) and on its YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/@nakvis-sqaa), where the Agency has also uploaded and updated the presentation films of all higher education institutions over the past strategic period.

The Agency remains committed to safeguarding integrity, independence and professional approach in all its operations. This is why it drafted in the past period the Communication Protocol, which clearly defines the communication channels, the responsibilities of the stakeholders in the procedures and the actions to be taken when handling cases of undue pressure.

The Agency devoted particular attention to the upgrade of the eNakvis information system. This allows the integration with external stakeholders and thus the submission of applications by higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges, as well as with other information systems, both the internal iNakvis information system and the eVŠ system. The Agency also continued to upgrade iNakvis, which enables employees to share information in a timely manner, adapt to work processes and carry out procedures in a high-quality manner. In terms of communication, its collaboration with higher and higher vocational education stakeholders in analytical work is also important, as all key analyses and projects have been developed in close collaboration with them.

The Agency has recently organised a range of events and meetings with a focus on strengthening cooperation with different higher education stakeholders both at home and abroad. In addition to the main annual international consultations with renowned national and international experts, it has organised several thematic meetings, hosted various representatives of other agencies and participated in a number of important national and international events. It has also introduced the NAKVIS Day, a ceremony centred on the awarding of prizes to higher education institutions, held in cooperation with the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The event, which will be organised annually, aims to promote achievements in the field of quality assurance in higher and higher vocational education and quality culture in general, while also deepening cooperation and exchanging good practices.

Through these activities, the Agency has contributed to strengthening quality culture and the comparability of the Slovenian higher education area with the European one, and brought fresh insights and practices to the Slovenian higher education area. However, new times bring new challenges in this area too, so the Agency remains committed to continuous learning, adapting and finding innovative approaches to quality assurance.

3

Strategic objectives for the 2026–2030 period

Mission of the Agency

Encourage higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges to meet internationally recognised quality standards and contribute to enhancing their performance.

Vision of the Agency

Co-create a level of quality culture in Slovenian higher and higher vocational education that will ensure that non-compliances with standards will only exceptionally be identified in accreditation and evaluation procedures.

Values of the Agency

- Development (D)
- Professionalism (P)
- Transparency (T)

Sectoral legislation and Agency criteria (D): Introduce the innovations brought by the ZViS-1 in the Agency's field of activity and consistently carry out the Agency's tasks even after the entry into force of the new criteria adopted on the basis of the ZViS-1.

1

2

Quality standards and accreditation and evaluation procedures (P): Strengthen the quality, consistency, development and consultancy orientation of accreditation and evaluation procedures by introducing innovations, updating standards and systematically training experts.

Thematic and Other Analyses (P): Strengthen the Agency's analytical, development and advisory role by developing a series of in-depth thematic and other analyses, engaging stakeholders, upgrading data sources and using modern information technologies.

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4

Databases (P): Extend the iNakvis and eNakvis information systems into a publicly open NAKVIS portal that will publish quality indicators in higher education on an ongoing basis and enable the use of analytical approaches for data management and systematic quality monitoring.

International cooperation and challenges (P): Strengthen the Agency's international presence and visibility by actively participating in international associations and by implementing accreditation and evaluation procedures abroad.

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Communication (T): Strengthening proactive, strategic and multi-channel communication and a culture of cooperation to achieve greater openness and accessibility of the Agency and a better understanding of its operations among key stakeholders.

3.1 Sectoral legislation and Agency criteria (D)

In the coming strategic period, the Agency's work will be mainly related to the new developments brought by the new ZViS-1 in the area of the Agency's activities, which the Agency has regulated in more detail in its new criteria:

a)

The ZViS-1 enables universities that were reaccredited twice in a row for a full accreditation period to adopt their own officially recognised study programmes (including joint programmes) without accreditation by the Agency. The Agency includes these programmes in the sample of study programmes for the sample evaluation two years after the start of their delivery. In the procedures of reaccreditation of a higher education institution, the Agency will check the internal quality assurance system for the adoption of these study programmes.

b)

In the procedure of accreditation of study programmes for regulated professions, the Agency is no longer obliged to obtain the consent of the ministry responsible for the regulated profession; instead, higher education institutions must obtain the consent of the ministry themselves before submitting an application to the Agency. As the consent of the ministry is now also mandatory in the case of modifications of compulsory components of study programmes for regulated professions, the Agency will also pay attention to any consents of the relevant ministries when reviewing modifications of study programmes.

c)

The ZViS-1 introduces the European Approach for Quality Assurance for Joint Programmes for the accreditation of international joint study programmes and allows an international joint study programme to be accredited by one of the agencies registered in EQAR under the European Approach. The higher education institution accredited in the Republic of Slovenia or the international association of universities shall inform the Agency about the study programme accredited in this way. The Agency may also carry out its own accreditation procedure for an international joint study programme, which must be completed within six months. The evaluation of a study programme accredited in this way is carried out every six years.

č)

An important new feature in the procedures of extraordinary evaluation of a higher education institution or a study programme and in the evaluations of samples of study programmes is the assessment of compliance with only individual provisions of the Act or the Agency criteria for a single higher education institution or several higher education institutions or for a single study programme or several study programmes. This enables the Agency to check compliance with specific legal provisions or quality standards by several higher education institutions or study programmes at the same time.

d)

The ZViS-1 allows the Agency to perform external evaluations and accreditations abroad; however, an external evaluation of a higher education institution or study programme in the Republic of Slovenia may also be carried out by another agency registered in EQAR, where the final decision is taken by the Agency Council, which must take into account the findings of the group of experts appointed by the other agency. When making its assessment, the foreign agency must take into account the provisions of the ZViS-1 and the Criteria for the Accreditation and External Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes (hereinafter: Accreditation and Evaluation Criteria).

e)

In the event of a negative decision, it is now possible to resubmit an application for accreditation of a higher education institution and a study programme six months following the finality of the accreditation decision, which is a much shorter period of time than before the entry into force of the new ZViS-1, when the time limit was one or two years.

f)

The ZViS-1 introduces courses for obtaining microcredentials as a public document, run by higher education institutions. The Agency's task is verifying the adequacy of the internal quality assurance system of these education and training courses, which will be assessed in the procedures for reaccreditation of higher education institutions.

g)

The new regulation in the ZViS-1 is also related to the procedure for the establishment of a new member of a university, where it is now clearly stated that it is established in the framework of the procedure of accreditation of the transformation of a higher education institution. However, the Agency is no longer responsible for accrediting new or replacing existing premises of higher education institutions; instead, only the branch is accredited as a change of the location of the study programme.

h)

The new Act allows the Agency to introduce an extraordinary evaluation procedure for a study programme whose modifications are not in accordance with the ZViS- 1. It communicates the information on this to the eVŠ within 30 days. The higher education institution may not publish a call for enrolment in the changed study programme or implement it until the decision in the extraordinary evaluation procedure becomes final. The same applies to officially recognised study programmes autonomously adopted by the university.

In its new criteria, the Agency has set out in more detail the specific new or modified competences conferred on it by the new Act. As an important innovation, it also provides for a targeted review as a special procedure for the reaccreditation of a higher education institution, which does not assess all the quality standards set by the Agency criteria in detail, but assesses only some of them: the compulsory standards set by the Accreditation and Evaluation Criteria and the elective standards, which the higher education institution chooses on its own. Higher education institutions that have been reaccredited twice in a row for a full period will be able to opt for the targeted review procedure.

In line with all the new developments introduced by the ZViS-1, the Agency will monitor the implementation of the new Agency criteria during this strategic period and update them accordingly in cooperation with stakeholders. It will ensure that the new developments are regularly communicated to stakeholders.

The Agency will continue to play an active role in the reform of higher education and higher vocational education legislation. An amendment to the Higher Vocational Education Act is being drafted to give the Agency more powers in the field of external evaluations of higher vocational colleges. The Agency, as an important stakeholder in the field of higher education, will participate in the drafting of the amendments to the Act with comments and proposals, and will subsequently harmonise the criteria for the external evaluation of higher vocational colleges in line with the amended Act. The Agency will also contribute to the overhaul of higher education legislation, alongside the revision of the ESG.

3.2 Quality standards and accreditation and evaluation procedures

In the period up to 2030, the Agency will continue its efforts to improve the quality and consistency of the procedures it carries out. In this context, it is crucial that higher education maintains a high level of professionalism of the higher education activities and independence of assessments while allowing for flexibility and responsiveness to current trends. The focus will be on further professionalising the Agency's staff and experts, upgrading training and strengthening the Agency's advisory role.

a) Introducing new orientations in education and quality assurance (courses for obtaining microcredentials, targeted reviews, artificial intelligence, sustainability)

In its work, the Agency draws on its identification of the needs of Slovenian higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges related to their quality, as well as on the orientations in the Slovenian and European higher education area.

It is crucial that the Agency continues to follow modern trends in education and quality assurance. One of the important trends is courses to obtain microcredentials, which enable individuals to acquire specific competences through short and targeted training content. The Agency is involved in the project of introducing the system of courses to obtain microcredentials in Slovenia, where its role is linked to quality assurance. In the coming period, it will therefore be in charge of setting up and implementing an external quality assurance system for courses to obtain microcredentials and of developing additional quality standards against which the internal quality system of courses to obtain microcredentials in higher education institutions will be assessed.

A similar pilot project in the coming period will be the introduction of so-called targeted reviews in the Agency's external quality assurance. Targeted reviews are a new approach to external evaluation, allowing a more targeted and in-depth analysis of individual areas of operation of colleges. The Agency will pilot the targeted reviews in the external evaluation of higher vocational colleges and, after analysing the initial findings and making appropriate adjustments, will systematically introduce the approach in the other procedures it carries out.

In the coming period, it will undertake the introduction of artificial intelligence into its procedures. Already in 2025, the Agency organised a working group in charge of methodical research and implementation of artificial intelligence aimed at improving work processes, with the Agency committed to its thoughtful and responsible use.

In the new period, the Agency will devote more attention to recognising and rewarding excellence. It is already participating in a national award initiative to promote and recognise sustainable practices in higher education institutions. As a proposer of quality standards for the assessment of such projects, the Agency foresees in the new period, in addition to impact analysis and communication activities, the inclusion of sustainability criteria for the assessment of excellence in its own quality criteria. The Agency will progressively develop similar recognition and promotion of excellence – innovative, efficient or above-standard approaches by higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges – in other content areas in the coming period. The positive incentive is designed to develop quality and strengthen the quality culture in Slovenian higher education.

b) Compliance with the European guidelines and the ESG revision

The Agency will continue to pay particular attention to compliance with the European guidelines on quality assurance in the next strategic period. One of the more significant developments in this area is the planned overhaul of the EGS scheduled for 2027. The overhaul of the ESG will have a direct impact on the future development of quality standards and on the Agency criteria and procedures for accreditation and external evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes.

To ensure that national quality procedures remain in line with European standards, internationally comparable and geared towards continuous quality improvement in higher education, the Agency will regularly follow the discussions and recommendations of key European organisations, participate in professional networks and adapt to new requirements and trends in a timely manner.

c) Revising the *Guide to External Assessments*

The changes brought by the ZviS-1 require changes to the internal regulations discussed in the previous chapter, as well as meaningful adjustments and upgrade of the Guide to External Assessments. It is important that the update of the Guide, which was originally conceived as a constantly evolving document, takes into account both legislative changes and contemporary trends in education and the results of analyses of quality in higher education.

č) Training of the staff

New trends in education or new approaches to assessments require trained staff to manage processes efficiently and professionally and to support the work of experts. The Agency will therefore continue to coordinate and train its staff on an ongoing basis through thematic cross-sectoral meetings, and will also engage external experts on specific topics as needed. The Agency places great emphasis on the high level of competence of staff in specific areas and procedures, and will therefore continue to strengthen their training by acquiring or upgrading the specific skills and competences required in these areas or procedures. The staff will be assigned procedures according to their specific skills. The Agency will also continue to involve additional staff in specific procedures in the coming period to better support the work of the experts and to ensure consistency of work.

d) Training of experts

Major steps have already been made in the training of the Agency experts in the past period, and the Agency will further strengthen its cooperation with them in the coming period. The mentioned new orientations in education also require some new approaches to conducting assessments, for which experts need to be trained accordingly. The Agency will therefore carry out thematic trainings on the new features or specificities of the assessments. As the exchange of experience and good practice is also important in assessments, the Agency will organise consultations with experts where participants will share or gain as much useful feedback as possible. In the first (theoretical) part of the training of experts, the Agency is planning sensible technical improvements following the example of other countries – certain content will be prepared as a presentation film which will always be available to the experts and will relieve the staff in this phase of the training.

e) High-quality and heterogeneous groups of experts

The recently drafted rules of procedure for work with experts are designed to ensure that groups of experts are formed as objectively as possible in each procedure, while at the same time avoiding overburdening individual experts and ensuring a balanced international representation of experts. In the coming period, the Agency will systematically and consistently ensure that the number of these experts is significantly increased. This will allow for greater objectivity of assessment and a broader view of the case of assessment, as well as the enrichment of Slovenian higher education area with new ideas.

f) Improving the advisory role of the Agency

Since its creation, the Agency has been committed to its advisory role and has enhanced it over the past period. In the coming period, it will develop it further through coordination meetings, assistance to institutions both during and outside procedures, and events organised for this purpose. The advisory role will also be enhanced by a virtual assistant (chatbot) that will guide the user to the desired information on the website. Another important aspect of the Agency's advisory role is the feedback it receives, mainly through anonymous online surveys, which can help it identify potential gaps or ambiguities in the communication and interpretation of procedures and rules. The Agency will address these gaps and ambiguities consistently or take appropriate action to remedy them.

3.3 Thematic and Other Analyses

In the next strategic period, the Agency will continue to prepare thematic and other analyses aimed at developing a deeper understanding of quality and development trends in the Slovenian higher education and higher vocational education sector while also enhancing the Agency's development and advisory role. By focusing on the analysis of accreditation and evaluation procedures, it will link good practices to current challenges and development needs while encouraging the involvement of different stakeholders in the production of analyses. It will expand and upgrade the use of modern information technologies, including artificial intelligence, and various databases. The focus will also be on strengthening international visibility and developing guidelines, recommendations and documents to support further development of quality.

a) In-depth thematic analysis, stakeholder involvement and development of guidelines and recommendations

In-depth thematic analyses based on the results of accreditation and evaluation procedures will focus on the analysis of experts' reports and institutions' self-evaluation reports, allowing a better understanding of the different approaches to quality assessment. The analyses will also include proposals and initiatives from institutions that will contribute to addressing broader societal themes such as sustainable development, gender equality, the social dimension and promoting the social responsibility of higher education institutions. Based on thematic analyses, the Agency will produce guidelines, recommendations and guides to support experts and institutions in assessing and developing their external quality system.

b) Developing other analyses and building on existing ones

During this period, the Agency will also produce other content-focused analyses addressing key development trends and identifying both good practices and challenges in the higher vocational education and higher education area. Particular attention will be paid to regularly updating and upgrading existing analyses (thematic and other) to provide a comparative view over time, to monitor progress and to assess the effectiveness of the improvements introduced.

c) Use of information systems and artificial intelligence in the collection and processing of analyses

The Agency will use its iNakvis and eNakvis IT systems to collect and process the data. In addition to these systems, other higher education records will be included that provide key data for evaluation, accreditation and other quality analyses. The Agency will prudently and responsibly introduce artificial intelligence to support its analytical work, tailoring it to the needs of the Agency and its strategic objectives.

č) Development of databases

The Agency will continue to develop the databases in cooperation with ministries and higher education institutions. In the new period, these will also include data on research activities, graduate career paths and the functioning of higher education libraries, which will be relevant for accreditation and evaluation procedures. In addition, these data sources will provide up-to-date information to monitor progress in different areas.

d) Thematic events, annual reports and dissemination of results and findings of analyses

The Agency will support the organisation of thematic events, consultations and training courses, and coordinate activities within the Quality Assurance and International Cooperation Department. A key objective will be to translate the findings of the analyses into evaluation and accreditation procedures and to promote cooperation among higher education stakeholders. Annual publications in Slovenian and English will include reports on the Agency's work, thematic analyses and topical issues in the field of higher education at home and abroad. The results of the analyses will be presented by the Agency at professional meetings at home and abroad, contributing to their wider visibility and use, and strengthening the understanding of quality in higher education. The analyses will also provide an expert basis for the preparation of strategy papers and improvements in evaluation practices.

3.4 Databases

a) Upgrading and integrating information systems

In the next period, the Agency will upgrade the user experience and web interface functionalities of the eNakvis information system, which will allow for greater data throughput and ease of use. As part of iNakvis, the Agency will launch a gradual opening of the application for wider use and make selected records on higher education institutions, programmes and procedures available to the general public. Further development of connectivity between information systems (eVŠ, HEI information systems, etc.) will also be crucial, as integrated systems allow for automatic data exchange, reduce administrative burdens and lay the foundations for data-driven quality monitoring.

b) Standardisation and quality of data

To ensure reliable analytical support and efficient information exchange between systems, it is essential that data is properly structured, consistent and comparable. In the coming period, the Agency will continue to harmonise and upgrade data models, develop clear definitions of data units (enrolment conditions, curricula etc.) and establish and maintain common code lists (e.g. eNakvis codes). Particular emphasis will be placed on improving the quality of entries in existing records, introducing validation mechanisms to enable more reliable reporting, better integration with other information systems and a higher level of confidence in the data that underpins judgements, analysis and strategic decision-making.

c) Data accessibility and transparency

Increasing the accessibility and transparency of data is one of the key elements of trust in the operation of the Agency and the quality assurance system as a whole. In the next period, the Agency will establish publicly available data displays to enable stakeholders – higher education institutions, students, researchers and the general public – to better understand the functioning of the system and individual institutions. It will be accessible through dedicated web interfaces and in the form of structured exports for further analysis. Emphasis will also be placed on visual readability, flexibility of displays and real-time data refreshing. By opening up the records already established in iNakvis, the Agency will contribute to greater transparency of decisions, procedures and results of assessments while also strengthening its accountability and promoting the use of data for research and development purposes.

č) Using data for monitoring quality

In the coming period, the Agency will build on existing data sources and develop new approaches for systematic monitoring of quality based on real, comparable and data refreshed in real time. The linking of records (e.g. of study programmes, accreditations and evaluations, graduate employment) will provide more comprehensive insights into the performance of higher education institutions and programmes. This data will help to identify deviations, trends and potential risks, strengthening the Agency's role as a development body. The changes brought by the ZViS-1 also allow the Agency to link its records to the SICRIS system free of charge for the purposes of accreditation and evaluation procedures, which enables more transparent assessment of the fulfilment of conditions for appointment to a title and facilitates the evaluation of research work. Indicators collected through iNakvis and other connected systems will be directly fed into evaluation and accreditation procedures and used to formulate guidelines, recommendations and decisions. This will ensure that data becomes a tool for quality improvement, not just a means for reporting.

3.5 International cooperation

In the next strategic period, the Agency will maintain certain objectives from the previous period and partly update or upgrade them. The primary strategic objective of the Agency for the period 2026–2030 remains the comparability of the Slovenian higher education area with the European one and the implementation of the development orientations of the European Higher Education Area, which will contribute to the further strengthening of quality culture.. To this end, the Agency will work towards fulfilling the following objectives:

a) Extending membership in ENQA and EQAR

In 2028, the Agency will again be subject to the ENQA and the EQAR register review process. The Agency will continue to improve its work and build on the progress made in the previous strategic period while starting a process of self-evaluation in preparation for the next review.

b) Active participation in international associations of quality assurance agencies

As before, the Agency will pay particular attention to cooperation within ENQA and EQAR, as well as in the CEENQA association, where it will contribute to the annual conferences, and in the European Consortium for Accreditation, where, through its membership of the Consortium's council, it will help to establish, as an initiator, a European platform for cooperation of experts in accreditation and evaluation procedures. This platform will facilitate access to qualified foreign experts who can participate on an equal footing in all the Agency's groups of experts appointed in higher education procedures.

At the same time, as a member of the Bologna Follow-up Working Group (BFUG), the Agency will closely follow developments in the European area, in particular with regard to the forthcoming revision of the ESG in 2027, as this will have a significant impact on the quality standards in the Accreditation and Evaluation Criteria.

The Agency will continue to follow the European Commission's initiatives in the field of higher education and, in cooperation with stakeholders, integrate them into the Slovenian higher education area.

c) Conducting accreditation and evaluation procedures abroad

Under the new Higher Education Act, the Agency has gained the ability to carry out accreditation and evaluation procedures abroad. This is a new area of the Agency's activity, which will strengthen the Agency's international activities and at the same time enable a more direct comparison of Slovenian higher education area with other countries. The Agency will focus on European countries when carrying out procedures abroad

č) Strengthening cooperation with agencies from the Western Balkans and beyond

The Agency will continue its advisory and networking role in the Western Balkans as a participant in the SMEQA project and by organising events related to this topic. Certain activities already started in 2024 and now continue. The Agency will work with the agencies from the region and help them on their way to meeting European standards.

Moreover, it will continue its bilateral activities, in particular visits to foreign agencies, aimed primarily at learning and mutual transfer of good practices.

3.6 Communication

In the coming period, the Agency will further strengthen its proactive and strategic communication with all key stakeholders. Particular emphasis will be placed on the use of modern digital tools, the development of multimedia content and making information on the Agency's activities even more open and accessible. The organisation of thematic events and the consolidation of a collaborative culture at the Agency will also play an important role.

a) Organisation of events

In the coming period, the Agency will organise more thematic events than ever before. They will be designed to share knowledge, bring stakeholders together and raise awareness of the importance of quality assurance. It will continue to organise annual international conferences on topical issues in the field of higher education and quality assurance, and will focus even more than in the past on domestic professional meetings and consultations, including for informal socialising and networking. The NAKVIS Day will be the main annual event organised by the Agency and dedicated to quality culture, and will be enriched with new content – a panel for experts and the awards for excellence.

b) Additional multimedia content

The Agency will continue to develop its multimedia content, which it publishes on its website and YouTube channel. The most important new features will include a presentation film as an introductory seminar to the Agency's procedures and the organisation of work in a group of experts, aimed at candidates for NAKVIS experts. The presentation film will replace the first part of the training that the Agency has so far organised remotely and will also be made available to experts already registered in the Agency's register to refresh their knowledge, if necessary. This approach optimises and streamlines work for both staff and experts. In addition, for the NAKVIS Day event, the Agency will prepare accompanying presentations of the recipients of the awards of reaccreditation of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges, so that participants can learn about the key findings of the external assessment and the achievements of the individual institutions or higher vocational colleges in a less formal way.

c) Broadening existing communication channels

To improve the timeliness, clarity and dissemination of its information, the Agency will strengthen communication on its channels in the coming period. It will increase the number and variety of posts on social media and on the website, and will update the website with additional functionality in the form of a chatbot – a virtual assistant for users. It will also expand the content of the monthly e-newsletter and make its dissemination to key stakeholders even more effective.

č) Strengthening of the collaborative culture at the Agency

In the coming period, the Agency will also pay particular attention to strengthening the Agency's collaborative culture and relationships. It will organise regular thematic coordination between employees and management, ensure that all sectors are consistently involved in tasks of common interest, strengthen the organisation of joint informal and formal gatherings, and further raise awareness and educate on the importance of a collaborative culture. Systematic mentoring of new colleagues and rewarding successful work will also be an important contribution to better cooperation and better quality of work.

Conclusion

The new Strategy for the period 2026–2030 continues and upgrades the Agency's efforts to date, as well as responds to the current development needs of the higher education and higher vocational education area. It is based on the experience and achievements of the past period and is designed with a clear view forward – towards objectives that will contribute to raising the quality, accountability and relevance of Slovenian higher and higher vocational education.

Over the next five years, the Agency will even more systematically put at the heart of its work content that links quality, sustainable development, digital transformation and international cooperation. The strategic objectives will be pursued in full respect of the values that have guided the Agency since its creation: professionalism, independence, transparency, integrity and development orientation. These values will continue to be based on the recognised European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), on which the Agency builds its role in the national and European higher education area.

With the new Strategy, the Agency is working towards greater integration between internal and external quality processes, paying particular attention to the involvement of all key stakeholders in the design and implementation of processes. This reinforces the culture of cooperation and co-responsibility that is essential for the long-term functioning and legitimacy of the quality assurance system.

Another important aspect in the future will be the Agency's ability to promptly react to changes – be they legislative, social, scientific, technological or environmental. The Strategy therefore includes instruments that allow for the adaptation and evaluation of actions to ensure that the Agency remains effective, credible and relevant at the time of the rapid transformations that characterise the modern higher education environment.

In the new strategic period, the Agency will strive to maintain an active and trusted role in the Slovenian and wider European higher education area. It will continue its efforts to develop quality in tertiary education through expert external assessments, quality data processing, thoughtful analysis, open communication with higher education stakeholders and enhanced advisory support to higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges.

The strategic objectives have been set by the Agency Director, in cooperation with the Heads of Departments and employees. The objectives were set taking into account the Agency's self-evaluation findings and the recommendations made by ENQA experts during the external evaluation of the Agency. The amendment was sent to all higher education stakeholders for comments and the strategic objectives were also presented at the Agency's consultations.

The Strategy was adopted by the Agency Council at its 24th meeting on 22 December 2025.

III.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS OF QUALITY IN SLOVENIAN HIGHER AND HIGHER VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FROM 2018 TO 2022

Filip Draženović, Maja Milas, PhD, Martina Mravlja, Matjaž Štuhec, PhD

Slovenian Higher Education 2018–2022

Methodological Framework for the Preparation of a Systemic Analysis

Analysis of Experts' Reports on the External Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions

Analysis of Experts' Reports on the Accreditation and Evaluation of Study Programmes

Analysis of Experts' Reports on the External Evaluation of Higher Vocational Colleges

Analysis of Self-Assessment Reports of Higher Education Institutions

Analysis of Self-Assessment Reports of Higher Vocational Colleges

Design of the Methodological Framework and Surveys:
Jernej Širok, PhD

Collection and Analysis of Data from External Evaluation Reports and Self-Evaluation Reports:
Filip Draženović, Anej Irgolič, Andrej Krček, Maja Milas, PhD, Martina Mravlja, Jernej Širok, PhD, Matjaž Štuhec, PhD

Introduction

The analysis of the quality of Slovenian higher and higher vocational education, or the so-called systemic analysis prepared by the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter: the Agency or NAKVIS), is the third in a row. The document provides an insight into the results of the procedures of reaccreditation of higher education institutions, accreditation and evaluation of study programmes and external evaluation of higher vocational education institutions, as well as the results of the self-evaluation reports of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges. It focuses on the identification of good practices and areas where there is room for minor improvements and those where major changes are needed.

The Agency's systemic analyses were initiated by various higher education stakeholders, who expressed the need for more comprehensive monitoring of the situation and trends in Slovenian higher and higher vocational education, as well as by its own needs for monitoring the quality of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges. The systemic analysis provides a holistic, systemic view of the quality of higher and higher vocational education, while at the same time offering higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges an individual insight into the analysis, so that they can get feedback relevant for their own development.

Chapter one presents an overview of study programmes, higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges, including accreditations granted and recommendations and opinions of the Council of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter: the Agency Council). Subsequent chapters analyse final accreditation/evaluation reports of groups of experts in procedures of initial accreditation and reaccreditation of higher educational institutions, accreditation and external evaluation of study programmes and external evaluation of higher vocational colleges. The analysis also includes an overview of self-evaluation reports of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges.

The research methodology is based on surveys with closed-ended questions, which allow for a structured analysis of the findings of the reports of groups of experts and self-evaluation reports. The contents of individual chapters are mostly based on the Criteria for the accreditation and external evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [Uradni list RS], Nos 42/17, 14/19, 3/20, 78/20, 82/20 – corr. and 44/21; hereinafter: the Accreditation Criteria) and the Criteria for the external evaluation of higher vocational colleges (Official Gazette of the Republic

of Slovenia, Nos 21/18 and 69/18, hereinafter: the Evaluation Criteria), valid between 2018 and 2022, i.e. in the period covered by the analysis. We consider the following areas of assessment, which are divided into individual quality indicators: (1) integration with the environment, (2) operation of the higher education institution, (3) human resources, (4) students, (5) material conditions and (6) quality assurance, and for higher education institutions and their study programmes (7) organisation and delivery of study. The analysis is also based on the highlights of the Higher Education Act (Uradni list RS, Nos 32/12-UPB7, 40/12-ZUJF, 57/12-ZPCP-2D, 109/12, 85/14, 75/16, 61/17 ZUPŠ, 65/17, 175/20 – ZIUOPDVE, 57/21 – Constitutional Court decision, 54/22 – ZUPŠ-1, 100/22 – ZSZUN and 102/23; hereinafter: the ZViS) referring to the areas from the Accreditation Criteria.

The analysis has focused on the concluding observations of the reports by groups of experts (rather than on the reports by groups of experts as a whole), which allowed their key lessons to be identified. This approach has increased the time-efficiency of the analysis due to the abundance of the material and the large number of reports. In carrying out the analysis, the Agency has followed a well-established methodology, which has allowed some of the selected areas to be assessed on the basis of the old criteria, thus allowing comparability with the results of the previous period.

In conclusion, the document offers a summary of the findings and points to future challenges in ensuring and improving the quality of higher and higher vocational education in the Republic of Slovenia.

1. Slovenian Higher Education 2018–2022

The last systemic analysis of the quality of Slovenian higher and higher vocational education included the results of accreditation and evaluation procedures in the period from 2014 to 2017.[1] After this period, the Agency's main activity, taking into account the legislation in force, continues to be related to the high-quality conduct of the following accreditation and evaluation procedures:

- **Accreditation of study programmes;** the procedure assesses whether the draft study programme meets the quality standards set for the accreditation of the study programme. The key areas of assessment are the structure and content as well as the design of the delivery of the study programme. Accreditation is granted to the study programme for an indefinite period, or an application for accreditation is rejected.
- **Evaluation of a sample;** the procedure assesses whether accredited study programmes meet the quality standards set for the external evaluation of a study programme. It is a process of assessing the modification and updating of a study programme, its implementation and the quality assurance system of a higher education institution in the part referring to the assurance and improvement of quality of a study programme (self-evaluation). The basis for the assessment is a self-evaluation report. The external evaluation of a study programme is carried out in the context of reaccreditation of a higher education institution, as an extraordinary evaluation of a study programme, or as an evaluation of a sample of study programmes.
- **Initial accreditation of a higher education institution;** the process assesses whether the higher education institutions in the process meet the conditions and quality standards set for the accreditation of a higher education institution. The key areas of assessment are the operation of the higher education institution, human resources and material conditions. Accreditation is granted to the higher education institution for a period of five years or the application for accreditation is rejected.
- **Reaccreditation of a higher education institution;** the procedure assesses whether accredited higher education institutions meet the quality standards set for the external evaluation of higher education institutions. The procedure for reaccreditation of a higher education institution shall be carried out by external evaluation and shall conclude with a decision on reaccreditation. External evaluation is the procedure of the comprehensive assessment of the operation of a higher education institution in the period since the previous accreditation. The assessment considers the progress and development

1 *Quality of human resources in Slovenian higher and higher vocational education from 2014 to 2017, Ljubljana 2018.*

since the previous accreditation in all areas of assessment, especially the internal quality assurance system of a higher education institution. The basis for the assessment is a self-evaluation report which includes the evaluation of the whole set of activities and the evaluation of the delivery and modifications of study programmes. In the procedure of reaccreditation of a higher education institution, the higher education institution is reaccredited for a period of five years, for a shorter period (but not more than three years), or not reaccredited.

- **Transformation of a higher education institution;** transformation into another type of higher education institution is processed in accordance with the criteria for the reaccreditation of a higher education institution. It can be the transformation of a higher education institution into a faculty or university.
- **External evaluation of higher vocational college;** the procedure assesses the achievement of quality standards of higher vocational colleges in accordance with the Criteria for External Evaluation of Higher Vocational Colleges. The work of a group of experts is similar as in the reaccreditation of a higher education institution, as is the process leading up to the issuing of final evaluation report. The areas of assessment are the same, but the group of experts must take into account the specifics of the higher vocational college. The Agency adopts an opinion whether the higher vocational college meets the quality standards. Accreditations are decided by the ministry competent for higher vocational education.

There have been no significant changes in the Agency operation since 2018. The last major systemic change affecting the Agency's operations was the transition from programme to institutional evaluation adopted in 2016. Instead of the previous reaccreditation of study programmes, the Act Amending the Higher Education Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No 75/2016, ZViS-K) stipulated that the Agency carry out the evaluation of study programmes in the framework of the procedures of reaccreditation of higher education institutions, extraordinary evaluation of study programmes and a new type of procedure – evaluation of samples of study programmes. As of 2017, the Agency no longer conducts reaccreditation procedures for study programmes, but only accreditation procedures, whereby the Agency Council may either grant or refuse to grant accreditation for an indefinite period of time. The provisions of the ZViS-K stipulate that the Agency annually evaluates at least 2% of the accredited study programmes implemented in that academic year by higher education institutions in the Republic of Slovenia, which the Agency carries out in the framework of evaluation of a sample of study programmes determined by the Agency Council. The nature of the procedure of evaluation of a sample of study programmes is different than in other Agency procedures, as the purpose of it is to advise higher education institutions in the development of self-evaluation and improvement of the quality of study programmes. During the period covered by this systemic analysis, Slovenian tertiary education was confronted with various challenges and opportunities, among which the COVID-19 pandemic had a particular importance as it had a significant impact on the introduction of digital techniques in education. The Agency, together with other stakeholders, also tackled these challenges by introducing some of the most advanced technological solutions, such as digitalisation of operations, distance procedures and teleworking. The transition to remote access was relatively simple, but the external quality assurance system for the Slovenian higher education area had to be adapted and guidelines for hybrid education had to be adopted.

The table below provides an overview of the decisions taken in the accreditation and evaluation procedures of study programmes, higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges in Slovenia between 2018 and 2022. It includes different types of procedures, such as accreditations, withdrawals of applications, evaluations of samples and extraordinary evaluations, as well as negative decisions and findings of non-compliance.

Table 1:
Number of accreditation and evaluation procedures from 2018 to 2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Study programmes						
Accreditation of new programmes	9	29	13	17	9	**77**
Withdrawal of application for accreditation	1	8	7	6	4	**26**
Negative decisions in accreditation procedures	2	1	1	0	1	**5**
Evaluation of a sample	/	12	18	27	17	**74**
Non-compliances established	/	4	4	2	8	**18**
Extraordinary evaluation	1	1	0	0	2	**4**
Total	**13**	**55**	**43**	**52**	**41**	**204**
Higher education institutions						
Initial accreditation	0	0	0	1	0	**1**
Reaccreditation	0	2	7	4	13	**26**
Reaccreditation for a shorter period	0	0	4	1	4	**9**
Transformation	2	0	1	2	2	**7**
Withdrawal of application in higher education institution procedures	1	2	0	0	0	**3**
Negative decisions in higher education institution procedures	0	1	1	0	1	**3**
Total	**3**	**5**	**13**	**8**	**20**	**49**
Higher vocational colleges						
External evaluation (positive opinions and qualified positive opinions)	9	15	8	8	10	**50**
Negative opinions	0	0	0	1	1	**2**
Total	**9**	**15**	**8**	**9**	**11**	**52**

Accreditation of study programmes was the most frequent of all the procedures, with a total of 77 accreditations, the highest number of these in 2019. Negative decisions were rare, with a few institutions deciding to withdraw their applications. The number of evaluations of samples has also grown over the years. During the whole period, the Agency carried out only one accreditation of a higher education institution. In the field of higher vocational education, the Agency follows a five-year plan for external evaluations of higher vocational colleges, which is coordinated with stakeholders.

Table 2:
Comparative review of procedures of reaccreditation of study programmes and higher education institutions and for the external evaluation of higher vocational colleges

Procedure	Total 2014-2017	Total 2018-2022
Reaccreditation of study programme	492	122
Reaccreditation of higher education institution	26	53
External evaluation of higher vocational college	31	54
Total	**549**	**229**

Table 2 shows that 492 procedures of reaccreditation of study programmes were carried out in 2014-2017, significantly more than in 2018-2022, when only 122 procedures were carried out. This is the result of a legal regulation that has abandoned the procedures of reaccreditation of study programmes.

2. Methodological Framework for the Preparation of a Systemic Analysis

The methodological approach used to prepare the systemic analysis of Slovenian higher and higher vocational education for the period 2018–2022 was based on a combination of two data sources: the analysis of reports of groups of experts and the analysis of self-evaluation reports of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges. This dual approach provides a comprehensive view of the quality of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges, combining objective findings from experts with self-assessment by institutions while ensuring comparability of results with previous periods.

The analysis of expert reports is based on publicly available opinions and final reports of groups of experts appointed by the Agency Council, while the analysis of self-evaluation reports assesses the quality of reporting and evaluation as carried out by the institutions themselves.

Both approaches use a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis with structured questionnaires tailored to specific quality criteria and areas of assessment, allowing for a systematic assessment of strengths, opportunities for improvement and potential non-compliances with regulations.

2.1 Analysis of reports of groups of experts

The analysis is based on publicly available expert opinions and findings in final reports of groups of experts appointed by the Agency Council for the procedures of accreditation, reaccreditation and evaluation. The sample of expert opinions selected for the analysis was based on the documentation examined, the findings of the visits to the institutions and the responses of the higher education institutions and colleges. The reports have been selected based on the period of the Agency Council decisions between 2018 and 2022. The analysis of the experts' reports has taken into account the final findings.

The approach followed the methodology of, with some adjustments to the specific requirements and circumstances of the current period, which allows continuity and comparability of results between different periods. The qualitative and quantitative analysis of the reports of groups of experts on higher education institutions, their study programmes and higher vocational colleges was carried out on the basis of closed-ended questionnaires specifically tailored to the type of procedure. Due to the different sample sizes, the questions were structured according to the **areas of assessment and the individual indicators** derived from the accreditation and evaluation criteria. All questionnaires covered the same areas:

- (1) integration with the environment,
- (2) operation of the higher education institution,
- (3) human resources,
- (4) students,
- (5) material conditions,
- (6) quality assurance,
- (7) organisation and delivery of education (only in the assessment of higher education institutions and their study programmes).

Some areas were based on the criteria, others were not, but the Agency considered that these could also contribute to a better understanding of the operation of higher education institutions and study programmes.

The aim of the survey was to assess the quality of Slovenian higher and higher vocational education in the 2018–2022 period, with a focus on identifying good practices, opportunities for improvement and non-compliances or major deficiencies in relation to the ZViS and the Accreditation Criteria. The questionnaires allowed the coding and interpretation of the reports of groups of experts, with the findings grouped into qualitative categories:

(1) strengths,

(2) opportunities for improvement,

(3) non-compliances with regulations,

(4) not addressed.

2.2 Analysis of self-evaluation reports

The analysis of self-evaluation reports (hereinafter: SERs) of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges focuses on assessing the quality of reporting and the evaluation itself, rather than providing insight into the actual situation at these educational institutions as shown by the experts' reports at the time of the various accreditations and evaluations. The Agency employees reviewed the SERs of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges for two self-evaluation periods, for the academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22, on the basis of the defined criteria. For each analysis, a sample of pairs of the two available reports was drawn up, with the two most recent available SERs for each higher education institution or higher vocational college collected and analysed. The analysis covered 295 SERs in total.

The qualitative and quantitative analysis was based on surveys with closed-ended questions specifically adapted to the SER structure prescribed by the Accreditation Criteria and Criteria for External Evaluation of Higher Vocational Colleges, respectively. As these regulations are similar, the questions in both surveys, for both higher education institutions or higher vocational colleges, were structured around the same areas of assessment: (1) integration with the environment, (2) operation of the institution, (3) human resources, (4) students, (5) material conditions and (6) quality assurance. In both surveys, an additional area of assessment covers (7) organisation and delivery of study.

The survey questions focused on whether certain areas of assessment, quality standards or indicators are covered by the SER and what is their evaluation scope. Three answers were possible:

- **No;** an area, standard or indicator is not adequately presented, documented or analysed in the report, meaning that it does not result in measures for improvement.
- **Yes, this is presented;** an area, standard or indicator is mentioned and documented in the report, but without a qualitative assessment or meaningful measures for improvement.
- **Yes, this is presented and evaluated;** the area, standard or indicator is adequately documented, analysed and evaluated, allowing meaningful measures for improvement to be formulated on the basis of the evaluation.

The questions were designed to allow for simple "yes" or "no" answers and cover topics such as the compliance of the report with the areas of assessment against the Accreditation Criteria or the Evaluation Criteria, the addressing of the measures for improvement from the previous self-evaluation, and the formulation of strengths and opportunities for improvement, including suggestions for new measures and an action plan. Some questions focused on the levels at which self-evaluation practices are carried out – at the level of the institution, individual study programmes, both levels or neither.

A methodological limitation is that yes/no questions do not provide an in-depth insight into the reasons and circumstances of self-evaluation practices but only give a superficial indication of whether certain elements are present. In addition, the assessment was partly dependent on the subjective interpretations of the Agency's staff, which may affect the uniformity and comparability of the results.

3. Analysis of Experts' Reports on the External Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions

3.1 Review and assessment of higher education institution quality indicators

The review covered 25 expert reports of groups of experts, which was considered comparable to the sample from the previous systemic analysis, when 26 such reports were considered. The reports of groups of experts show that experts were reserved in identifying non-compliances; the number of the latter in all areas of assessment was low, most often in the range of 5-10%. The exceptions detected were the areas of the quality of self-evaluation of study programmes and study delivery, where the percentage of non-compliance was higher, reaching up to 20%. It was also noted that strengths were often balanced with opportunities for improvement, indicating a cautious approach to quality assessment. The exceptions were quality assurance, where opportunities strongly predominated, and integration with the environment, where strengths clearly predominated.

Only independent higher education institutions were in the procedure of reaccreditation during the period under review; namely 11 higher vocational colleges and 13 faculties.

In total, 895 individual responses to the survey questions were analysed and grouped into qual-

Chart 1:
Higher education institutions by type

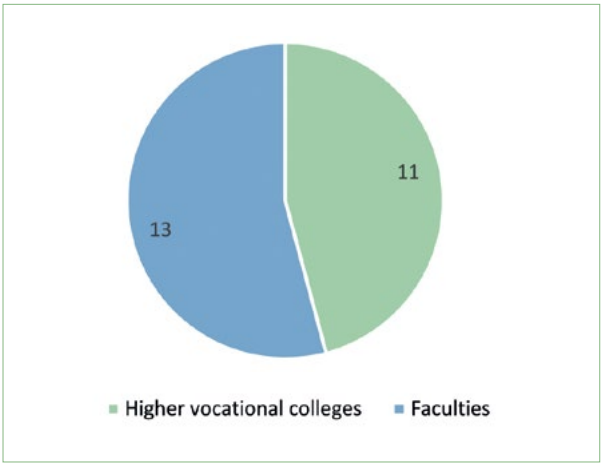


Chart 2:
Higher education institutions by four qualitative categories

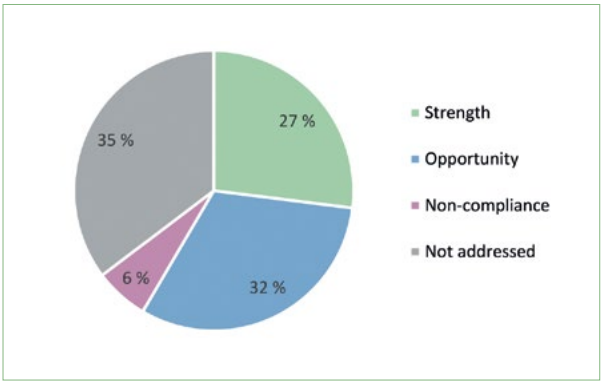
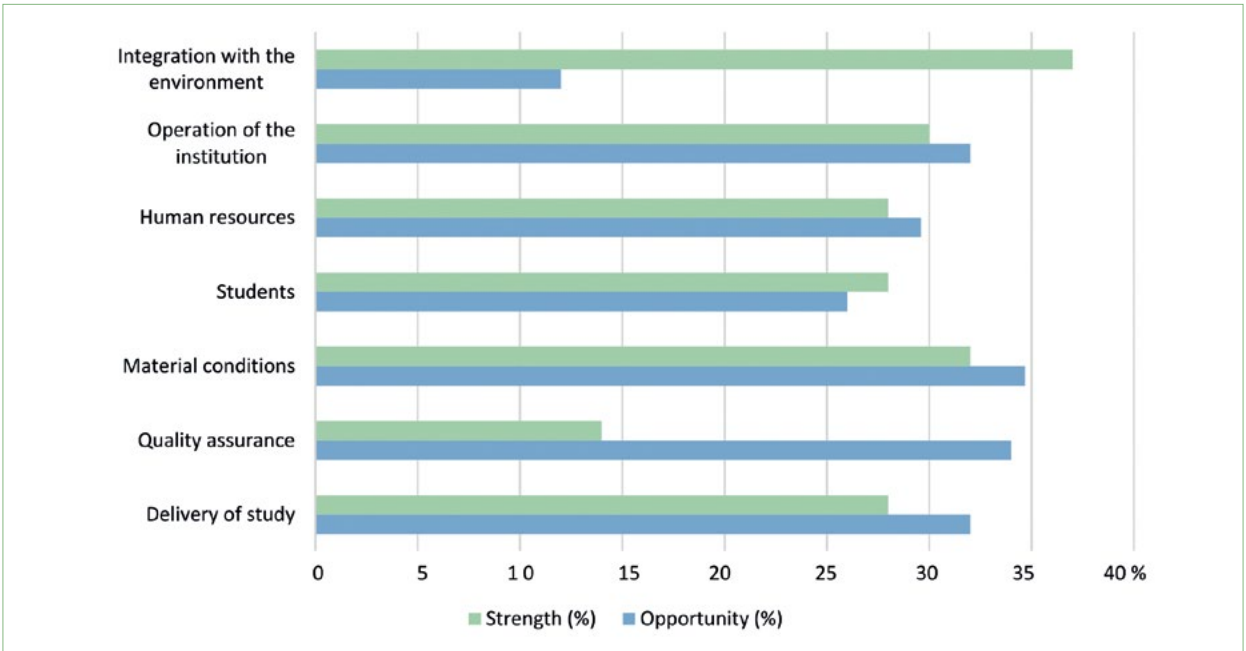


Chart 3:
Comparison of strengths and opportunities for each area of assessment



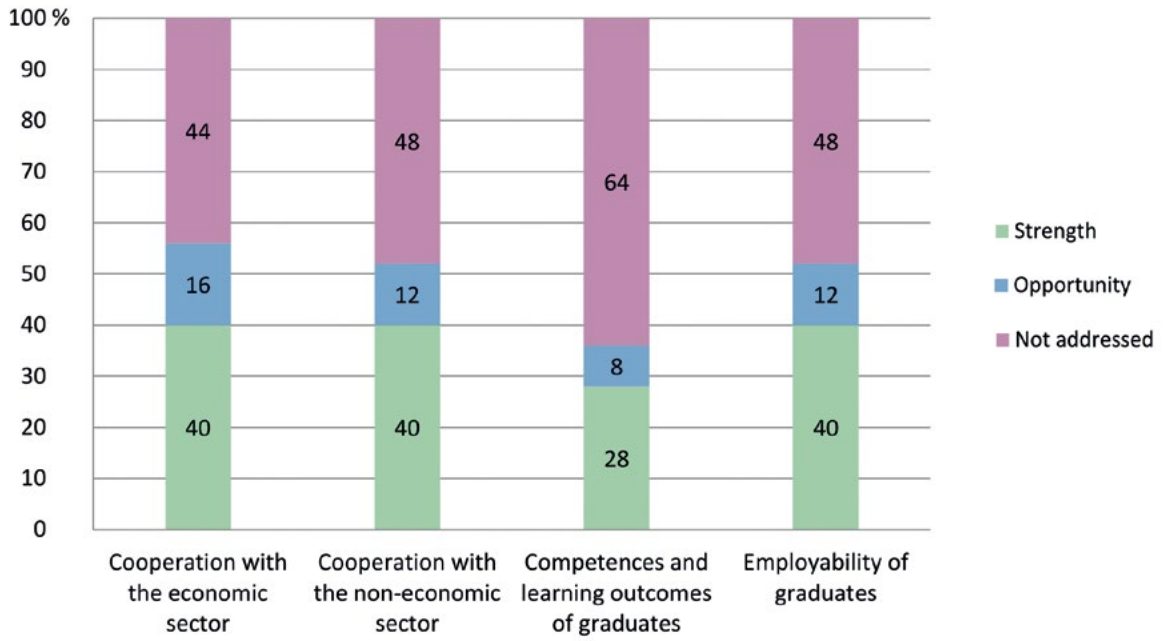
itative categories. Only the findings made after the completed assessment under each standard were included in the analysis. The survey data shown in the pie chart reflect the distribution of responses into four main qualitative categories. The largest share (33%) belongs to the category not addressed, which means that certain content was not addressed by the groups of experts or did not diverge either positively or negatively from the provisions of the Accreditation Criteria. The second largest group, accounting for 32% of responses, is the opportunity category. In addition, it is noticeable that, with few exceptions, groups of experts tend to balance strengths and opportunities for improvement.The individual quality indicators are analysed in more detail below for each of the areas of assessment. We will be interested to know how often the experts identified the indicators in their reports under each of the qualitative categories of ***strength, opportunity for improvement, non-compliance*** and ***not addressed.*** Below is a breakdown of the strengths, opportunities and non-compliances for the quality indicators in each of the areas of assessment.

(1) The first aspect considered is the **integration with the environment**, where the qualitative findings of the experts have been taken into account in relation to the following indicators:

- **cooperation of higher education institutions with the economic sector** – partnerships, projects of use to industry, involvement of experts or representatives of the economic sector in the teaching or evaluation of study programmes;
- **comparing higher education institutions with the economic and non-economic sectors** in terms of public services, meeting public sector requirements, intellectual and cultural integration with the environment;
- **competences and employability of graduates** in relation to their education and skills.

In about half of the reports, the area of **integration with the environment** is not addressed in the concluding observations or no positive or negative divergences were detected by the groups of experts, which means that the standard has been met as required by the Accreditation Criteria. The number of strengths was particularly high in the ***cooperation of institutions with the (non-) economic sector***, as well as in the ***employability of graduates***, which is similar to what was found in the evaluations of study programmes, as will be shown below. In the previous systemic analysis, the experts paid more attention to this area, with only about a fifth of the reports omitting it; most

Chart 4:
Quality indicators in the area of integration with the environment



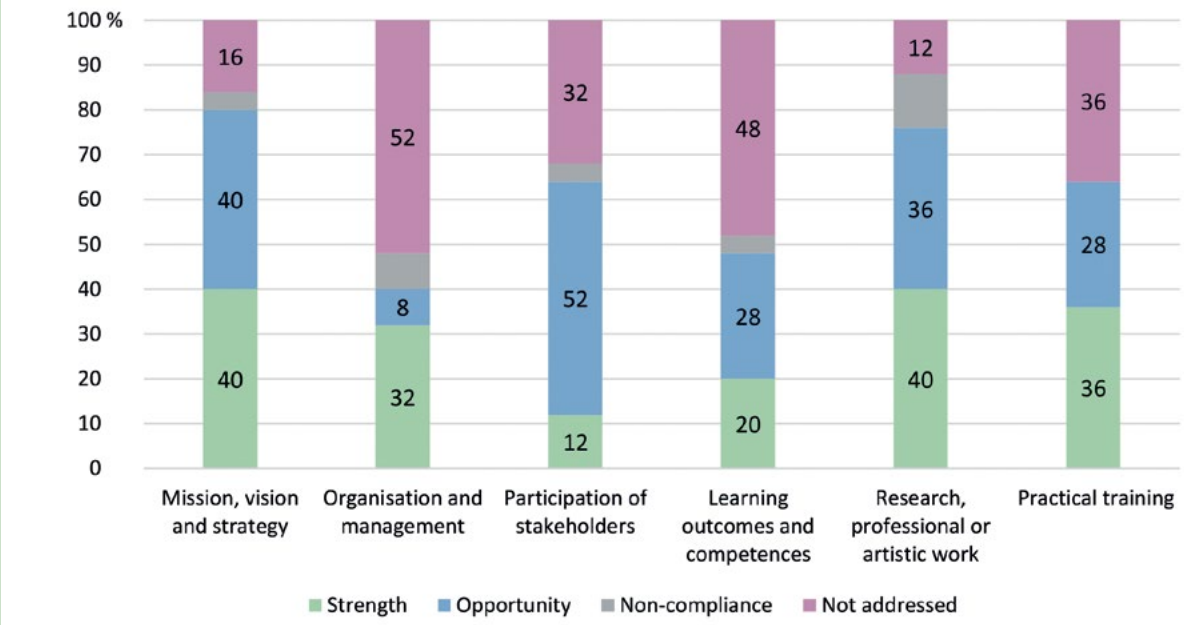
attention was paid to the ***cooperation with the economic sector***, where they perceived the most strengths. As in this analysis, ***competences*** were dominated by strengths, with the exception of ***cooperation with the non-economic sector***, where, in contrast to the present analysis, there was a fairly even balance of strengths and opportunities.

(2) In the next area of assessment, **operation of the higher education institution**, the experts considered the following quality indicators:

- **mission, vision and strategy** in relation to organisational objectives and planning;
- **organisation and management** of the higher education institution;
- participation of key stakeholders in the management of the higher education institution, i.e. participation in governance;
- achieving and monitoring **learning outcomes and competences**, i.e. practices related to the assessment of knowledge, skills and competences;
- **research, professional or artistic work** in terms of scientific, professional and professional research or artistic work and achievements and prizes at institutional level;
- **practical training** in terms of organisation, delivery and evaluation.

The ***indicator participation of key stakeholders*** stands out as having significantly more opportunities than strengths, while the indicator ***organisation and management*** has significantly more strengths than opportunities, with a noticeably high proportion of reports that did not address this indicator. The other indicators are relatively balanced in terms of strengths and opportunities. Among the indicators not covered by the reports, ***mission, vision and strategy*** and ***research, professional or artistic work*** have the lowest share, while the other indicators have a share of around 50%. No non-compliances were found for ***practical training***, while their share in other indicators is between 4% and 12%. Comparing the results with the previous analysis shows a predominance of opportunities over strengths in the scientific, research and/or professional activities of the institution, as well as a lower level of consideration in the monitoring of competences. Similarly, the preponderance of strengths in the mission and governance of the institution remains significant, and the indicator on the ***participation of key stakeholders*** shows an even greater preponderance of opportunities than in the analysis of the previous period.

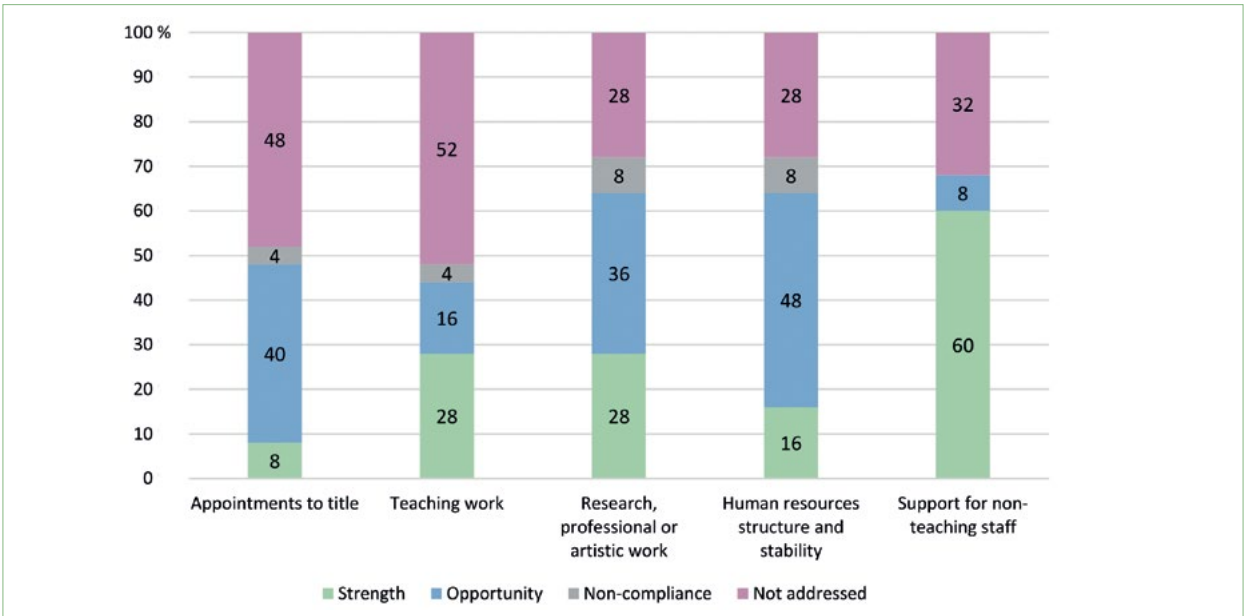
Chart 5:
Quality indicators in the area of operation of higher education institution



(3) In analysing the **human resources** findings, the experts took into account the following quality indicators:

- **appointments to title,** their validity and correspondence with the fields of courses that the teachers hold;
- **teaching work**;
- **scientific and research, professional or artistic work of teachers** – at the individual, not institutional level;
- **human resources structure and stability** in terms of type of employment of teachers and researchers at the higher education institution,
- **administrative, professional and material support** for non-teaching staff – job stability and quality of services.

Chart 6:
Quality indicators in the area of human resources of higher education institution



Administrative, professional and material support for non-teaching staff is identified as a strength in 60% of reports, which is the most frequently identified strength. By contrast, the ***appointment to title*** indicator stands out for its distinctly low number of strengths, as it is indicated in less than 10% of reports, while opportunities are identified in 40% of reports. The ***human resources structure*** also presents a significantly higher proportion of opportunities than strengths. Opportunities are three times more frequent for this indicator than for the others.

Major deficiencies and non-compliances occur in all quality indicators, except for ***administrative, professional and material support for non-teaching staff.***

(4) For **students**, the following quality indicators are covered:

- **participation in research,** depending on students' actual or potential participation in scientific and professional research or artistic work;
- **participation in management,** which refers to the inclusion of students in the management of the higher education institution;
- **participation in updating study programmes,** which refers to the inclusion of students in the update of study programmes and adoption of programme updates;
- **support for students,** which refers to general administrative support for study, enrolment services, services of the student affairs office and the international affairs office;
- **provision of information to students,** which refers to the information services of the higher education institution and includes information for students on matters related to education, employability and self-evaluation;
- **student mobility,** which refers to the support and conditions for student mobility, its organisation and the actual student exchanges.

The area covering students has the lowest number of identified non-compliances. Among the quality indicators where opportunities outweigh strengths, special mention should be made of ***participation in governance***, where opportunities outweigh strengths by a factor of three. A similar, though slightly lower number of opportunities is also found in the indicators ***participation***

Chart 7:
Quality indicators in the area of students of higher education institution

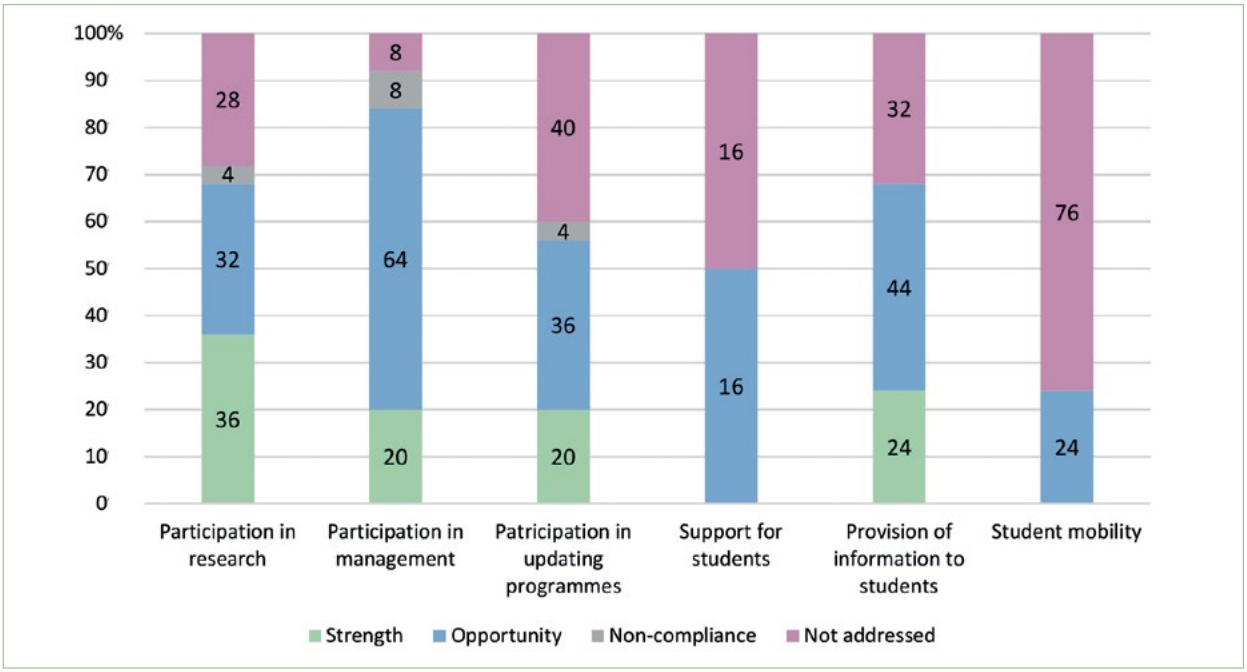
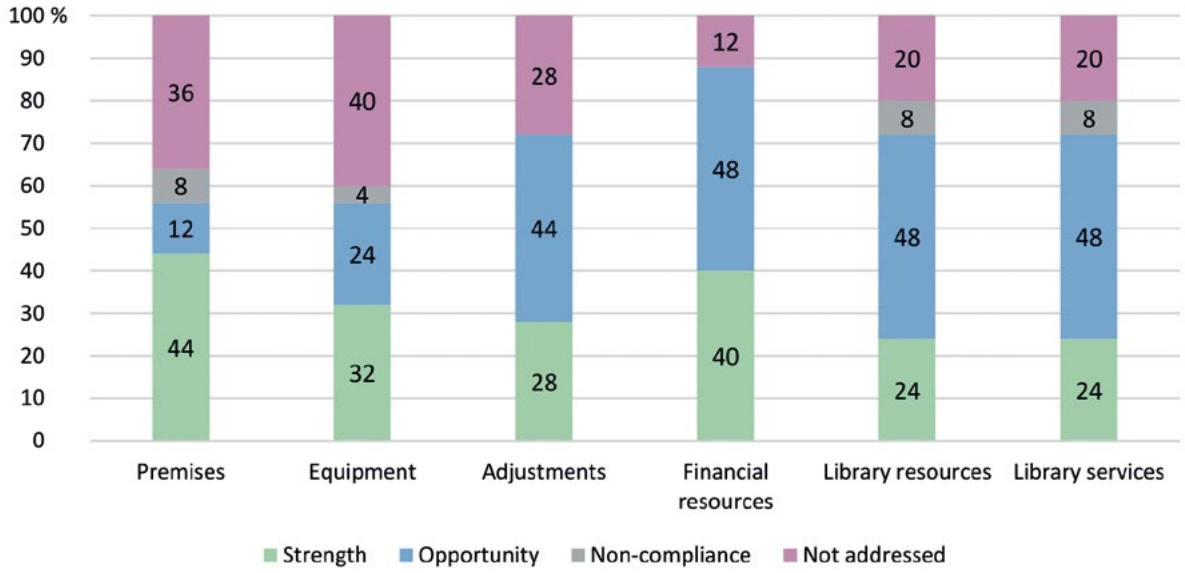


Chart 8:
Quality indicators in the area of material conditions of higher education institution



in updating study programmes and ***provision of information to students***. As a positive exception, ***support for students*** can be highlighted, where the number of strengths significantly outweighs the number of opportunities – almost by four times, similar to the ***administrative, professional and material support for non-teaching staff*** presented in the previous point. In ***student mobility,*** which is the least frequently addressed area in the reports reviewed, the groups of experts identify opportunities for improvement.

Comparison with the previous analysis shows a similar picture, with a preponderance of strengths in ***participation in research*** and ***support for students***, while ***mobility and participation in governance*** were predominantly identified as opportunities for improvement in both analyses. There is a change in the ***provision of information to students***, which was very positively assessed in the previous analysis, but much less so this time.

(5) **Material conditions** cover the following quality indicators:

- **premises** in terms of facilities for education, research or artistic work;
- **equipment** for education, research or artistic work;
- **adjustments for students with special needs** in terms of special adaptations to facilities, special equipment, as well as rules (rights and obligations) and support;
- **financial resources** in terms of financial stability and adequacy throughout the accreditation period;
- **library resources** in terms of physical copies of study and research literature, as well as access to databases;
- **library services** in terms of professional support for students, teachers and researchers.

In this area of assessment, indicators such as ***equipment, adjustments for students with special needs*** and ***financial resources*** are fairly balanced in terms of the ratio of strengths and opportunities. The ***premises*** indicator stands out, with strengths outweighing opportunities by a factor of four. In the opposite direction, we see a twofold excess of opportunities in the indicators ***library resources*** and ***library services***. In these two indicators, and in particular in ***financial resources,*** the category of ***not addressed*** in the reports of the groups of experts has a smaller share than in the other indicators. The areas with the fewest major deficiencies or non-compliances identified

are ***adjustments for students with special needs*** and ***financial resources.***

In the previous analysis, the indicators for ***premises*** and ***equipment*** have an even higher proportion of strengths compared to opportunities. The picture is different for ***adjustments for students with special needs***, where the previous analysis found more strengths. ***Financial resources*** and ***library resources*** show a slightly better picture compared to the previous period, with slightly more strengths, while opportunities prevail in both indicators. ***Library services*** have deteriorated, as both analyses show, with almost 50% of reports identifying opportunities and some identifying non-compliances.

(6) **Quality assurance**, as a specific area of internal quality assurance assessment, includes the following quality indicators:

- **internal rules** on quality assurance in terms of quality manuals or other adopted documents;
- **operation of internal quality assurance system** in relation to the organisation, management, efficiency and effectiveness of the quality assurance process;
- **participation of key stakeholders** in internal quality assurance;
- **quality culture**;
- **closure of quality loop** in terms of completeness of the quality assurance process – i.e. completion of the Deming cycle (plan-do-check-act) or related quality assurance cycles including follow-up procedures;
- **provision of information on quality assurance,** i.e. quality assurance processes, their relevance and outcomes;
- **quality of self-evaluation** in terms of consistency, completeness, methodological rigour and effectiveness of self-evaluation;
- **self-evaluation of individual study programmes,** i.e. regular review and development of study programmes them in the light of self-evaluation results.

When assessing the ***quality culture***, which is the least frequently addressed in the first set of indicators, the groups of experts identify more strengths than opportunities for improvement. All other indicators, with the exception of ***internal rules***, show an excess of opportunities for improvement. Opportunities particularly stand out in the indicator ***participation of key stakehold-***

Chart 9:
Quality indicators in the area of institution quality assurance

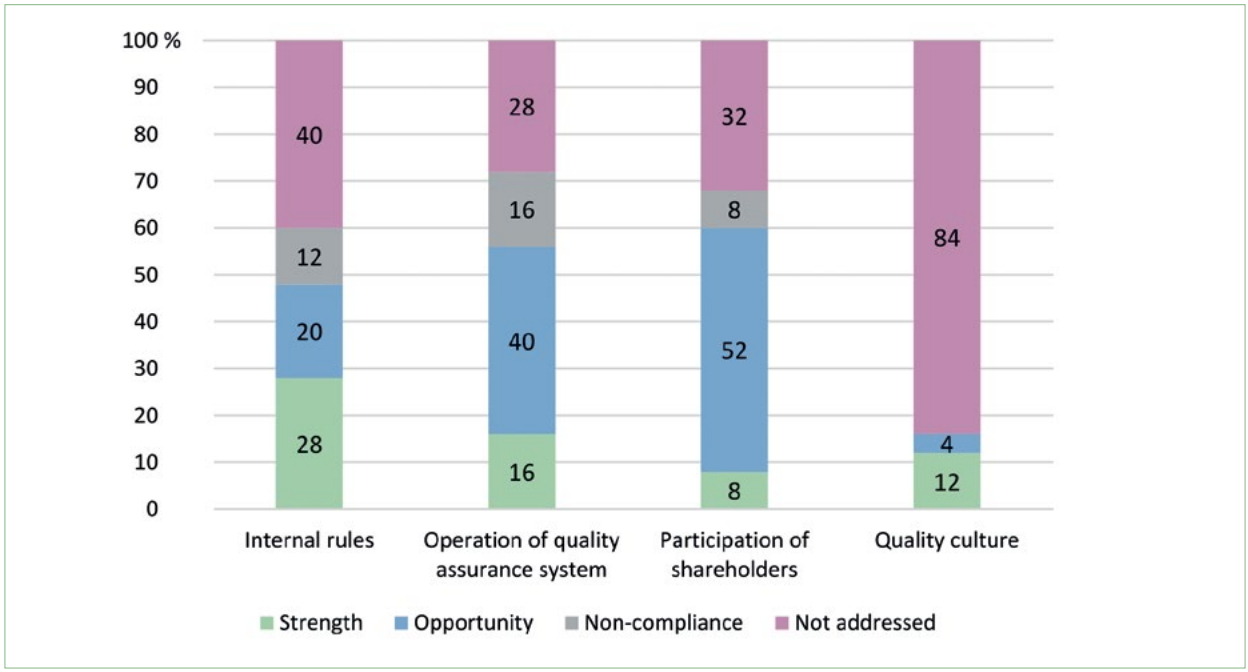
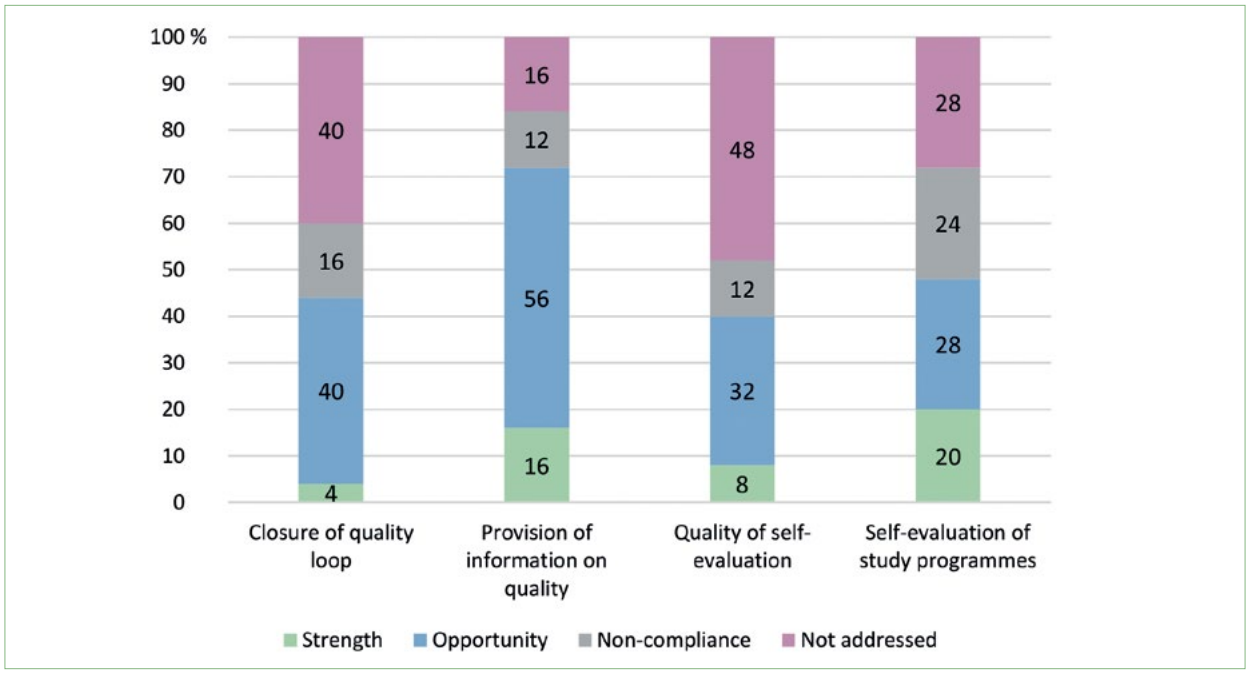


Chart 9:
Quality indicators in the area of institution quality assurance



ers, and to a lesser extent in the ***operation of the internal quality assurance system.***

In the second set of this area of assessment, there is also a marked excess of opportunities over strengths, particularly in the indicators on ***closure of quality loop*** and on the ***provision of information on quality assurance***. There is also a small but still noticeable preponderance of opportunities in the area of ***quality of self-evaluation*** and ***self-evaluation of study programmes.***

Non-compliances or major deficiencies occur in all quality indicators for this area, except for the ***quality culture*** (in terms of status and development); this is the area with the highest number of non-compliances compared to the other assessment areas considered.

In the previous analysis, this area was characterised by a marked preponderance of opportunities for improvement. The indicator on i***nternal rules on quality assurance*** shows a better picture this time, with an excess of strengths. The ***quality culture*** indicator also identified more strengths than opportunities, although it received much less attention from the experts this time.

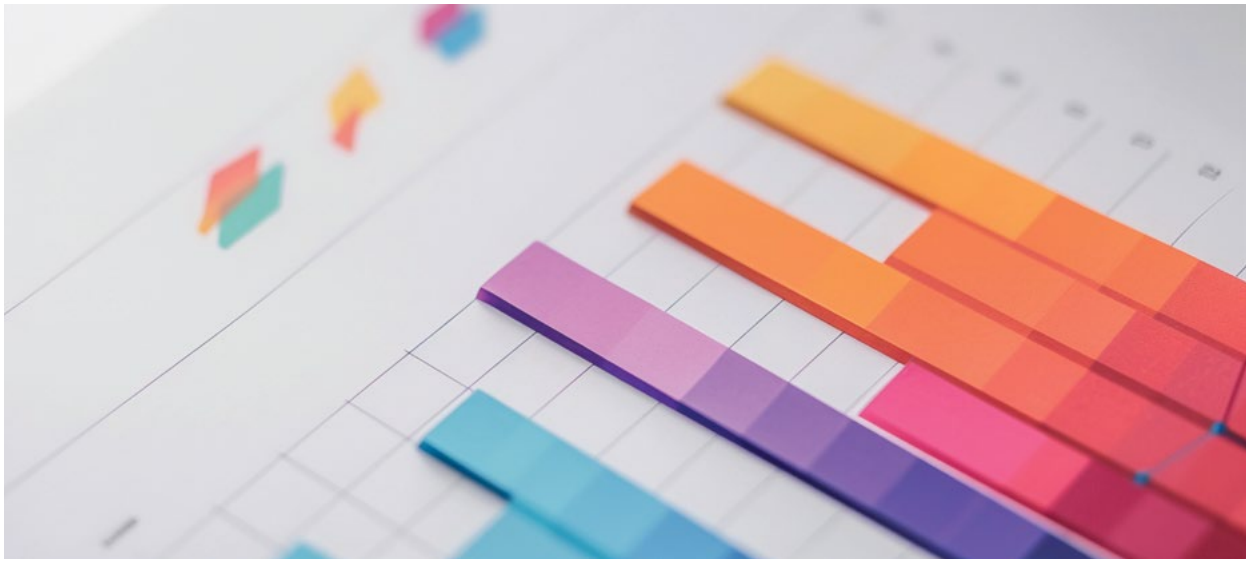
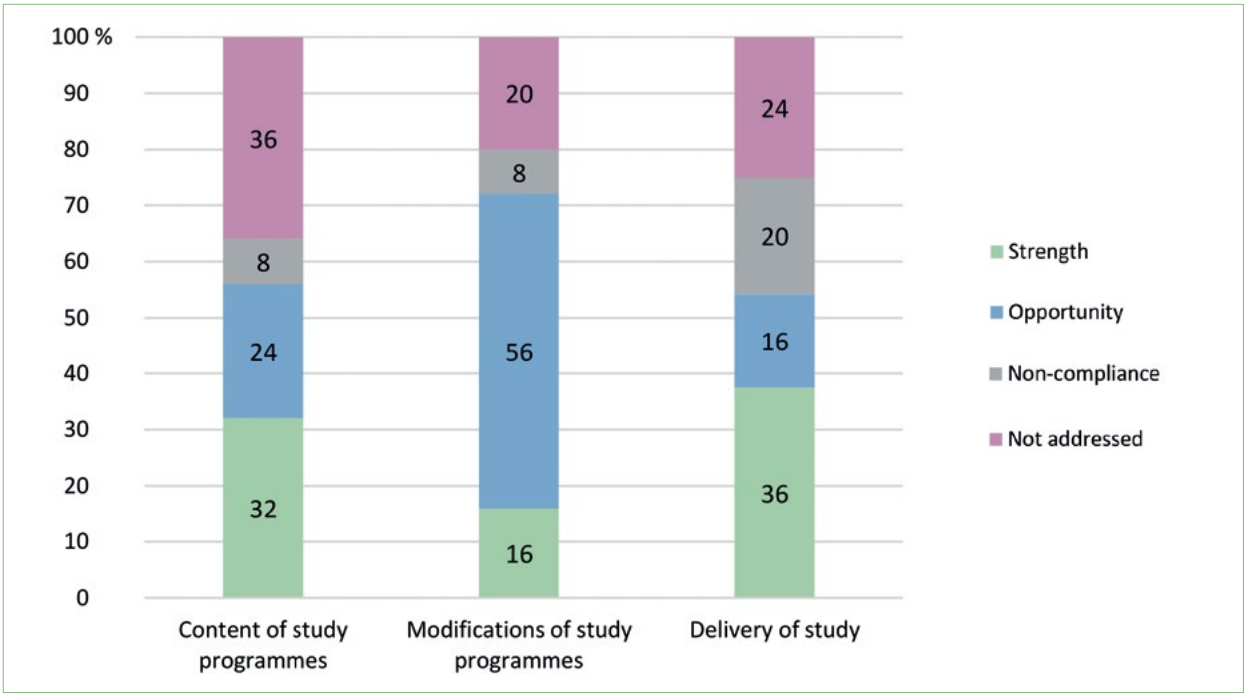


Chart 10:
Quality indicators in the area of organisation and delivery of education



(7) **Organisation and delivery of education** encompasses the following quality indicators:

- **content of study programmes,** i.e. the curricula and syllabi, the composition and coherence of the content, as well as their relevance to the field of study or scientific discipline;
- **modifications of study programmes** in the light of content development (changes to curricula and syllabi), modifications of study literature, changes to teachers and modifications of compulsory components,
- delivery of study programmes in relation to the implementation of the accredited syllabi, stakeholder satisfaction with the study programme and its delivery, the mode of delivery (i.e. distance learning), the language of instruction.

The data collected shows that the reports of groups of experts have focused less on the content of the study programmes and their modifications, or have not detected negative or positive divergences. However, in this area of assessment, there is a marked preponderance of opportunities for improvement in the indicator on ***modifications of study programmes.*** In contrast, for the ***content of study programmes*** indicator, the strengths and opportunities are balanced, each at around 30%, while for the ***delivery of study programmes*** indicator, the strengths outweigh the opportunities by around twice. Non-compliances or major deficiencies occur in all three indicators, most of them in the ***delivery of study programmes***, where they are more frequent than opportunities for improvement.

In the previous analysis, the groups of experts paid less attention to the indicators in this area, as the strengths dominated in the ***content of study programmes*** indicator, while the picture was slightly better for ***modifications of study programmes***, with balanced strengths and opportunities.

3.2 Comparison with previous period

The results of the analysis of the quality of higher education institution operation show that for most indicators, there has been a marked improvement compared to the previous period (2014–2017). However, some challenges remain, which have already been identified in previous analyses and are highlighted below as general areas for improvement.

In the area of **integration with the environment**, ***cooperation with the economic sector*** was already rated very positively in the previous period, while the indicator on ***cooperation with the non-economic sector*** also identified a number of opportunities for improvement at that time. In this analysis, for all indicators of integration with the environment, including ***employability of graduates***, strengths strongly outweigh opportunities for improvement; at the same time, however, there is a higher frequency of the ***not addressed*** category. Both in this and the previous period, opportunities prevail in ***cooperation with the economic sector***, while in the area of **operation of the higher education institution**, the ***organisation and management*** indicator is dominated by strengths this time, whereas in the previous analysis, opportunities prevailed. Opportunities still dominate ***research, professional or artistic work***, but less strongly than in the past.

Both the previous and the current analysis identified exclusively opportunities in the ***student mobility*** indicator, while the most strengths in **students** indicators were found in the ***support for*** and ***provision of information to students.*** Among the quality indicators where opportunities still outweigh strengths, ***participation in governance*** stands out, with opportunities outweighing strengths by a factor of three. A similar finding was also noted in the previous analysis.

The indicator of ***library resources***, which falls under **material conditions**, has been characterised by opportunities outweighing strengths for all analysed years, which is not the case for the other indicators. In ***library services***, strengths and opportunities were equally represented in the previous analysis, but this time this aspect is rated less favourably. As the current analysis shows, in the area of quality assurance, opportunities for improvement prevail for most indicators, as also noted in the previous analysis. Although the experts in the previous analysis focused less on the **organisation and delivery of education**, especially on the ***content, delivery and modifications of study programmes***, than in the current analysis, a significant share of strengths is observed in both analyses. The indicator ***modifications of study programmes***, however, still stands out exceptionally, and this time even slightly more so, with a large share of opportunities for improvement.

Overall, it can be concluded that experts are relatively reserved in identifying non-compliances, with the proportion of reports containing non-compliances averaging only 7% (2% in the previous analysis). The results show that the opportunities for improvement slightly outweigh the strengths, whereas in the previous analysis the opportunities clearly predominated. In addition, it is noticeable that, with few exceptions, experts frequently point out opportunities for improvement when listing strengths.

3.3 Key highlights and general conclusions of the analysis

Category	Details
General characteristics of the review of reports	• Review of 25 reports of experts in higher education institution reaccreditation procedures • Reports evaluated using uniformly designed survey questionnaires and a methodology with 39 quality indicators • Indicators evaluated according to four categories: strengths, opportunities for improvement, non-compliances or major deficiencies, not addressed
Findings on the methodology of reports	• Experts reserved in identifying non-compliances or major deficiencies, low share of non-compliances and major deficiencies found • Frequent balancing of strengths with opportunities for improvement • Some contents are not addressed, or are addressed too generally
Quality indicators where opportunities for improvement prevail over strengths in reports of groups of experts	• Participation of key stakeholders in the management of the higher education institution, i.e. participation in governance; • Human resources structure and its stability • Appointments to title, their validity and relevance to the subject areas • Teaching work • Participation of students in management and provision of information to students on matters related to education, employability and self-evaluation; • Library resources and library services • Operation of internal quality assurance system, participation of key stakeholders in it, closure of quality loop and information to stakeholders on quality assurance • Modifications of study programmes in the light of content development (changes to curricula and syllabi), changes to study literature, changes to teachers and modifications of compulsory components such as enrolment conditions
Quality indicators where strengths prevail over opportunities for improvement in reports of groups of experts	• Organisation and management of the higher education institution • Administrative, technical and material support in relation to professional and administrative support staff • Support for students, which refers to general administrative support for study • Premises for education, research or artistic work • Delivery of study programmes in relation to the implementation of the accredited syllabi
Major areas of non-compliances or major deficiencies in reports of groups of experts	• Organizacija in vodenje visokošolskega zavoda • Raziskovalno, strokovno ali umetniško delo visokošolskega zavoda • Raziskovalno, strokovno ali umetniško delo učiteljev - na ravni posameznika • Kakovost samoevalvacije v smislu doslednosti • Izvajanje študijskih programov glede na izvajanje akreditiranih učnih načrtov
Not addressed in reports of groups of experts	• Achieving and monitoring learning outcomes and competences • Appointments to title, their validity and relevance to the subject areas • Teaching work • Student mobility • Quality culture in relation to the current situation and development • Quality of self-evaluation in terms of consistency • Evaluation of individual study programmes • Content of the study programmes, i.e. the curricula and syllabi, the composition and coherence of the content, as well as their relevance to the field of study or scientific discipline
Comparison with previous systemic analysis	• Improvement under all quality indicators • The number of opportunities for improvement remains highest in the indicators of participation of key stakeholders in the management of the higher education institution, scientific and research, professional and artistic work, human resources structure and appointments to titles, library resources and library services, operation of internal quality assurance system and modifications of study programmes.

3.4 Summary of analysis of experts' reports on accreditations and external evaluations of study programmes

The survey on reports by groups of experts on external evaluation and accreditation of study programmes consisted of general questions and covered 250 study programme reports, 92 on accreditation and 158 on external evaluation of study programmes. The circumstances of the present analysis (2018–2022) are different from the analysis of the previous period (2014–2017), as the latter included study programme reaccreditation procedures that the Agency is no longer carrying out, which makes it difficult to make a direct comparison between the two.

The previous procedures for study programme reaccreditation are formally different from the current procedures of external evaluation of study programmes, but are based on comparable quality indicators. The 2014 criteria for the quality evaluation in the context of study programme reaccreditation were based on the conditions provided by the institution for the delivery of the study according to the chapters for the evaluation of a higher education institution: integration with the environment, operation of the institution, human resources, students, material conditions and quality of self-evaluation A specific chapter was devoted to the organisation and delivery of the study in terms of structure and content at the initial accreditation, with possible subsequent changes (focusing on objectives, competences, ECTS workloads, assessment, etc.).

The new criteria adopted in 2017 focus more directly on the quality assurance of the study programme itself in the following three areas, which also cover the other institutional quality indicators provided by the institution (listed in brackets):

- **1. internal evaluation of study programme** (collecting proposals, stakeholder participation);
- **2. modification and updating of a study programme** (developing content, evaluating objectives, competences and needs of the society);
- **3. study programme delivery** (forms and scope of implementation, tailoring to stakeholders' needs, material conditions, human resources, protection of stakeholders' rights).

The review of the reports was carried out on the basis of various quality indicators, which allowed the data to be classified according to specific aspects of quality. Not all quality indicators were the same as in the analysis of the reports on the reaccreditation of higher education institutions, but were adapted to the study programmes (e.g. interdisciplinarity). The data were extracted from the notes at the end of each standard, where the experts assessed the strengths, opportunities for improvement, partial compliance or non-compliance with the quality standard.

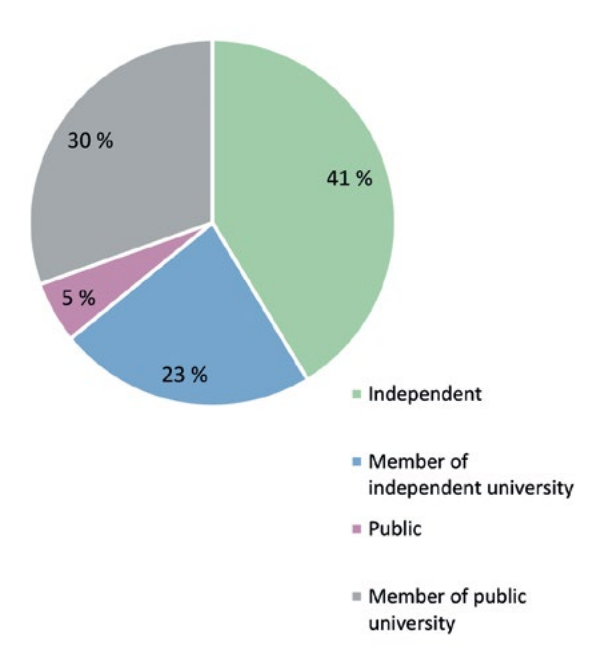
Some areas were based on the criteria, others were not, but the Agency considered that these also contribute to a better understanding of the operation of study programmes.

4. Analysis of Experts' Reports on the Accreditation and Evaluation of Study Programmes

4.1 Review and assessment of quality indicators

The survey covers the reports on the accreditation of 92 study programmes of higher education institutions between 2018 and 2022. In terms of type of higher education institution and compared to the external evaluations, the sample includes an even higher proportion of faculties (84%) and a much lower proportion of professional colleges (11%), as well as only two academies and three doctoral schools.

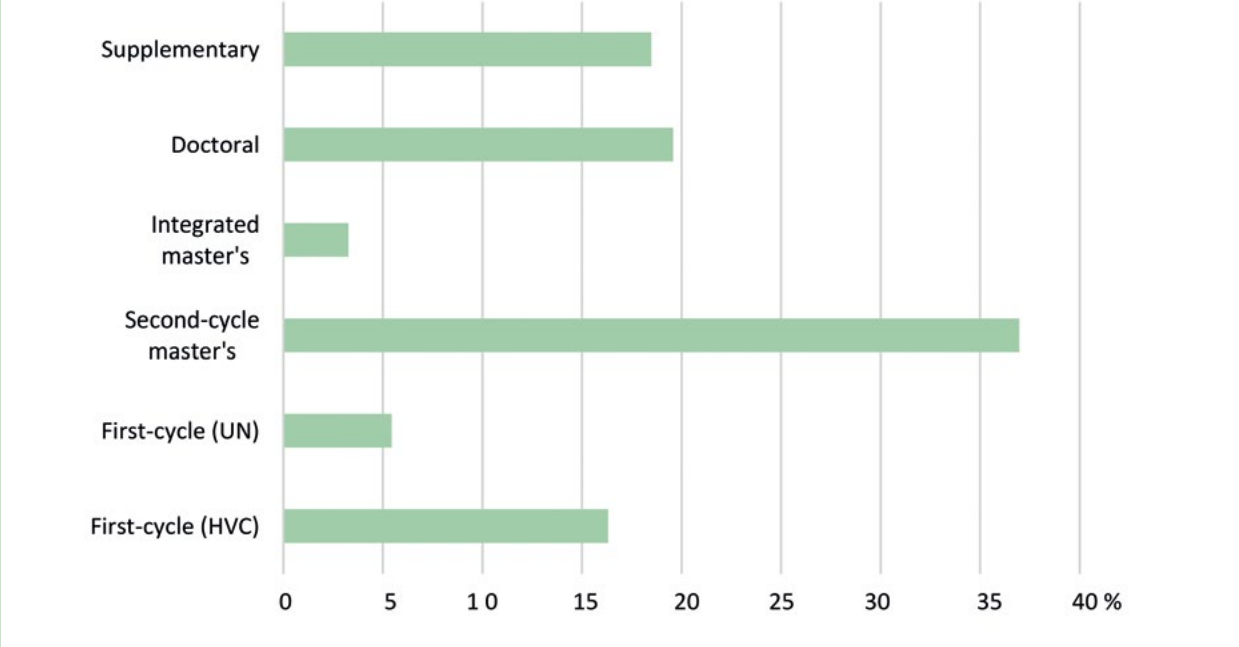
Chart 11:
Classification of reports in terms of status of higher education institutions



In terms of cycle and type of study programme, the sample, as in the previous analysis, has the highest number of masters programmes, but the number of doctoral and supplementary programmes is higher this time than in the previous analysis.

The study programmes under consideration cover almost all professional fields as defined by the KLASIUS-P-16 classification. According to the KLASIUS-P-16 classification, the largest number of study programmes was in the field 04 Business and administration, and the smallest number in the field 08 Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary. Almost a third (27) of the programmes had more than one field defined according to the KLASIUS-P-16 classification; some of them were also defined as interdisciplinary. The highest number of programmes (7) are from the fields 02 Arts and humanities and 03 Social sciences, journalism and information. This is followed by four multidisciplinary programmes in the fields 04 Business, administration and law, and 07 Engineering, manufacturing and construction. Three programmes are classified in fields 03 Social sciences, journalism and infor-

Chart 12:
Razporeditev evalviranih študijskih programov po stopnji in vrsti



mation, and 06 Information and communication technologies (ICTs).

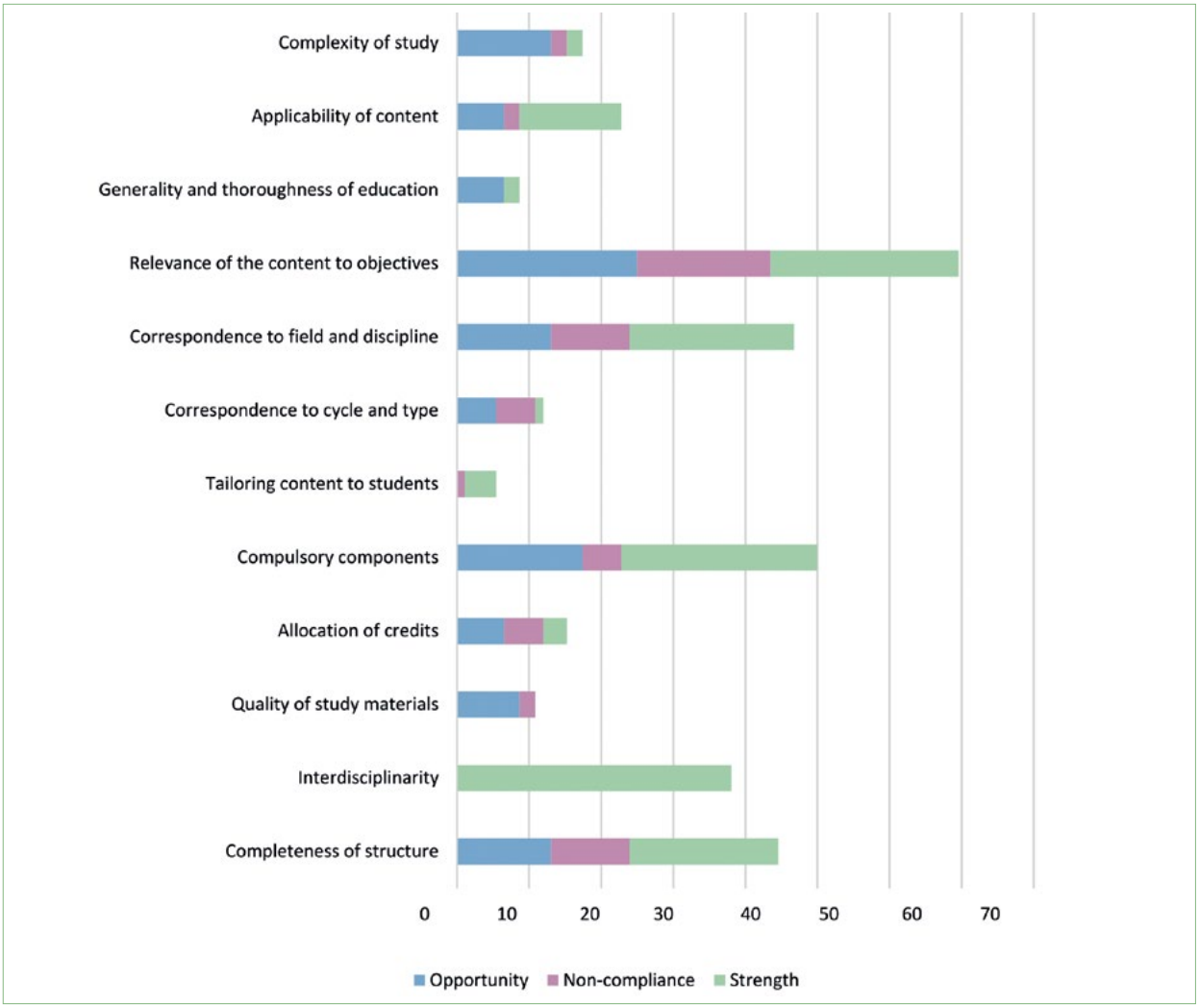
The analysis of reports by groups of experts in the accreditation of study programmes found that many indicators are not addressed. Reports of groups of experts focus mainly on quality indicators related to study content, with the most frequent focus of the groups of experts being on the relevance of the content of the study programme to its objectives, anticipated skills and competences, which is a key prerequisite for the accreditation of programmes. However, the analysis shows that 30% of the reports did not address this aspect. For the programmes considered, approximately the same number of strengths and opportunities for improvement were identified in the aspect of relevance.

Partial compliance with the standards accounts for 18% of the findings, the highest proportion of partial compliance with the standard in the whole analysis. For indicators on the ***correspondence of the study programme with the discipline*** and the ***completeness of the programme structure*** (curricular aspect), the reports show a high level of strengths (around 20%), but both categories also show 10% partial compliance with the standards, the second highest level of partial compliance with the standards. The data show that the ***employability of graduates*** is the second most frequently addressed area, which can be linked to the fact that an article of the Accreditation Criteria – and indirectly also one of the standards in the reports – covers this area. This indicator was rated as a strength in 30% of the reports, a deficiency in 23% and partial compliance with the standard in only 3% of the reports, while it was not addressed in 44% of the reports.

In the area of ***study programme's relevance to the environment***, and in particular in the area of ***relevance of content and research with the environment***, which is not directly included in the criteria, experts identified strengths in 31% and opportunities for improvement in only 7%. The opposite was true for ***scientific and research, professional or artistic work of teachers***, where opportunities for improvement were identified in 26% of the reports, which is the highest proportion of opportunities for improvement. In 10% of the reports, scientific and research work was rated as a strength of the institution.

The situation is similar for ***participation of students in scientific, research, professional or artistic work***, which was considered a strength in

Chart 13:
Display of quality indicators related to study content in the procedure of accreditation of study programmes



14% of reports and an opportunity for improvement in 23%. Opportunities for improvement are strongly prevalent in indicators such as ***complexity, generality and thoroughness, quality of study material*** and ***allocation of credits***, although the number of reports addressing these indicators is relatively low, at around 10%.

Human resources structure is one of the areas rated less favourably by the groups of experts. The groups focused on the ***suitability of the habilitations*** and the ***stability of the human resources structure***, rarely identifying strengths and more often identifying opportunities for improvement (14%) or partial compliance with the quality standard (17%).

The indicators with the most strengths are ***premises*** and ***equipment***, where strengths were identified in 31% of reports, while ***library resources*** were rated much lower, so that strengths and opportunities for improvement are evenly matched. The category of ***interdisciplinarity*** stands out even more in terms of strengths; these were identified in 38% of the reports, with no opportunities or non-compliances identified in any of the cases.

Although the methodological approach based on the analysis of the concluding findings at the end of each standard does not provide answers to all questions, it does offer an insight into the key characteristics of the assessments. The overall conclusion is that the groups of experts are most focused on the structure and content of the study programme as defined in Article 17 of the Accreditation Criteria.

4.2. Analysis of reports on the external evaluation of study programmes

The analysis covers reports on external evaluations of 158 higher education institutions' study programmes between 2018 and 2022. Just under half of the evaluations (73) were carried out as part of evaluations of samples of study programmes, and half (82) as part of regular reaccreditations of higher education institutions. The number of extraordinary evaluations was low (4).

The indicators are classified according to strengths, opportunities for improvement and non-compliances. Most indicators (about 80% on average) were not addressed in summary reports. The category ***not addressed*** may indicate that the experts have assessed the indicator as either irrelevant to the summary or aligned with the requirements of the standard, which makes it stand out neither positively nor negatively. The table below (Chart 15) shows the most obvious divergences by chapter of the assessment, indicating the percentages of reports that highlight divergences in the summaries in terms of strengths, opportunities or non-compliances.

In terms the type of higher education institution, the majority of applicants for accreditation of study programmes in the analysed reports are faculties and about one-sixth are professional colleges; in terms of the status of the higher education institution, a good half are members of public universities, a little less than half are independent higher education institutions, and the remaining are members of independent universities. In terms of cycle and type of programmes, masters and higher professional study programmes dominate.

According to the KLASIUS-P-16 classification, most of the evaluated programmes are classified in the field (04) Business and administration, with approximately the same number of programmes classified in the fields of (1) Education, (02) Arts and humanities, (7) Engineering and (09) Health and welfare. The analysis also includes four interdisciplinary programmes with predominating fields of (02) Arts and humanities, (04) Business and administration, (05) Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics, and (06) Information and communication technologies (ICTs). The areas selected are also partly conditioned by the sample defined by the Agency in the evaluations of samples: in 2020, the sam-

Chart 14:
Classification of evaluated study programmes by cycle and type

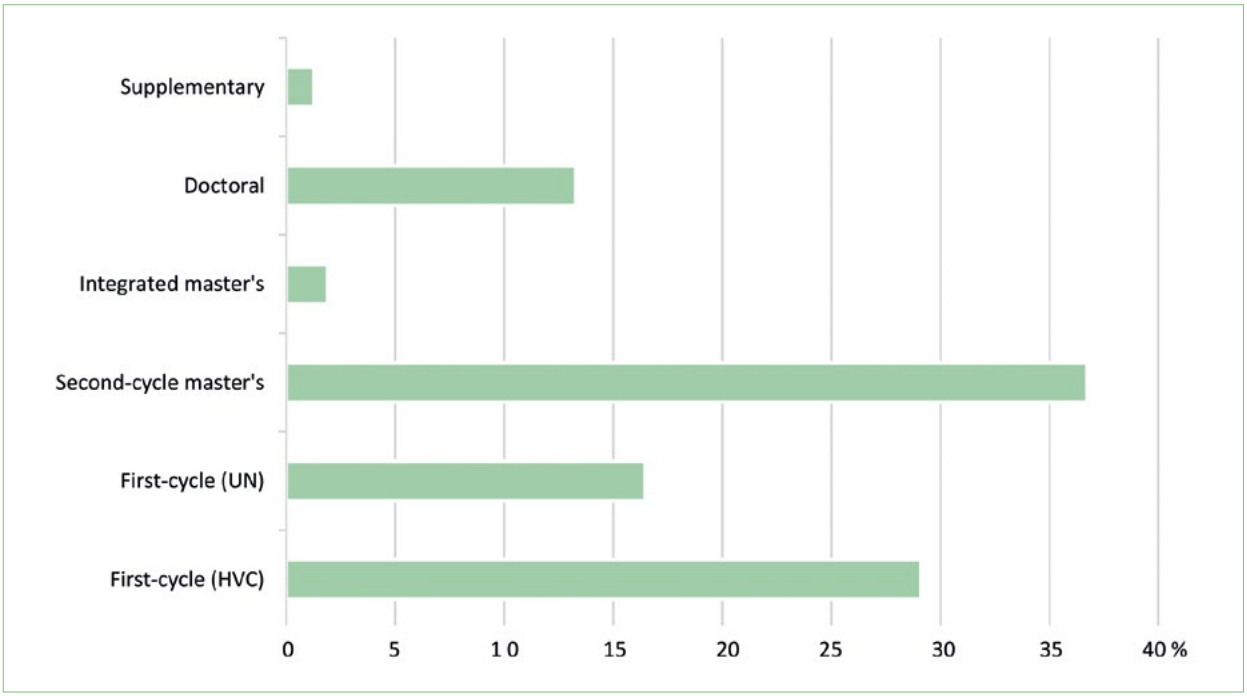
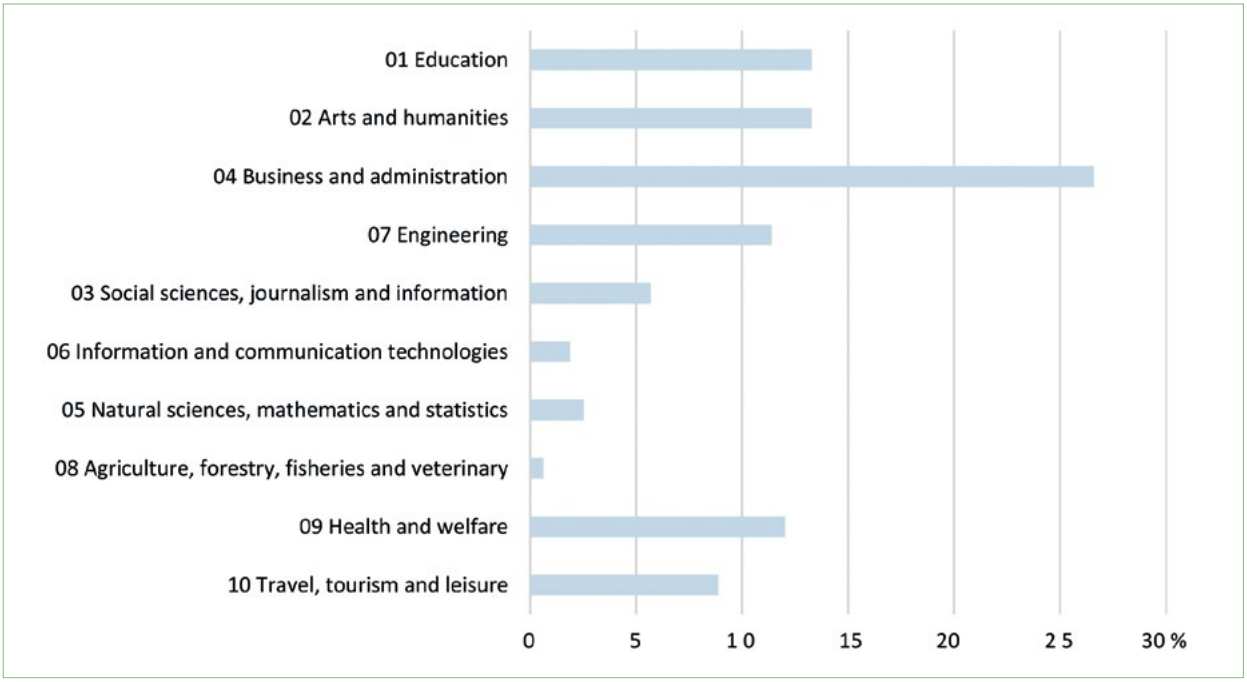
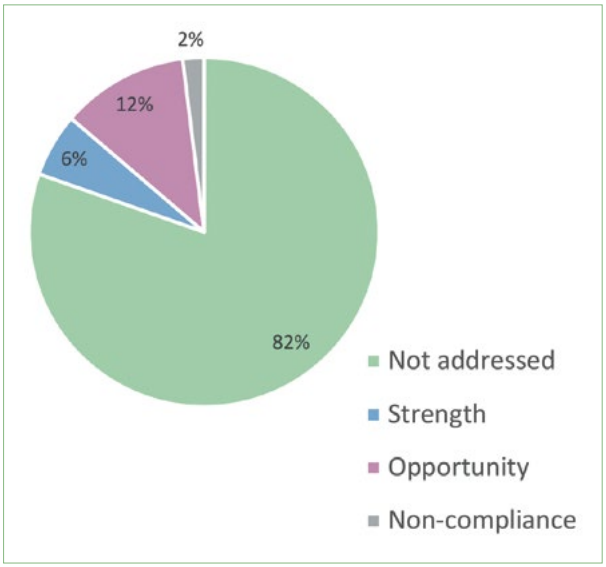


Chart 15:
Classification of evaluated study programmes by KLASIUS-P-16 areas



ple covered study programmes implemented as joint study programmes, transnational higher education or at the branches of Slovenian higher education institutions abroad, in 2021, these were teaching study programmes and in 2022, doctoral study programmes. The above distribution by KLASIUS-P-16 classification may therefore diverge from the proportions of all programmes delivered.

Chart 16:
Responses to the overall survey on the external evaluation of study programmes – distribution according to the four qualitative categories



In the remainder of the analysis, we will first look in more detail at the assessment area of the **organisation and delivery of the study**, which is divided into three sets of indicators: ***content of study programmes, modifications of study programmes*** and ***delivery of study programmes.*** This will be followed by an overview of the indicators by areas related to the elements of institutional quality (integration with the environment, operation, human resources, students, material conditions, quality assurance).

The figure shows a pie chart comparison of the distribution of the total number of indicators for all survey questions in the analysis of the reports on evaluation of the study programmes according to the categories of ***strength, opportunity*** and ***non-compliance***. Most of these indicators (on average close to 80%) are not mentioned by the experts in the summary reports (category ***not addressed***). As only the concluding findings at the end of each standard in the report have been included in the analysis, only the most significant findings according to the groups of experts, or those that diverge significantly, have been taken into account.

As mentioned above, let us now first look in more detail at the frequency of the qualitative catego-

ries of strength, opportunity and non-compliance in each of the sub-areas of the organisation and delivery of the study: content of study programmes, modifications of study programmes and delivery of study programmes.

Opportunities prevail for all indicators in the ***content of the study programmes***, most notably for the ***relevance of the content to the objectives*** and ***allocation of credits***, where some non-compliances are also found. A significant share of opportunities is also found in the ***applicability of content*** and the ***quality of study materials***. This area was not as detailed in the previous systemic analysis, but can be seen in most of the indicators related to study content, such as ***programme structure and objectives***, or ***student needs*** and ***competences for the workplace***.

When comparing the findings of the surveys from the accreditation and external evaluation procedures, it should be borne in mind that they have different purposes and specifics. When experts in study programme accreditation procedures address indicators that concern the operation of the institution as a whole (in the areas of material conditions, integration into the environment, quality assurance, etc.), they tend to focus more on describing the potential or future state of affairs when the programme in the accreditation procedure is launched. In evaluation procedures, however, groups of experts check the actual situation, so there are more categories to consider.

A more detailed analysis of the ***modifications of study programmes***, shown in the chart below, shows that the ***relevance of the content to the objectives*** of the study programme is one of the most frequently addressed indicators. The groups of experts identified equal strengths and opportunities in ***changes to study content***. ***Changes in delivery*** (methods, forms and course) are dominated by strengths (twice as many as opportunities), while ***changes in study materials*** are dominated by opportunities with no perceived strengths.

In the previous analysis, a single indicator was devoted to modifications of study programmes, with a clear preponderance of strengths.

In the area of ***delivery of study programmes***, as shown in ***Chart 19***, there is a clear preponderance of strengths in the indicators of ***delivery tailored to students*** (34%), which is also the most frequently addressed indicator, and ***satisfaction with teaching*** (11%). The indicator on the ***quality of study delivery*** also shows more strengths than

Chart 17:
Quality indicators for modifications of study programmes in terms of strengths, opportunities and non-compliances

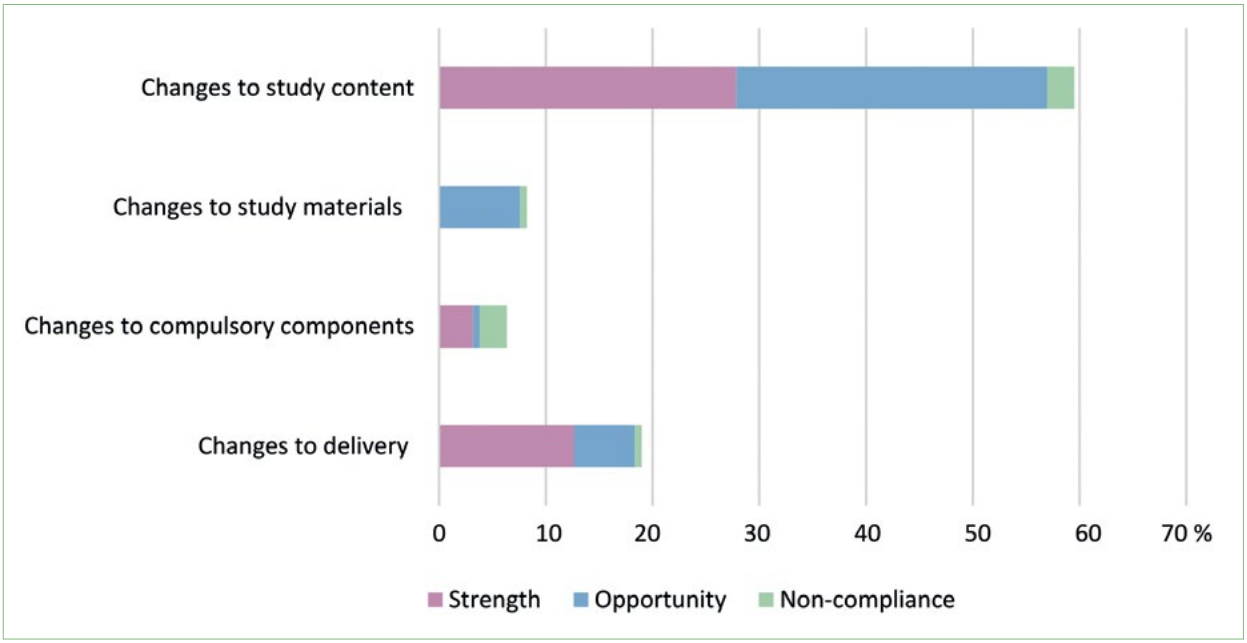
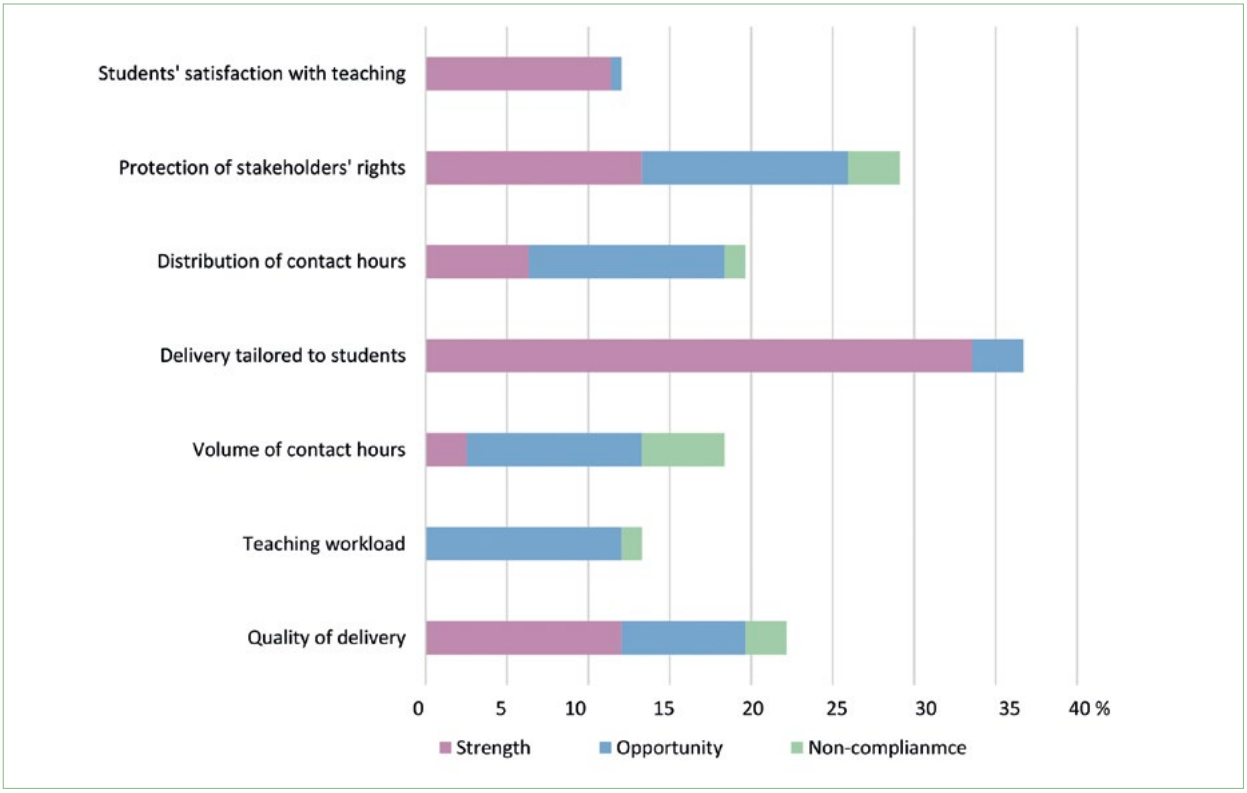


Chart 18:
Quality indicators for delivery of study in terms of strengths, opportunities and non-compliances



opportunities. ***Protection of stakeholders' rights***, which is the second most frequently addressed indicator, has an equal number of strengths and opportunities.

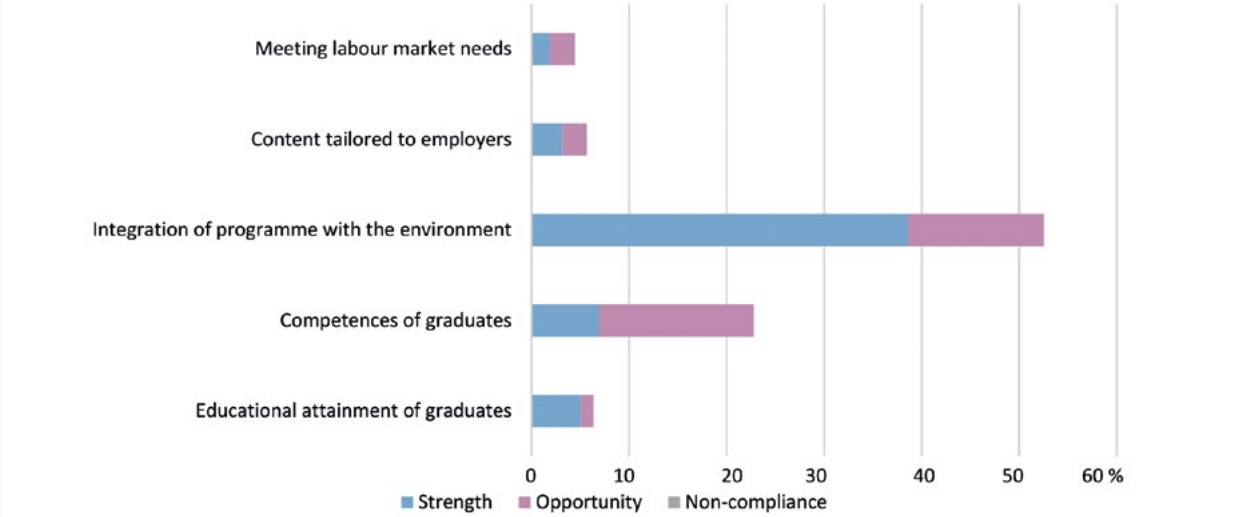
Problems are noted in the indicators relating to the scheduling and volume of contact hours, where opportunities clearly predominate, with up to 5% of non-compliances recorded. ***Teaching workload*** is also a major challenge, as this indicator is significantly dominated by opportunities, with no strengths identified at all. The previous analysis did not pay much attention to the ***delivery of study programmes*** indicator in general, but the indicators it did cover – ***implementation of contact hours***, ***modes of delivery*** and ***tailoring to students' needs*** – showed a fairly even balance between strengths and opportunities. In some of the reports, the experts also noted the excellences of the evaluated study programme. These most often relate to the following areas or indicators of quality highlighted in more than three reports (see table 3).

By the end of the chapter, there is a breakdown of the strengths, opportunities and non-compli-

Table 3:
Indicators of study programmes where excellences are highlighted

Number of reports	Area of excellence
6	premises and/or equipment
5	quality of teaching
5	organisation and/or operation
4	practical training
4	provision of information to stakeholders

Chart 19:
Quality indicators in the area of integration with the environment



ances for the quality indicators in each of the areas of assessment related to the institutional aspect of quality.

(1) In the area of **integration with the environment**, the indicators of the ***study programme's relevance to the environment*** and the ***tailoring of the content to the needs of employers*** are analysed in more detail. The reports by groups of experts highlight the distinct strengths for the ***study programme's relevance to the environment***, which is found in about half of the reports. This shows that many institutions are establishing successful links with the local environment and the economy, reinforcing their relevance to society. ***Tailoring of the content to the needs of employers*** was less frequently addressed.

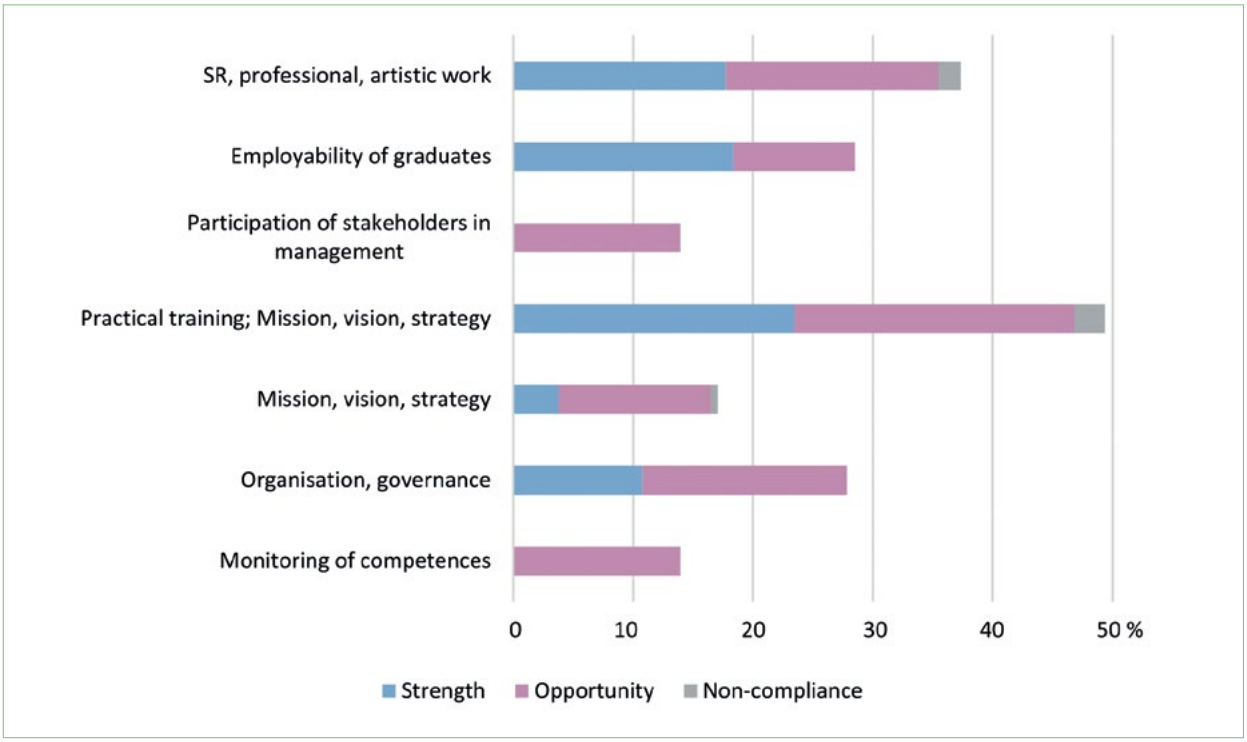
However, experts perceived more opportunities in the ***competences*** indicator, which suggests the need to further improve programmes to better equip graduates for the labour market. This is also a point made by experts when addressing the indicator on ***monitoring competences*** in the area of operation of the higher education institution.

The analysis for the period 2014–2017 also shows a predominance of strengths in the indicator on ***cooperation with the economic and non-economic sectors***, as well as more opportunities in the ***monitoring of competences***.

(2) In the area of **operation of the higher education institution**, it has been found that institutions are still not monitoring competences adequately. The ***employability of graduates*** indicator, which was frequently discussed, identified slightly more strengths than opportunities for improvement, while experts also noted the close links between the programmes and the environment. For the indicators on ***organisation and management*** and ***mission, vision and strategy***, the reports of the groups of experts identified several opportunities for improvement, which indicates the need to further optimise these processes in line with the objectives set. It also stands out that the ***participation of key stakeholders*** still only lists opportunities (without strengths). The only non-compliances in this area of assessment were identified for the indicators ***practical training*** and ***scientific and research, professional or artistic work***, where the proportion of strengths and opportunities was the same.

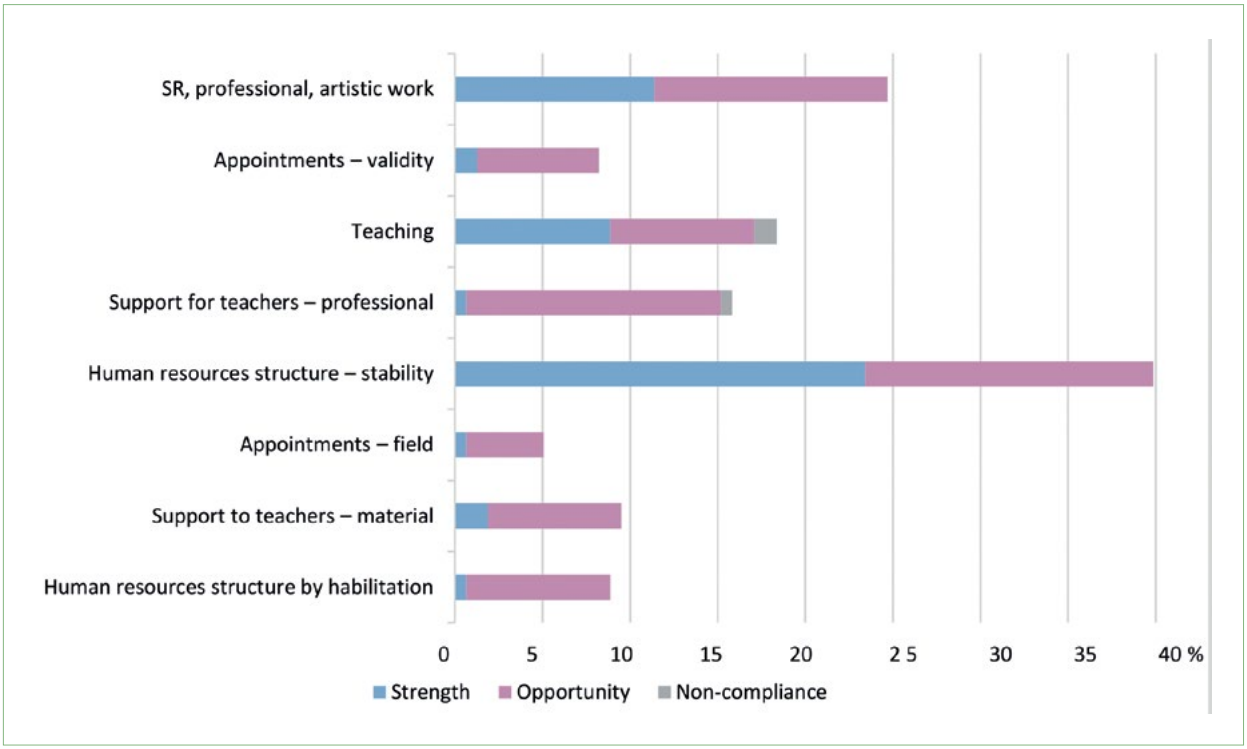
The analyses show that the ratio of strengths and opportunities is more balanced in the 2014–2017 period than in the 2018–2022 period for most indicators, with the exception of ***mission, vision and strategy*** and ***competences***, where opportunities prevailed in both periods. However, the ratio was slightly in favour of the strengths in the first period for the ***scientific and research, professional or artistic work*** indicator.

Chart 20:
Quality indicators in the area of operation



(3) The analysis of **human resources** shows that, as in the previous system analysis, ***teacher support*** and ***human resources structure*** are among the indicators where more opportunities than strengths are identified. The reports identified a high proportion of opportunities for improvement in the ***appointments***, ***human resources structure*** and ***relevance to the subject areas of teachers***, and this is also true for 2014–2017. However, as in the previous period, the ***quality of***

Chart 21:
Quality indicators in the area of human resources



teaching was rated with a higher proportion of strengths, indicating a general satisfaction with the quality of teaching.

(4) In the area of assessment of **students**, evaluations have shown that the indicators ***mobility*** and ***provision of information and support for students*** are often rated as having more opportunities for improvement than strengths, suggesting the need for more support for students. Expert reports in evaluations have highlighted the need for greater participation of students in programme updating and scientific and research work. ***Support for students*** and their ***participation in scientific and research work*** were frequently discussed, and both strengths and opportunities for improvement were identified. In the previous analysis, only ***mobility*** and ***provision of information to students*** showed a similar result with a higher share of opportunities, while indicators such as ***participation in governance***, ***participation in research*** and ***support for students*** were dominated by strengths.

(5) The results of the analysis in the area of **material conditions**, especially for the ***financial resources*** indicator, show frequent challenges, with opportunities for improvement outweighing the strengths, although this aspect of material conditions is generally not often addressed by the experts in their reports.

On the other hand, the indicators for ***premises*** and ***equipment*** show a number of strengths. Experts place great emphasis on this aspect of quality. This suggests that higher education institutions are generally well-equipped and have adequate facilities for the delivery of study programmes. There is some room for improvement in the ***adjustments for students with special needs***.

In the previous period (2014–2017), the area of material conditions recorded the highest number of strengths in the whole analysis. The indicators that show a slightly weaker picture this time (***financial resources, libraries, adjustments for students with special needs***) were also rated highly positively.

(6) In the area of **quality assurance**, evaluations appear to have addressed this area in a relatively consistent manner. The predominant findings were on opportunities for improvement, particularly in indicators related to the ***participation of key stakeholders*** and the ***quality of self-evaluation procedures***. The analysis showed that these indicators had the highest proportion of opportunities for improvement, but also the highest number of non-compliances. The highest proportion of these non-compliances was found for the ***closure of quality loop*** indicator.

Chart 22:
Quality indicators in the area of students

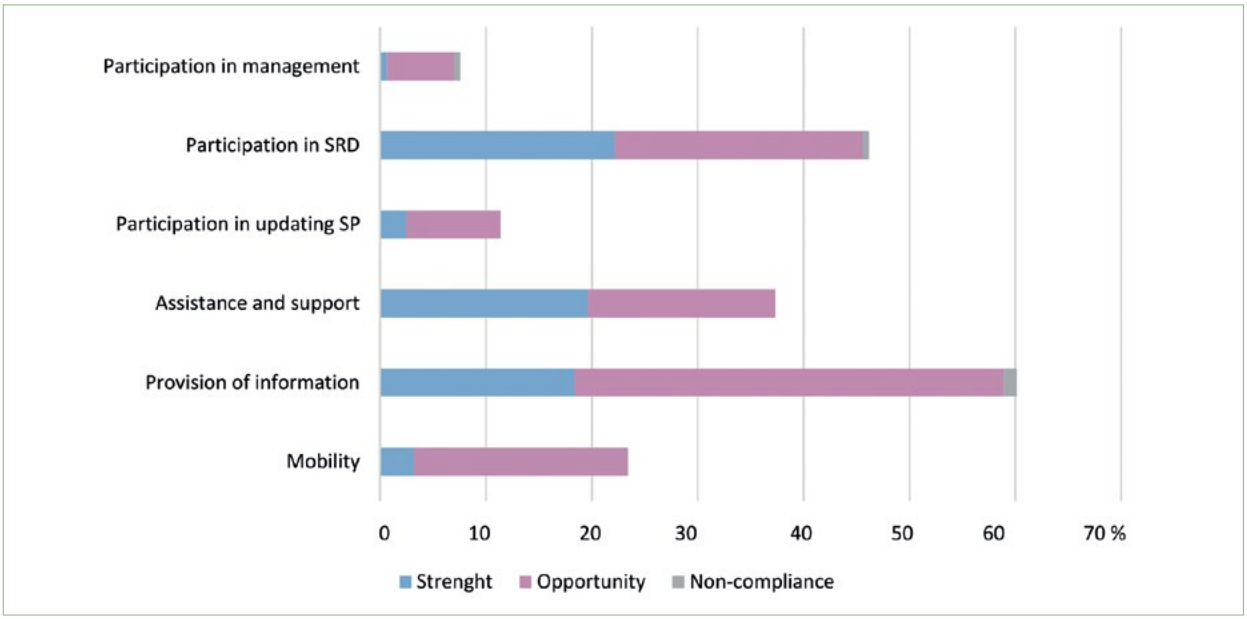
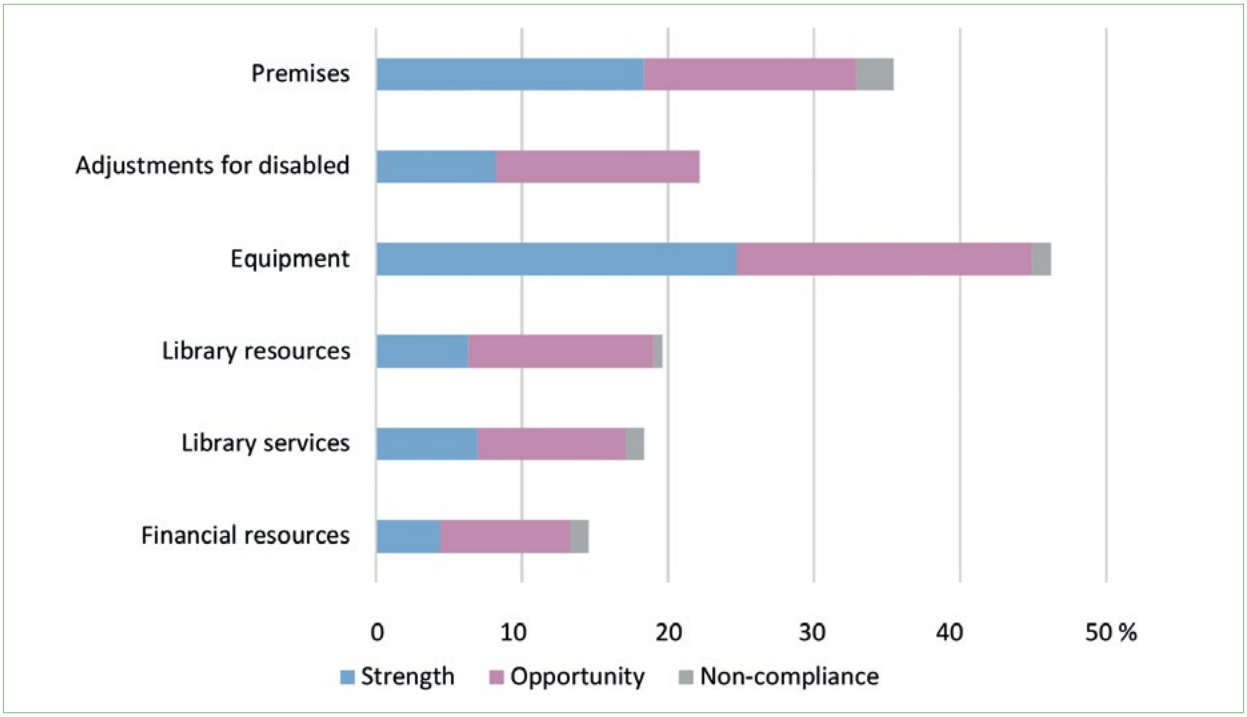
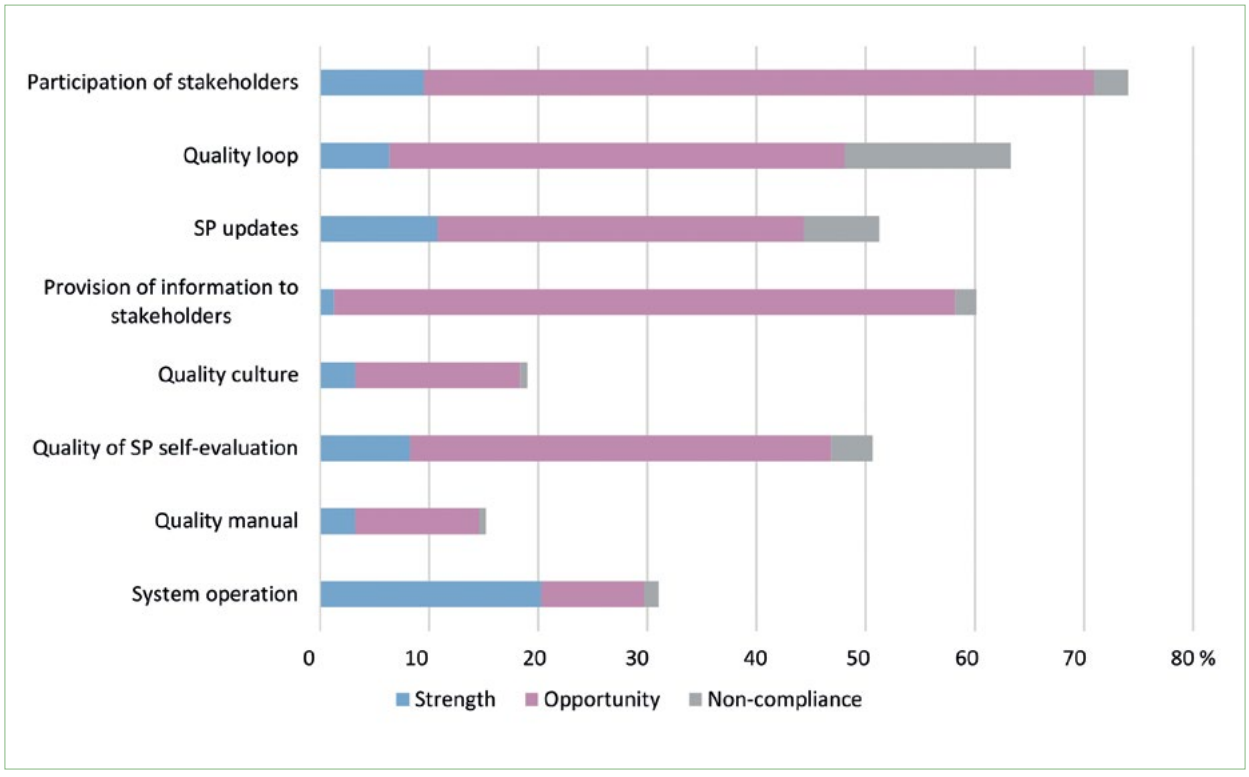


Chart 23:
Quality indicators in the area of material conditions



The previous systemic analysis already shows a higher proportion of opportunities than strengths for almost all indicators in this area, as does the reverse relationship for the ***operation of the quality assurance system***. This can be interpreted as meaning that in most of the reports, the experts conclude that, while quality assurance systems are in place in the institutions, they still have – according to the data collected – a number of deficiencies.

Chart 24:
Quality indicators in the area of quality assurance



4.3 Summary of analysis of reports on accreditation and external evaluation of study programmes

The analysis shows that groups of experts are more likely to identify opportunities for improvement in procedures of external evaluation of study programmes than in procedures of accreditation of study programmes, where the proportion of strengths and opportunities is more balanced and more non-compliances are detected. The purpose of evaluations, as defined by the Agency, is to advise institutions on how to improve, which is taken into account by the groups of experts in their assessments. This means that they tend to look more critically at quality indicators in evaluations and at the ***content of study programme*** in accreditations. Accreditations have a higher number of non-compliances, which are rare in evaluations and mostly relate to non-closure of the quality loop, insufficient self-evaluation and a lack of participation of key stakeholders in quality assurance. The proportion of indicators represented in reports of groups of experts tends to be much higher in evaluations because certain indicators are easier to verify in this procedure, which results in more indicators not being addressed in accreditations. Overall, we can see that opportunities and strengths are largely balanced, but many indicators are not addressed or do not diverge from the standard.

In accreditations, the indicators assessed as the most critical were the ***relevance of the content of the study programme to its objectives, intended skills and competences*** and the ***completeness of study programme***. Both remain a focus of attention for expert groups in evaluation of programmes, as a relatively high number of opportunities for improvement were identified (44%). The analysis shows that many groups of experts perceived a number of strengths in the study programmes, but this indicator also recorded the highest number of partial compliance with the standards. The situation is similar in the ***relevance of the content of the study programme to its area and discipline*** and its completeness, where more non-compliances have been identified than in other categories.

In the experts' reports on the evaluation of study programmes, strengths were found in 30% in the indicator ***delivery of study programme tailored to the expectations and needs of students,*** which shows that the programmes meet the expectations of students. The exceptionally high share of strengths identified in the indicator ***study programme's relevance to the environment*** in the field of study content shows that the environment also recognises the quality and relevance of the study programmes. However, analysis of the reports shows that higher education institutions do not place enough emphasis on ***monitoring and defining students' competences***. The results of the analysis of the ***monitoring of competences*** in the context of accreditations and evaluations of study programmes show that for this indicator, accreditations have an equal share of strengths and opportunities for improvement, while evaluations are dominated by opportunities. This points to the need to improve the labour market skills of graduates.

Indicators that are often addressed in both evaluations and accreditations are the ***adequacy and accessibility of the literature*** and the ***material conditions for the delivery of the study programme***. Strengths prevail in the ***study programme's relevance to the local environment*** and the ***support of the environment***, especially in terms of content and research.

Groups of experts more frequently choose non-compliances or opportunities for indicators that are clearly defined (especially for quantitative indicators), while such decisions are rarer for indicators that are not so strictly defined (e.g. ***quality culture***). Thus, the categories that are most often addressed are those that are more concrete and directly represented in the standards, while those that concern the quality culture are the least addressed. There are hardly any non-compliances found in evaluations, as the nature of the procedure means that experts identify opportunities for improvement more frequently than in the case of accreditation of

study programmes. This also shows the different purpose of the two procedures, which the Agency regularly informs its experts about.

It is noticeable that certain indicators are often not addressed, partly due to the focus of the analysis only on the experts' conclusions, which reduces the range of findings. Nevertheless, the data are indicative and provide an analysis of the situation which shows that in-depth work has been carried out by the groups of experts. Comparison with the previous systemic analysis is not possible, as the evaluation procedure did not exist at that time, and the previous analysis combined the procedures of initial accreditation and reaccreditation of a study programme that is no longer implemented today.

With regard to the work of the groups of experts, it was noted that the higher number of opportunities identified was often due to a tendency to balance opportunities and strengths, or to "harmonise" the assessments. Such practices can lead to inappropriate assessments of strengths or opportunities. In addition, more emphasis should be placed on categories and standards that are not quantifiable, as they often represent important aspects of quality. The analysis also showed that ***interdisciplinarity*** has always been highlighted as a strength, but without in-depth reflection on its actual role and impact. It is often positively evaluated by experts for its conceptual importance, but not for its concrete application in a programme. This is an area in need of more critical and broader addressing, as interdisciplinarity is a key dimension of the quality of modern higher education programmes.

As the system analysis for 2014–2017 did not consider the reports of experts in the procedure of accreditation of study programmes, a comparison with the previous period was not made.

4.4 Key highlights and general conclusions of the analysis of reports on study programme quality

Category	Details
General characteristics of experts' reports on accreditation and external evaluation of study programmes	• 250 study programmes, 92 reports of groups of experts on study programme accreditation, 158 reports on external evaluation of study programmes • Indicator evaluations classified in four categories: strengths, opportunities, non-compliances or major deficiencies, not addressed • The analysis is based on the conclusions, so some important aspects of quality that are not included in the final descriptions of the reports may not have been addressed
General findings of experts' reports on accreditation and external evaluation of study programmes	• Differences between evaluation and accreditation reports – different focus of groups of experts • More non-compliances in study programme accreditation reports, more opportunities in study programme evaluation reports • Indicators with the most strengths: premises and equipment • Experts focus mainly on the indicators defined in the criteria • Most indicators (about 80% on average) not addressed in summary reports
Quality indicators in the self-evaluation report adequately presented	• Relevance of the content of the study programme with the objectives (accreditation and evaluation) and the field or discipline (accreditation) • Compulsory components of study programme (accreditation) • Allocation of credits (evaluation) • Study programme's relevance to the environment (evaluation) • Practical training (evaluation) • Teaching (evaluation)
Recommendations for group of experts	• Pay more attention to quality-related categories (e.g. quality culture in the institution, closure of quality loop). • In evaluation procedures, examine in more detail the development and modification of the study programme • Critically evaluate the adequacy of habilitations and scientific and research work at the institution in study programme accreditation • Avoid unjustified balancing of strengths and opportunities • Avoid uncritical assessment of certain indicators, such as interdisciplinarity • Broaden the understanding of the environment indicator to include the non-economic environment • To avoid misinterpretation, clearly distinguish between the categories of non-compliance and opportunity for improvement
Recommendations for institutions	• In both types of procedures, strengthen the scientific and research work of teachers, especially in second- and third-cycle study programmes, and the participation of students in scientific and research, professional or artistic work (strengths are rarely found in these indicators) • Continue the active cooperation with the local economy and broader environment • Strengthen the closure of quality loop and the participation of external stakeholders (these are the indicators where the most non-compliances are found) and the quality culture

5. Analysis of Experts' Reports on the External Evaluation of Higher Vocational Colleges

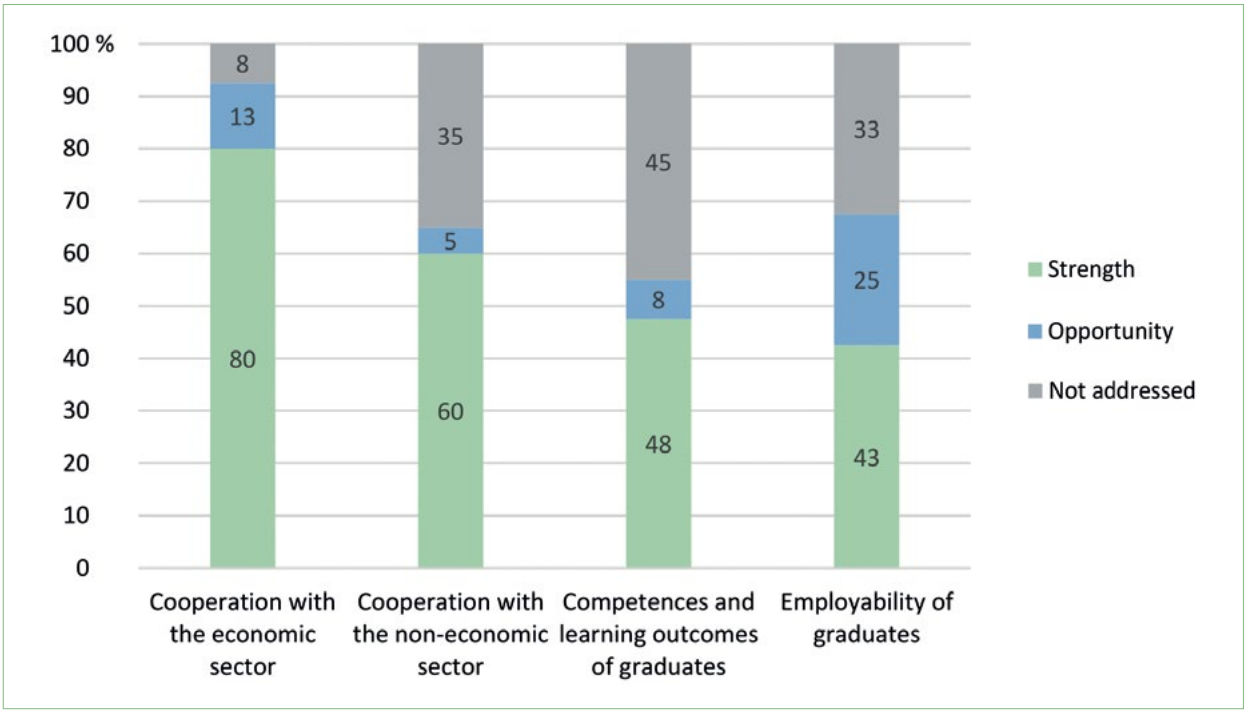
5.1 Review and assessment of quality indicators of higher vocational colleges

The analysis of the experts' reports on the external evaluation of higher vocational colleges between 2018 and 2022 consisted of a review and assessment of 41 reports of groups of experts. The survey consisted of 15 general questions following the methodology of the previous systemic analysis. Following the same methodology as in the other chapters, the analysis was divided into the following areas of assessment: integration with the environment, organisation and governance, human resources, students, material conditions, quality assurance, organisation and delivery of study.

For each area, the percentage of the qualitative categories ***strength, opportunity for improvement*** and ***non-compliance*** or ***major deficiency*** is calculated for each of the quality indicators listed in the charts, and ***not addressed*** if the indicator is not addressed as one of the categories. For

Chart 25:
Higher vocational colleges by status

Chart 26:
Quality indicators in the area of integration of the higher vocational college with the environment



ease of comparison, the graphical presentations are formatted in the same way as in the previous analysis. Below is a breakdown of the strengths, opportunities and non-compliances for the general quality indicators in each of the areas of assessment.

(1) The first area is **integration with the environment**, where the qualitative findings of the experts are taken into account on the basis of the following indicators:

- **cooperation of higher vocational colleges with the economic sector** in terms of partnerships, applied projects for industry, the participation of experts or representatives of the economic sector in teaching;
- **cooperation of higher vocational colleges with the non-economic sector** in terms of public services, meeting public sector requirements, intellectual and cultural integration with the environment;
- **learning outcomes and competences** in terms of education and skills;
- **employability and competitiveness** of graduates in terms of employability and labour market competences.

The results show a similar high level of ***cooperation with the economic sector*** as in the previous analysis, while ***cooperation with the non-economic sector*** is slightly better in this analysis. ***Learning outcomes and employability of graduates*** are rated better than in the previous period, with close to 50% positive ratings this time compared to 30% in the previous period. However, both indicators are still not addressed in a significant proportion of reports. A higher share of opportunities for improvement is found in ***employability of graduates*** than in ***competences***.

(2) The following quality indicators are taken into account for the next area of assessment, the **operation of the higher vocational college**:

- **mission, vision and strategy** in relation to organisational objectives and planning;
- **organisation and management** of the higher vocational college;
- **participation of key stakeholders** in governing a higher vocational college;
- achieving and monitoring **learning outcomes and competences**, i.e. practices related to the assessment of knowledge, skills and competences;

Chart 27:
Quality indicators in the area of operation of a higher vocational college

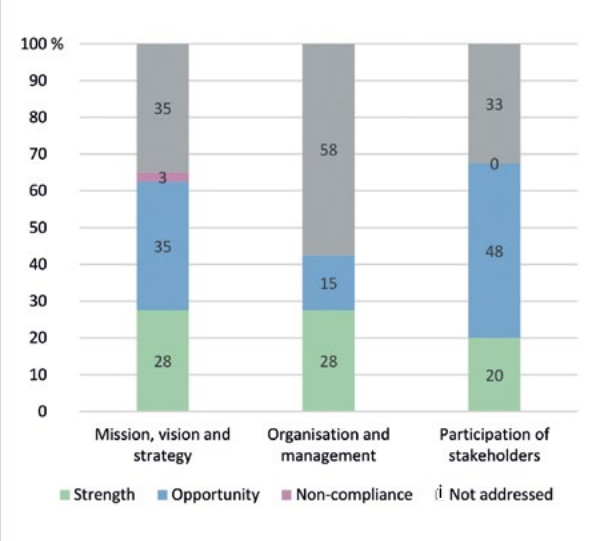
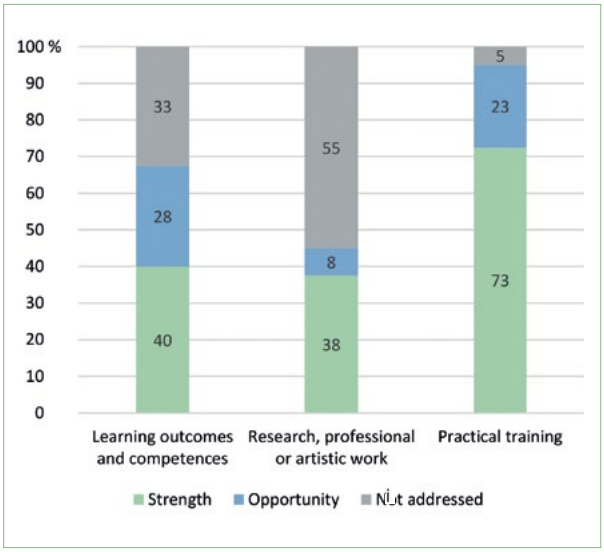


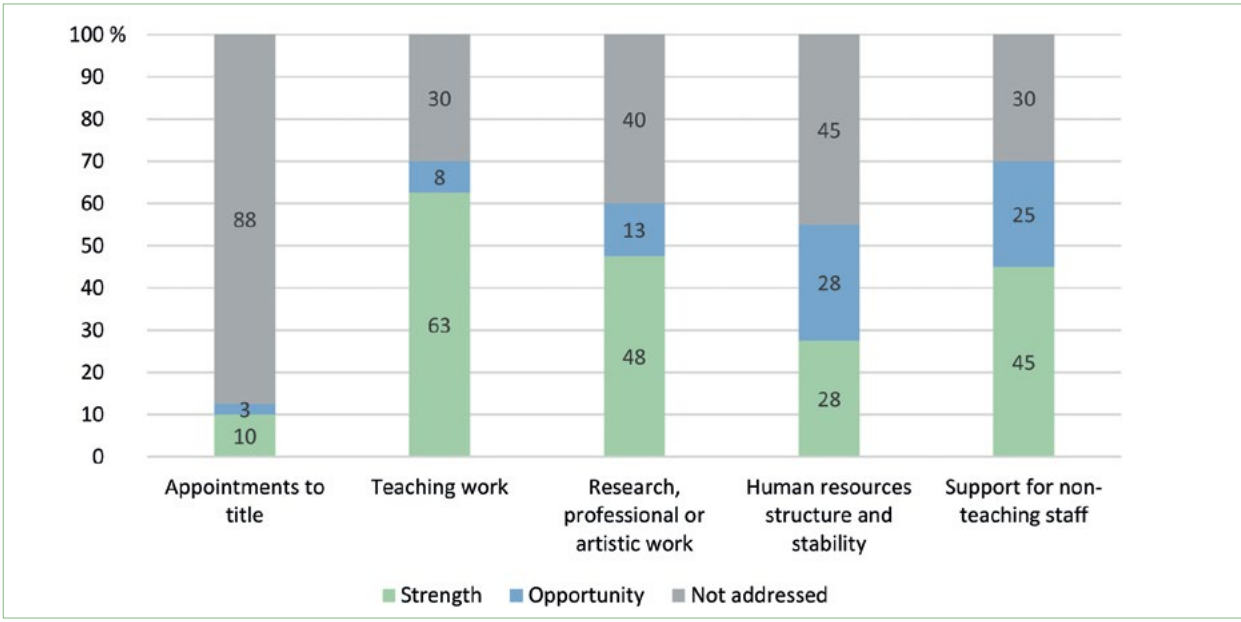
Chart 28:
Quality indicators in the area of operation of a higher vocational college



- **professional or artistic work** in terms of research in a professional field or artistic work, achievements and prizes at institutional level;
- **practical training** in terms of organisation, delivery and evaluation.

Among the indicators in this area, the ***participation of key stakeholders*** has the highest share of opportunities for improvement, at around 50%. The previous analysis shows a similar predominance of opportunities (38%) over strengths (15%), but this time the strengths are slightly more frequent. The indicator on ***organisation and management*** was rated slightly lower than in the previous period, as it received less attention from the experts this time and it did not diverge (either negatively or positively) from the provisions of the Evaluation Criteria. The indicator ***mission, vision and strategy***, which recorded 70% of the opportunities in the previous analysis, has improved considerably this time, with strengths and opportunities almost equal, indicating that more attention is being paid to this topic by the institutions.

Chart 29:
Quality indicators in the area of human resources of a higher vocational college



Practical training has a remarkably high score, with strengths far outweighing opportunities for improvement. The professional operation of the college and monitoring of students' competences are also rated as good.

(3) In analysing the **human resources** findings, the following quality indicators are taken into account:

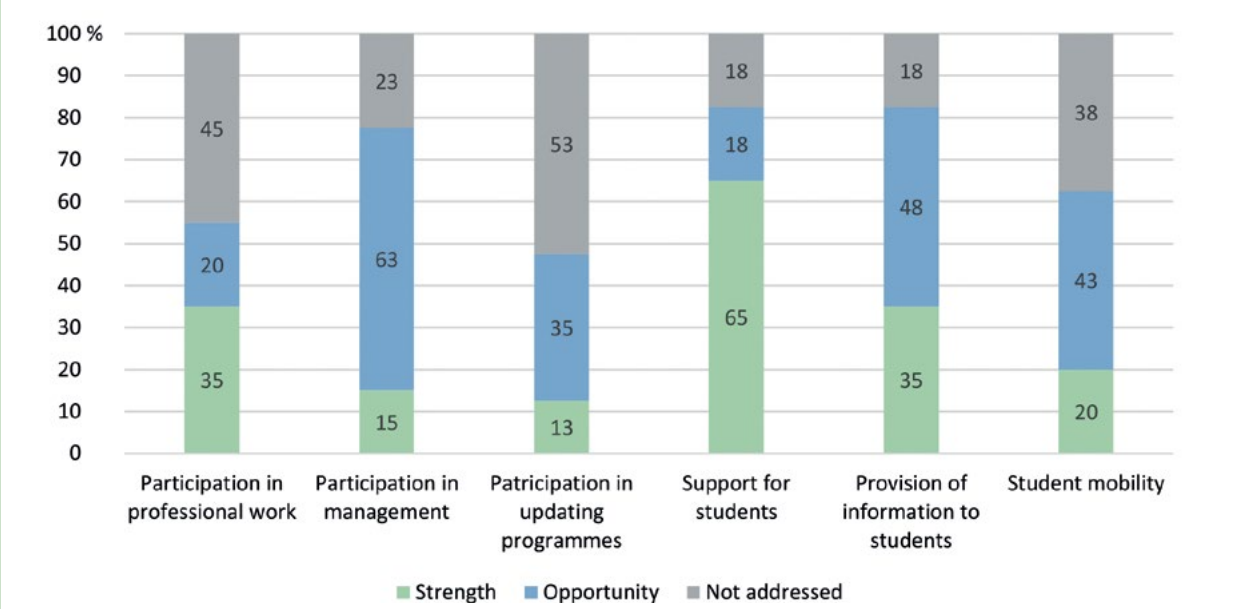
- **appointments to title,** their validity and relevance to the subject areas taught by teachers;
- **teaching work;**
- **professional or artistic work of teachers** – at the individual, not institutional level;
- **human resources structure and stability** in terms of the nature of the employment of teachers and researchers at the higher vocational college, i.e. full-time equivalents, full-time staff versus external staff;
- **administrative, technical and material support** in relation to professional and administrative support staff – their stability, employment and services.

As in the previous period, the indicator of ***appointment to title,*** which is rarely addressed, stands out. The analysis shows that the relationship between the individual human resources structure indicators is balanced, similar to the previous systemic analysis. In the area of ***professional work,*** however, significantly fewer opportunities for improvement were identified compared to the previous period. In the case of higher vocational colleges, the strengths are predominant, especially in indicators related to ***teaching work,*** and to ***administrative, professional and material support for teachers*** – which is similar to the previous period.

(4) For **students**, the following quality indicators are covered:

- **inclusion in professional or artistic work** in terms of students' actual or potential participation in professional or artistic work;
- **participation in governance,** which refers to the inclusion of students in the governance of the higher vocational college;
- **support for students,** which refers to general administrative support for study, enrolment services, services of the student affairs office and the international affairs office, and support to extracurricular activities;

Chart 30:
Quality indicators in the area of students of a higher vocational college



- **provision of information to students,** which refers to the information services of the higher vocational colleges and the scope of provision of information to students on matters related to education, employability and self-evaluation;
- **student mobility,** which refers to the support and conditions for student mobility, its organisation and the actual student exchanges.

As in the last analysis, ***support for students*** is strongly dominated by strengths. For the indicators ***participation in management*** and ***mobility,*** opportunities continue to outweigh strengths, with ***mobility*** improving slightly and ***participation in management*** deteriorating compared to the previous period.

Similarly, ***provision of information to students*** on education, employability and self-evaluation is rated lower than in the previous analysis.

Participation in updating study programmes, a new indicator in this analysis compared to the previous one, shows a significant excess of opportunities for improvement over strengths.

(5) The **material conditions**, which were our next area of analysis, include the following quality indicators:

- **premises** in terms of facilities for education, professional or artistic work;
- **equipment** for education, professional or artistic work;
- **adjustments for students with special needs** in terms of special adaptations to facilities, special equipment, as well as rules (rights and obligations) and support;
- **financial resources** in terms of financial stability and adequacy throughout the evaluation period;
- **library resources** in terms of physical copies of study and research literature, as well as access to databases;
- **library services** in terms of professional support for students, teachers and researchers.

The indicators ***premises and equipment*** are clearly dominated by strengths, as in the previous period. The proportion of strengths in ***adjustments for students with different forms of disability*** has increased markedly, rising from 12% to almost 40%,

Chart 31:
Quality indicators in the area of material conditions of a higher vocational college

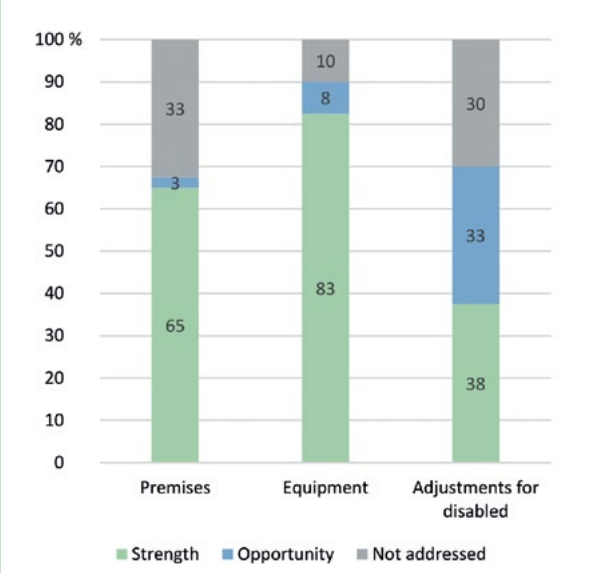


Chart 32:
Quality indicators in the area of material conditions of a higher vocational college

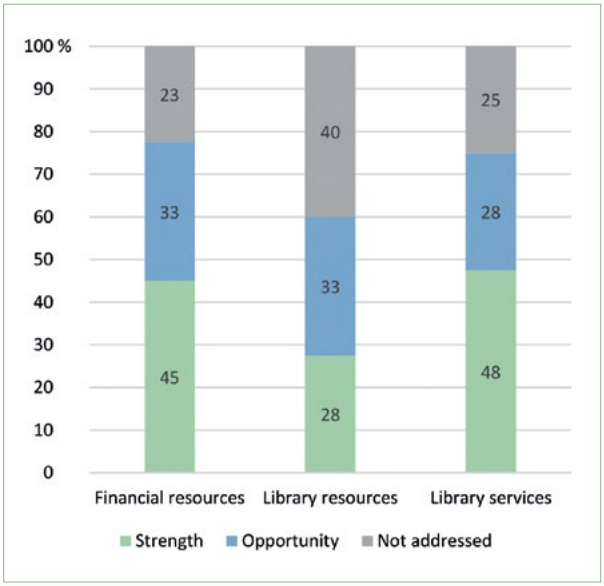
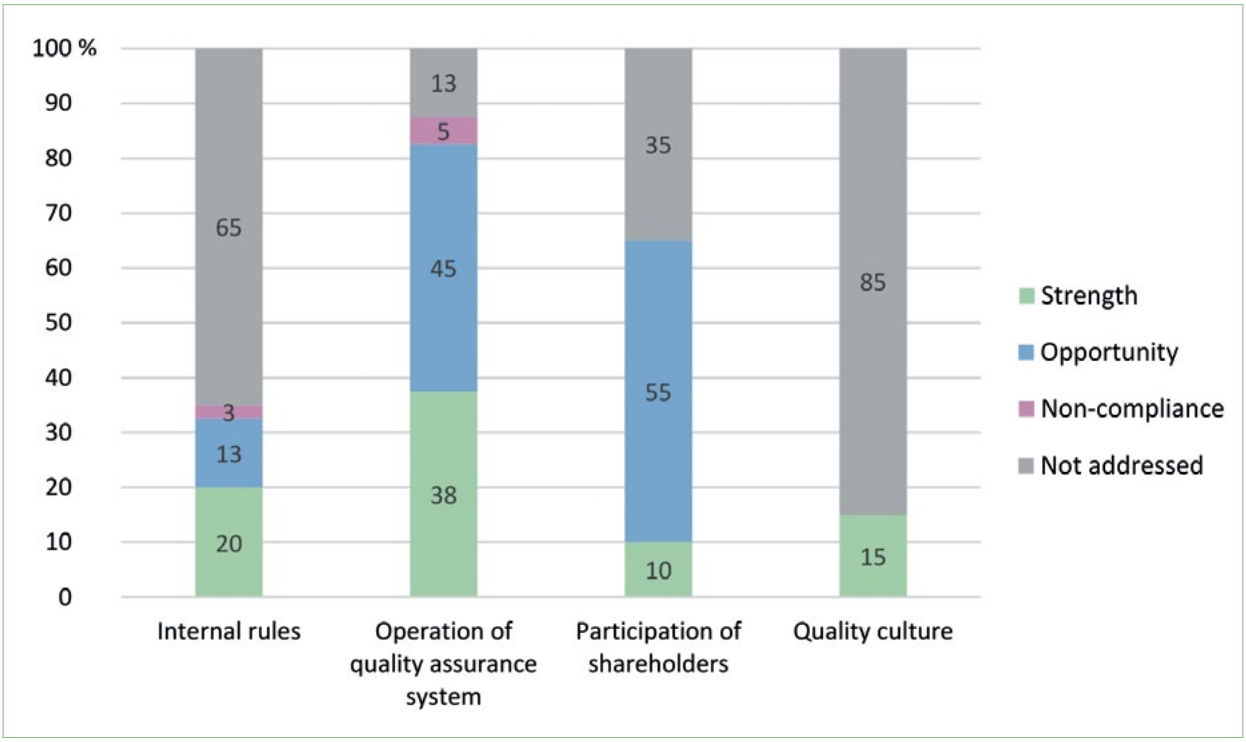


Chart 33:
Quality indicators in the area of quality assurance of a higher vocational college



while the proportion of opportunities remains at around 30%. This indicator has attracted much more attention from experts in recent years, as the category of ***not addressed*** has halved.

Higher vocational colleges have improved over the last period in three key categories in the area of material conditions: ***financial resources, library resources*** and ***library services***.

For all three indicators, the number of strengths increased, especially for ***library services,*** but slightly less for ***library resources***, where the number of opportunities for improvement halved.

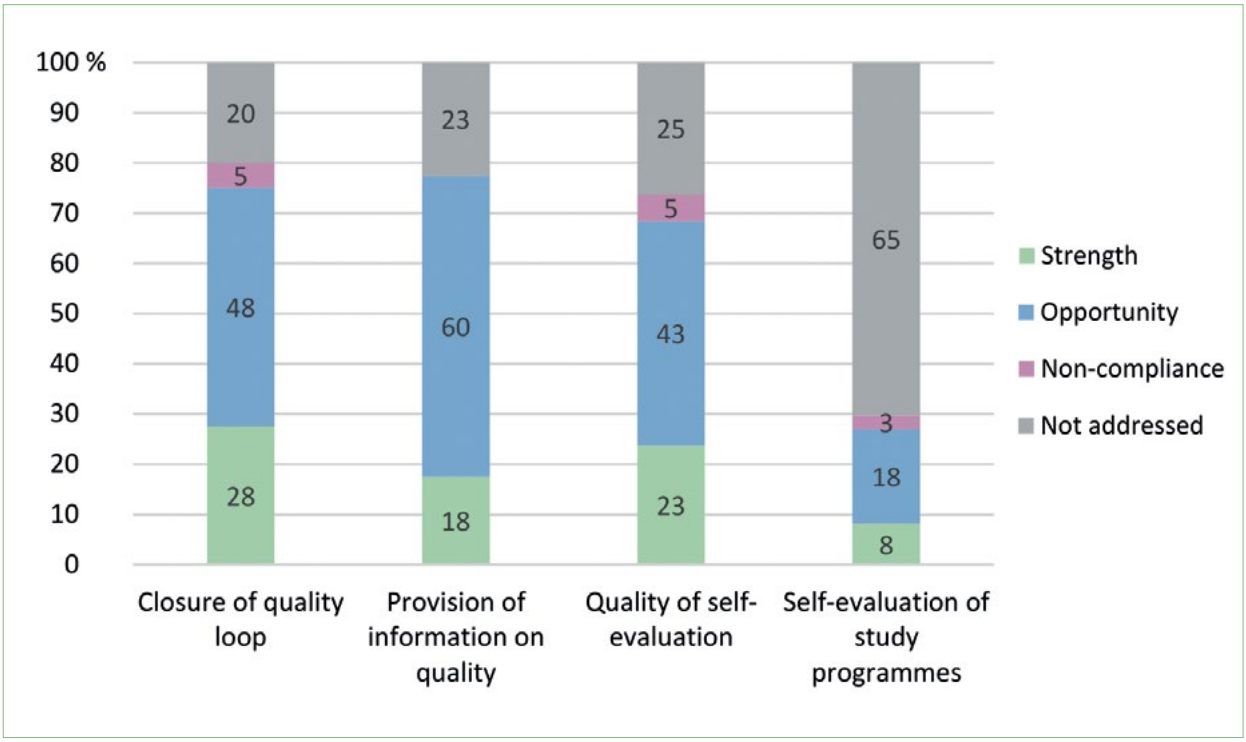
In the case of ***financial resources,*** the number of strengths has more than doubled, while the number of opportunities remains almost unchanged.

(6) **Quality assurance**, as a specific area of internal quality assurance assessment, includes the following quality indicators:

- **internal rules** on quality assurance in terms of quality manuals or other adopted documents;
- **operation of internal quality assurance system** in relation to the organisation, management, efficiency and effectiveness of the quality assurance process;
- **participation of key stakeholders** in internal quality assurance;
- **quality culture** in relation to its current situation and development;
- **closure of quality loop** in terms of completeness of the quality assurance process – i.e. completion of the Deming cycle (plan-do-check-act) or related quality assurance cycles;
- **provision of information on quality assurance** – on quality assurance processes, their relevance and outcomes;
- **quality of self-evaluation** in terms of consistency, completeness, methodological rigour and effectiveness of self-evaluation;
- **self-evaluation of individual study programmes,** i.e. regular review of study programmes in the light of their implementation.

The results are similar as in the previous period. ***Quality culture*** is paid somewhat less attention by experts, as are ***internal rules*** or quality manu-

Chart 34:
Quality indicators in the area of quality assurance of a higher vocational college



al. The reason for the high proportion of the category ***not addressed*** in these two indicators may also be that the indicators do not diverge (either negatively or positively) from the Evaluation Criteria. The ***operation of internal quality assurance system*** was rated better, with an increase in the number of strengths for this indicator. However, the share of strengths in the ***participation of key stakeholders*** has fallen sharply, reaching only a third of the level of the previous period.

Non-compliances or major deficiencies are present for the indicator ***operation of internal quality assurance system*** in relation to the organisation, management, efficiency and effectiveness of the quality assurance process.

Self-evaluation of individual study programmes is largely not addressed, which is similar to the finding of the systemic analysis for the previous period.

For the other three indicators – ***closure of quality loop, provision of information on quality assurance*** and ***quality of self-evaluation*** – the opportunities continue to outweigh the strengths, as in the previous period. In the last period, the ratio has improved slightly in favour of strengths, while the consideration of these indicators has also increased. Non-compliances or major deficiencies are present for the indicators ***closure of quality loop, quality of self-evaluation*** and ***self-evaluation of individual study programmes.***

The reports identified several key areas of excellence that contribute to the overall quality of the education process. These include the ***competences or employability of graduates,*** which is closely linked to practical training, adequate premises and equipment, and internationalisation processes. ***Integration with the environment*** or ***cooperation with the environment*** is highlighted as a key factor in professional and artistic work and in the organisation and operation of study programmes and professional colleges, where the quality of teaching and the infrastructure available also contribute to high quality.

In addition, the ***role of professional or support services*** ensures the smooth operation of educational institutions and improves the conditions for learning and teaching. Together, these areas build the basis for excellence in higher vocational colleges and strengthen their close links with the environment and the economy.

5.2 Comparison with previous period

The results of the analysis of experts' reports on external evaluation of higher vocational colleges in the period 2018–2022 confirm similar trends as those found in the previous period while perceiving certain improvements and deficiencies. In the area of integration with the environment, a large proportion of strengths still stand out, especially in ***cooperation with the economic and non-economic sectors,*** with an increase in cooperation with the non-economic sector. The share of strengths in ***mission, vision and strategy*** has also increased, indicating progress in the long-term orientation of higher vocational colleges. The area of human resources remains at a similar level as before, with strengths still prevailing in ***teaching work*** and ***administrative support.***

In the area of students, the share of strengths in ***student mobility*** has increased slightly, but the share of opportunities for improvement is still quite large. ***Provision of information to students*** on education, employability and self-evaluation was rated lower, similar as in the previous period.

In the area of material conditions, the indicators on ***premises and equipment*** for the delivery of the educational process continue to be dominated by strengths, while ***adjustments for students with special needs*** have visibly improved, indicating that higher vocational colleges are paying more attention and providing more support to these students. There are also notable improvements in ***financial resources, library resources and library services,*** which indicates that conditions for students and employees in this area are improving. Although the operation of the internal quality assurance system is rated better than in the previous period, opportunities for improvement still prevail.

5.3 Summary of the analysis of higher vocational college evaluation reports

Quality indicators where opportunities for improvement prevailed over strengths include ***mission, vision and strategy*** of colleges, ***participation of key stakeholders in management, organisation*** of colleges, ***participation of students in professional or artistic work, provision of information on education and employment opportunities to students, student mobility*** and ***study programme updating.***

Experts often identify gaps in the operation of the internal quality assurance system, where deficiencies have been detected, such as non-closure of quality loop, inadequate self-evaluation and insufficient participation of key stakeholders. These are the areas where all non-compliances or major deficiencies have been found. Nevertheless, the reports also highlighted positive trends, such as study programmes tailored to the needs and expectations of students and the integration of programmes with the local environment, which indicates a positive attitude of colleges towards their social role.

To improve the current situation, it is recommended to strengthen the participation of key stakeholders in the management and updating of study programmes and in internal quality assurance systems. Reflection is particularly recommended in ensuring the closure of quality loop, the quality of self-evaluations and the establishment of more effective mechanisms for informing stakeholders about quality monitoring. Closer monitoring of the learning outcomes and competences of graduates will improve the matching of programmes to labour market needs and raise the profile of graduates.

5.4 Key highlights and general findings

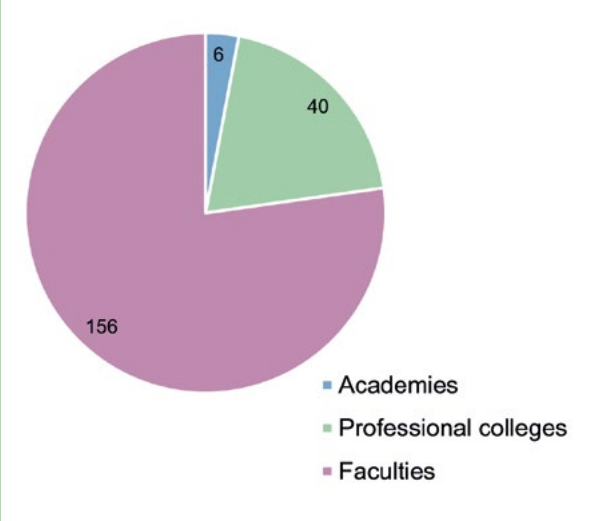
Category	Details
General characteristics of the review of reports	• 41 reports by groups of experts for external evaluation of higher vocational colleges • Indicators classified in four categories: strengths, opportunities for improvement, non-compliances or major deficiencies, not addressed
Findings on the methodology and reports	• Strengths outweigh opportunities for improvement; most recommendations in the area of integration with the environment and the operation of higher vocational colleges • Frequent balancing of strengths with opportunities for improvement • Some contents are not addressed, or are addressed too generally • Practical training rated very highly (70% of strengths)
Quality indicators where opportunities for improvement prevail over strengths in reports by groups of experts	• Mission, vision and strategy of the higher vocational college, participation of key stakeholders in management of a higher vocational college and general organisation and management of the higher vocational college • Participation of students in professional work and management and provision of information for students on matters related to education, employability and self-evaluation, participation of students in study programme updating, student mobility • Operation of internal quality assurance system and participation of key stakeholders in internal quality assurance
Quality indicators where strengths prevail over opportunities for improvement in the reports of the groups of experts	• Cooperation of higher vocational colleges with the economic and non-economic sectors, learning outcomes and competences and employability • Practical training and professional or artistic work in higher vocational colleges • Teaching and professional work of teachers and administrative, professional and material support • Support, assistance and counselling for students • Facilities for education and professional activities • Library services as expert support for students
Excellences in reports of groups of experts	• Practical training – organisation, delivery and evaluations • Cooperation of higher vocational colleges with the economic and non-economic sectors • Quality of teaching • Professional and/or support services • Facilities for the implementation of educational and professional activities
Major areas of non-compliances or major deficiencies in reports of groups of experts	• Operation of internal quality assurance system, closure of quality loop and quality of self-evaluation
Often not addressed in reports of groups of experts	• Learning outcomes and competences in terms of education and skills • Appointments to title (their validity and relevance to the subject areas) and human resources structure and stability • Participation of students in professional work • Quality manual and quality culture
Comparison with previous systemic analysis	• Improvement in the indicator of mission, vision and strategy • Improvement in the indicator of cooperation with the non-economic sector • Organisation and management of the higher vocational college is rated lower • Provision of information to students on education, employability and self-evaluation is rated lower • Adjustments for students with special needs have visibly improved • Improvement in the indicators of financial resources, library resources and library services • Visibly improved operation of the quality assurance system

6. Analysis of Self-Assessment Reports of Higher Education Institutions

6.1 Review and assessment of quality indicators for higher education institutions

The survey consisted of 34 questions and included 205 self-evaluation reports (SERs) from higher education institutions, 54% of which are members of public universities and 46% of which are private institutions. In the second part of the analysis, the data were divided between public and private institutions, which will allow the analysis to show the characteristics of a specific type of institution.

Chart 35:
Vrsta visokošolskega zavoda glede na status



The analysis includes similar areas and indicators as in previous analyses of the quality of Slovenian higher and higher vocational education covering the period 2014–2017, which allows for comparison. Most SERs cover one academic year (in some cases the report is written for a calendar year); only in one case was the SER prepared for two academic years. In the vast majority of cases, reports are publicly available on the websites of the institutions, which allows access to the reports to all stakeholders.

The analysis below shows the distribution of the three main quality indicators in individual areas of assessment.

(1) The first area is the **operation of the institution** and its **integration with the environment**, where we took the following indicators into account in the self-evaluation analysis:

- **mission, vision and strategy** in relation to the implementation of organisational objectives and plans;
- **management of the higher education institution,** including the participation of key stakeholders;

- **research or artistic work** in terms of scientific and professional research or artistic achievements and prizes at institutional level;
- **practical training** in terms of organisation and delivery;
- cooperation with the economic sector, applied projects for industry, involvement of experts in teaching, and intellectual and cultural integration with the environment;
- **competences and employability of graduates** in terms of the skills they acquire and their position in the labour market.

The results of the analysis show that organisational objectives – ***mission, vision, and strategy*** – are often included in the SERs of institutions. In most cases, these objectives are merely presented, with the content often being uncritically repeated from year to year, as was evident from a comparison of the SERs for the two selected years.

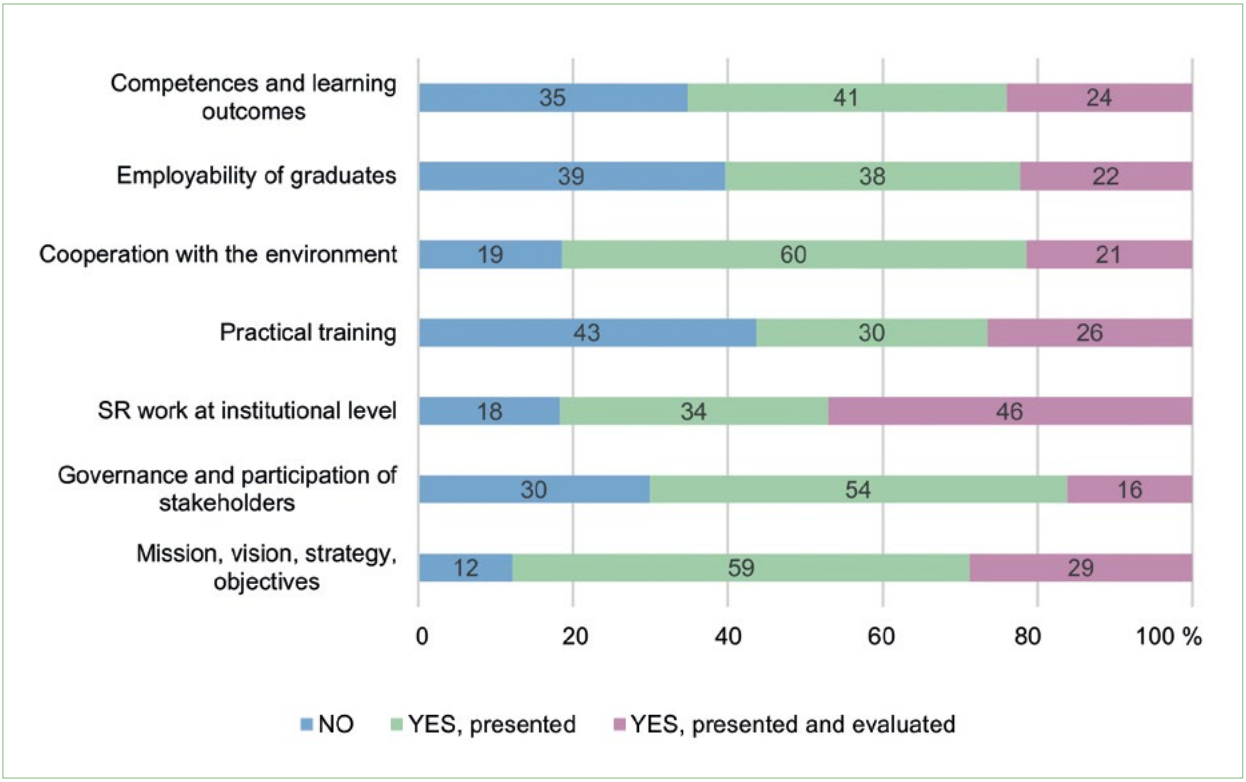
The situation is similar with the ***governance of the institution*** and the ***participation of key stakeholders***, which are most often presented through the composition of various bodies active at the institution.

Research activity is adequately presented and assessed in the reports, similar to the previous analysis, where it was one of the most in-depth indicators. The treatment of ***practical education***

Example of good practice

The chapter on scientific and research work introduces the faculty's key research areas and themes, as well as its research objectives. This is followed by an assessment of the implementation of the measures in the field of research. The presentation of research projects and programmes, as well as the researchers' publications, is followed by an assessment or the trend compared to the previous period. Highlights are given to the highest quality publications, the most high-profile scientific achievements and accompanying events, such as science popularisation. Activities in the area of knowledge transfer and use, as well as projects with the economic sector and other external stakeholders, are presented in a similar way (objectives, measures, evaluation).

Chart 36:
Quality indicators from SER in the area of operation of higher education institution and integration with the environment



or training, however, is less consistent in the reports, as it is not present at all institutions, which is understandable given the characteristics of individual study areas. ***Cooperation with the environment*** is mostly presented but rarely evaluated. Often, it is a matter of listing the companies with which the institutions cooperate, which coincides with the findings on the lack of evaluation of the governance of the institution. The ***employability*** indicator is less well rated, especially in the case of independent institutions, where most students are already employed. As the results of the first set of questions show, institutions mostly present indicators in their SERs, but evaluate them less frequently.

(2) In analysing the **human resources** self-evaluation, the following quality indicators were taken into account:

- **competences and learning outcomes of graduates;**
- **satisfaction of employees** on the basis of surveys or interviews;
- **teacher and faculty assistant mobility** and student mobility, its organisation and actual exchanges;
- **teaching work;**
- **research or artistic work of teachers** at the individual, not institutional level;
- **human resources structure** in terms of stability and nature of the employment of teachers and researchers (full-time, full-time staff versus external staff).

The analysis shows that ***competences and learning outcomes*** are rarely properly evaluated. In most cases they are merely presented, and institutions do not pay much attention to the evaluation of the study programme delivery.

The analysis shows that ***satisfaction of employees*** is not frequently evaluated. A comparison between private and public institutions reveals that private institutions pay less attention to this issue, which could be related to the lower proportion of full-time teachers. The ***human resources structure*** is better evaluated, as already noted in the previous analysis. In contrast, the evaluation of ***research and artistic work*** at the level of individual teachers is relatively low, although ***scientific and research work at institutional level*** is well addressed.

Mobility is one of the most widely presented and frequently evaluated areas, both for students and teachers. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, mobility indicators were similar to those in the previous analysis. Teaching work was rated lower than in the previous analysis. Although the ***teaching work*** is broadly defined, the SERs have focused mainly on teaching methods and ways of imparting knowledge.

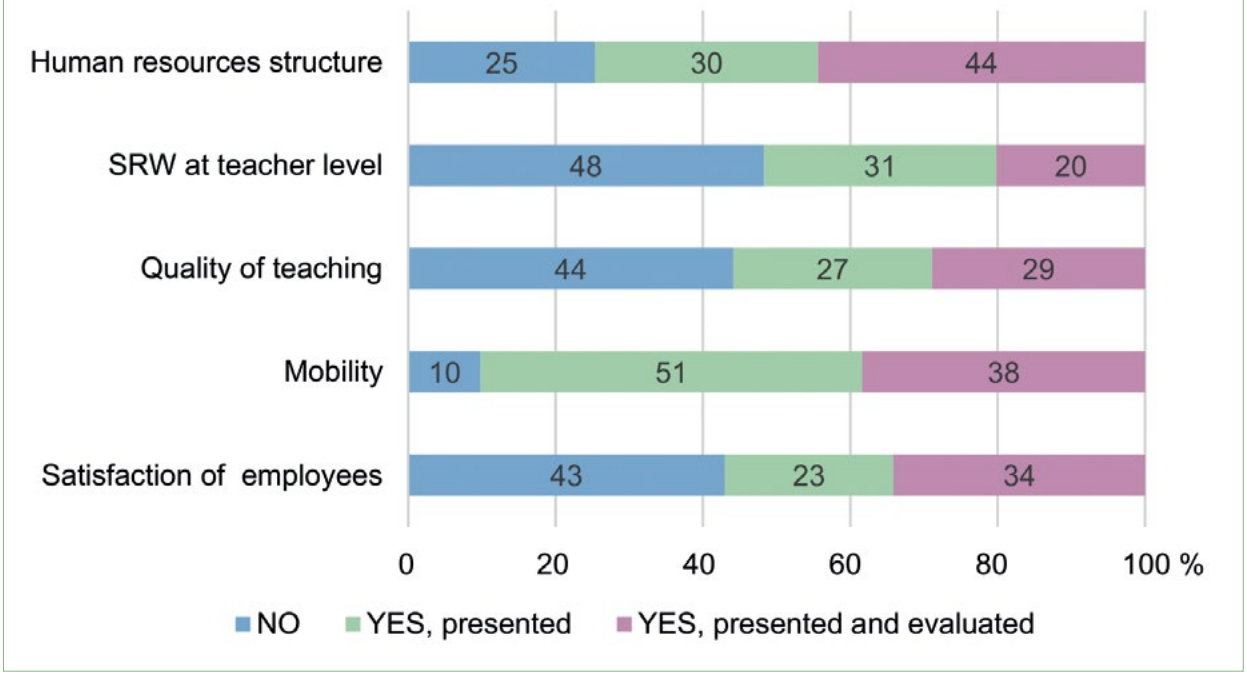
The analysis shows that some areas are less well presented, especially ***competences*** and ***learning outcomes,*** which are rarely evaluated. The institutions often merely list them instead of evaluating them. In the previous systemic analysis, 53% of the SERs did not include an evaluation of competences, and there was a lack of monitoring ECTS student workload, which is comparable to the findings of the previous analysis.

Example of inappropriate practice:

»As can be seen from the lists of professional activities submitted, all lecturers demonstrate professional activity in their respective fields. For the sake of transparency and consistency with the NAKVIS criteria, the verification of professional and teaching performance is carried out every 5 years. /.../ OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND A STRATEGY TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVE: In this area, the Commission for quality control and monitoring does not see any specific measures to be introduced.«

Comment: This section of the SER contains nothing more than the list of teaching and other staff. There are no comparisons with the previous period, no information on future plans (e.g. additional recruitment or downsizing), no information on teachers' research or artistic activities, etc.

Chart 37:
Quality indicators from SERs in the area of human resources



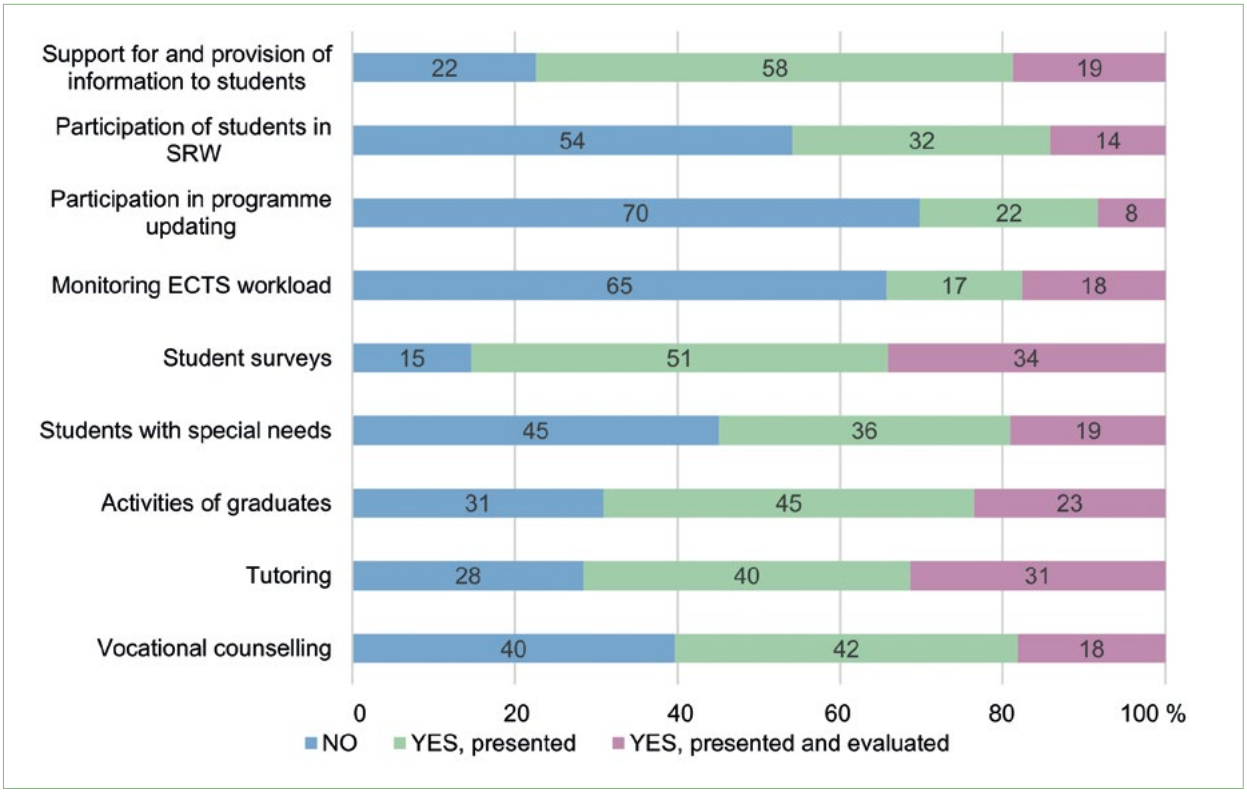
(3) For **students**, which is a mixed area of assessment linked to all other areas, the following quality indicators were taken into account in the analysis of the self-evaluation:

- **career counselling** in terms of the activities and services of career centres or other organisational units;
- **tutoring** in terms of organisation and activity;
- **alumni-related activities,** including the organisation and operation of alumni clubs and the promotion of dialogue with alumni and employers;
- **students with special needs** in terms of adaptations to facilities, equipment, rules (rights and obligations) and support;
- **student surveys** in terms of results and impact;
- **participation in research or artistic work** depending on students' actual or potential participation;
- **provision of information and support for students,** which refers to the information services and the scope of information provided to students on matters related to education, employability, self-evaluation and administrative support (enrolment, office for student affairs, international affairs services, extracurricular activities support);
- **ECTS student workload** according to the results of the student load monitoring and appropriate measures;
- **participation in updating study programmes**, including the participation of students in the evaluation and adoption of study programme updates.

Example of good practice:

Part of the SER is prepared by the student council of the higher education institution, where it presents its activities (elections, publicity, organisation of events). Other chapters of the SER also show the structure of the students, their interests in specific content areas and modules, as well as a detailed presentation of student mobility, student surveys and so on.

Chart 38:
Quality indicators from SERs in the area of students



Of all the quality indicators, the ***student survey*** has been the most evaluated and is well documented, as it is the basis for most of the SERs considered. By contrast, ***student participation in updating study programmes*** is the least addressed indicator. ***Participation of students in scientific and research, professional or artistic work*** is slightly better evaluated than in the previous system analysis.

Vocational counselling is relatively poorly evaluated; almost half of the reports does not address it at all, while the others mostly just present it, which is in accordance with the findings of the previous systemic analysis. Also, the indicator of ***students with disabilities*** is still poorly addressed, mostly with the answer "NO", which is comparable to the previous analysis.

Tutoring is often presented as an existing activity, but it is poorly evaluated. Alumni clubs are often presented, which indicates the active involvement of institutions in this area and brings better results compared to the previous period. ***Support for students,*** including help and advice and information for students, was also better addressed than in the previous analysis. The SERs show that these areas are receiving a great deal of attention from the institutions.

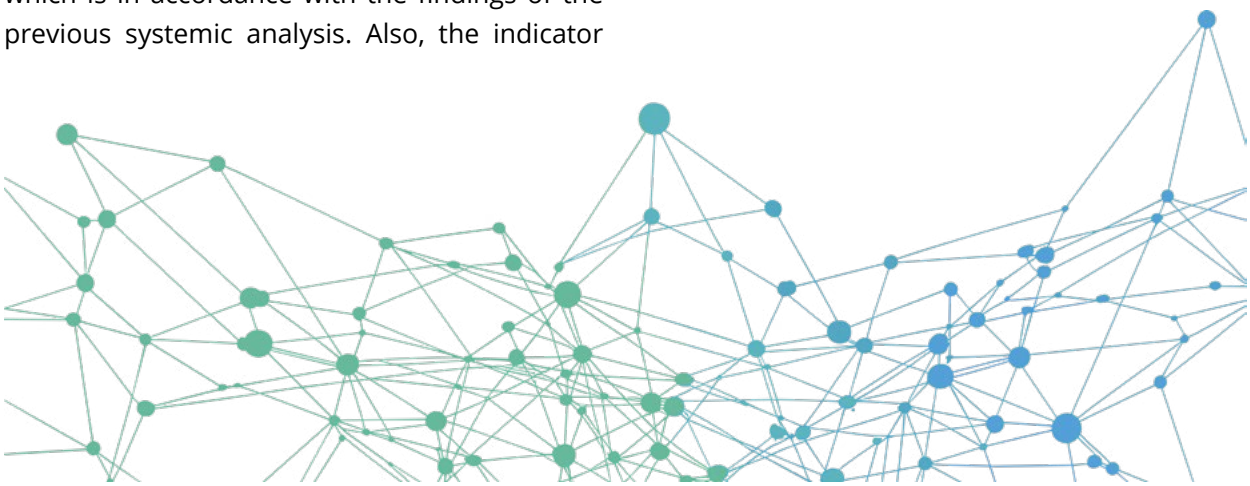
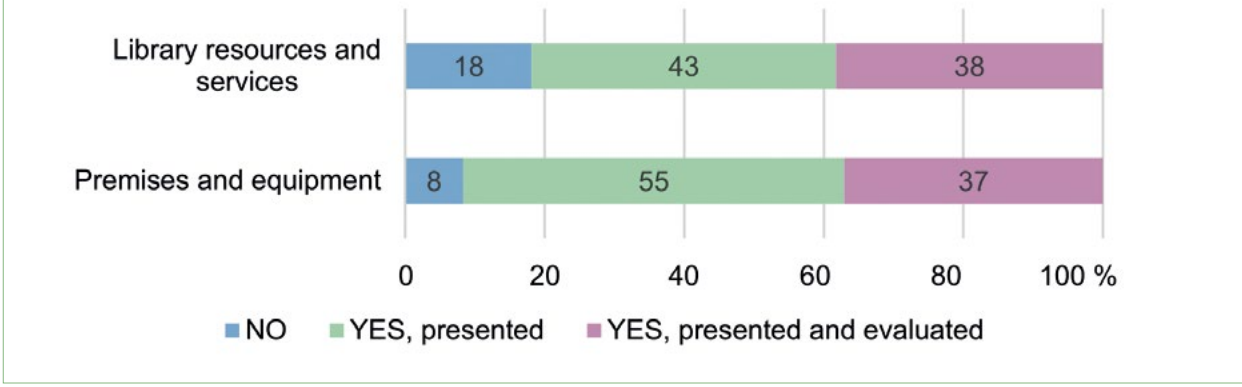


Chart 39:
Quality indicators from SERs in the area of material conditions



(4) In analysing the **material conditions** self-evaluation, the following quality indicators were taken into account:

- **premises and equipment for education, research or artistic work**
- **library work and services,** including professional support for students, teachers and researchers, and library resources such as physical copies of academic and research literature and access to databases.

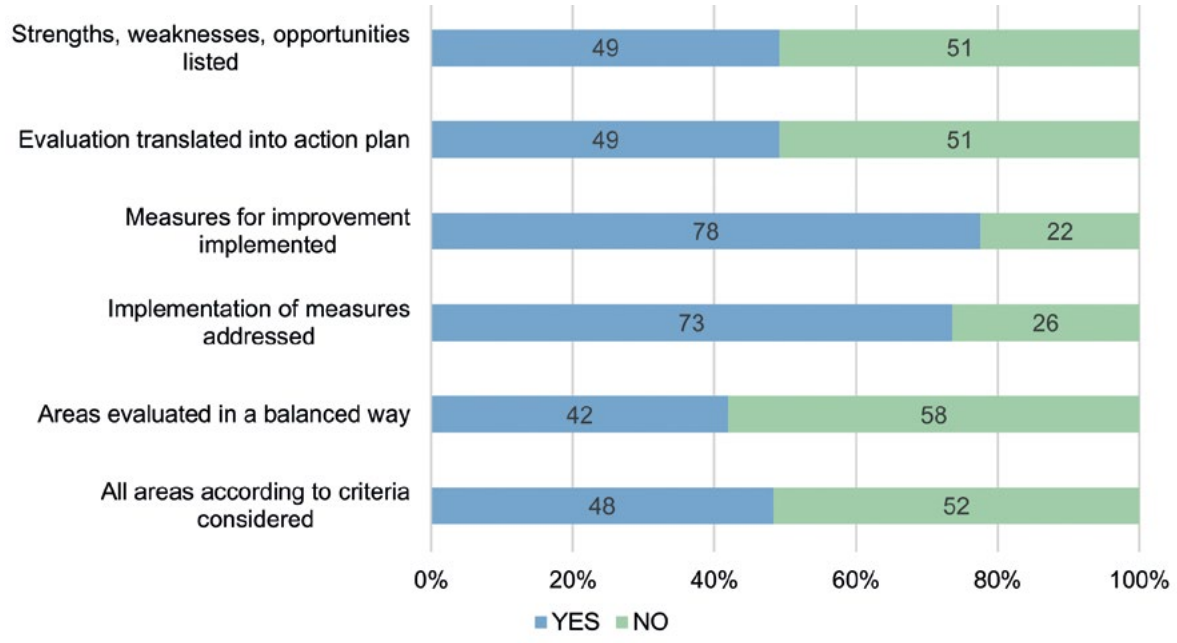
Premises, equipment and finance were almost always presented, as well as ***library work and services,*** which are slightly less well evaluated but are nevertheless present in most SERs.

Example of inappropriate practice:

»We have upgraded the ICT equipment in rooms P3 (adding an LCD screen, upgrading the computer system) and P6 (upgrading the projector and computer); we have purchased four portable hybrid cameras (with microphone and loudspeaker) and laptops for all the lecture theatres where they could be used. We have also equipped the Conference Room, which we have started to use more often, with a larger LCD screen.«

Comment: It is merely an inventory of equipment, with no further information on how needs were analysed, what the objectives of the renovations and purchases were and what impact was achieved.

Chart 40:
Quality indicators from SERs in the area of quality assurance



(5) The next set of questions related to **quality assurance**, which is linked to the operation of the institution. When asked ***whether the report covers all the areas of assessment of the Accreditation Criteria,*** the answers are almost evenly split between yes and no.

However, when it comes to the question of whether ***areas of assessment are evaluated in a balanced way,*** i.e. whether all areas are given sufficient attention and whether the more important areas are addressed in more detail, we have repeatedly found a lack of balance between all areas.

Example of inappropriate practice:

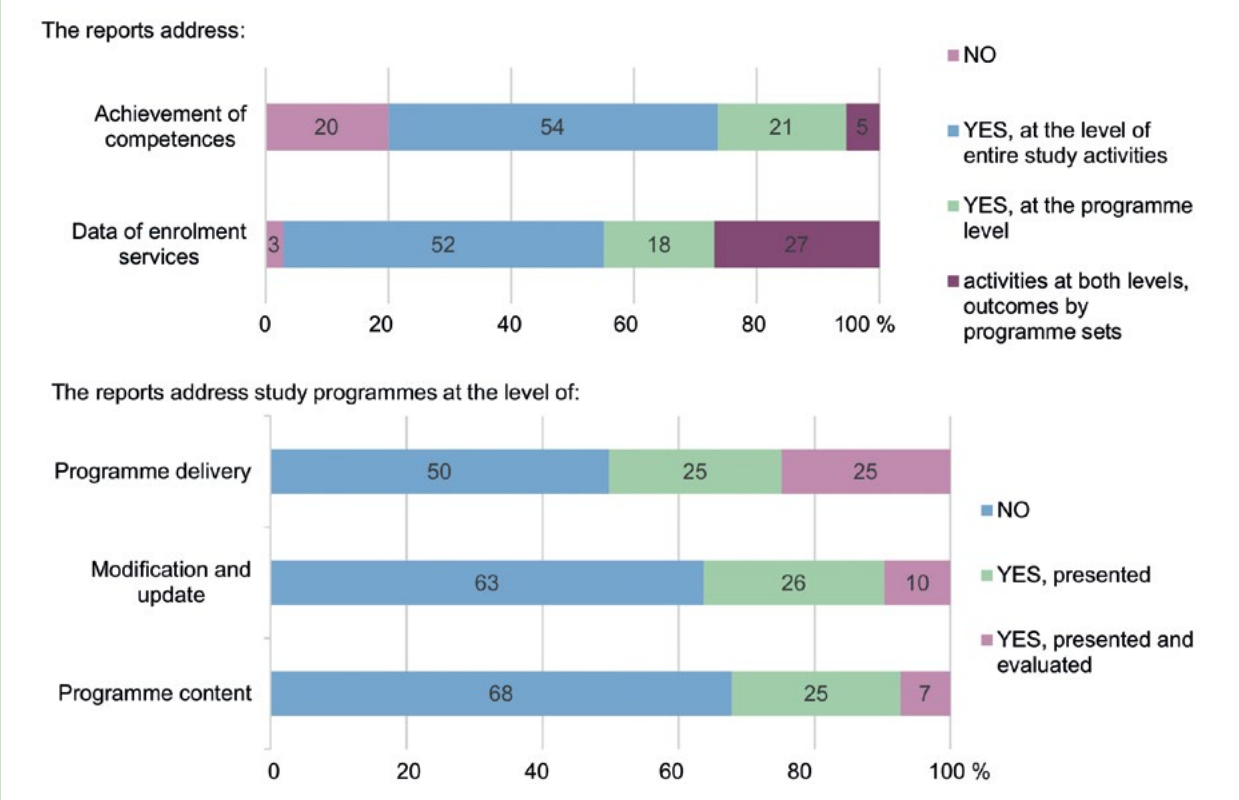
Presented at the end of the SER is a set of indicators monitored by the Faculty over a longer period of time, without any indication of what objectives are pursued by these indicators and how the indicators influence the planning of activities. The indicators are not linked to one another and even address topics for which a numerical value is not entirely appropriate (e.g. number of research projects, number of publications).

It has been found that ***most of the reports address the implementation of the measures*** identified in the previous self-evaluation.

However, the ***implementation of the action plan*** was rated lower. Scores were lower on the question of whether the institution actually ***implements the action plan.***

The situation was similar for the question of *whether the evaluation report clearly demonstrates strengths, deficiencies and opportunities for improvement*, suggesting a link between the action plan and the evaluation findings.

Chart 41:
SER quality indicators in the field of organisation and delivery of study activities (how is it addressed in the reports, at which level, what data does it include)



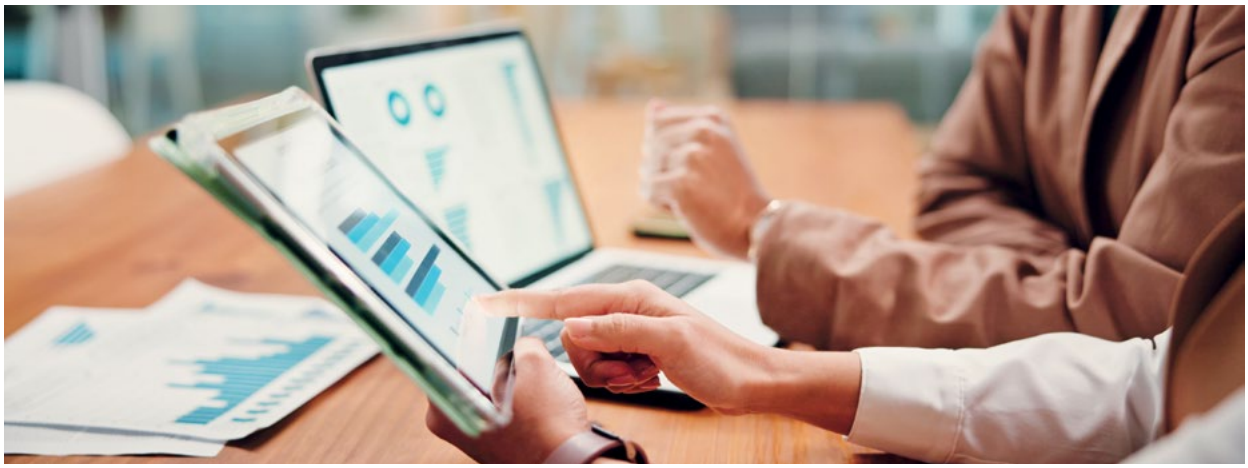
(6) The last set of questions dealt with the **organisation and implementation of study activities**, which are mainly addressed at institutional level in the SERs.

The achievement of knowledge and competences is also presented at the level of study activities as a whole. The ***update of study programmes*** is rarely presented in the SERs, which also means that most of the reports do not deal with the delivery of study programmes in detail.

Example of good practice:

A third-cycle study programme is considered from a number of perspectives, such as

- the relevance of the content of the existing programme and the inclusion of new knowledge;
- compliance if the proposed modifications with the vision and development strategy of the institution;
- integration of contents of the study programme;
- consistency and cohesion (compliance) of the objectives, competences or learning outcomes determined by the syllabi with the objectives and competences of the study programme and its content;
- appropriate distribution of courses by individual semesters and years (horizontal and vertical cohesion) and allocation of credits;
- suitability of testing and assessing knowledge.



6.2 Public higher education institutions

In the case of public institutions, the ***vision*** is mostly presented but without proper evaluation. The same applies to the areas of ***governance of the institution and cooperation with the environment,*** which are often only presented but not evaluated. The best evaluated is ***scientific and research work at institutional level,*** which is presented in almost two-thirds of the cases, while at the level of ***individual teachers*** it is rather poorly addressed. ***Practical training*** is less well presented, which is expected as not all institutions provide it. ***Employability and competences*** are roughly evenly distributed between the three categories. A similar pattern appears in the ***quality of teaching. Mobility*** is very often addressed, while ***human resources structure*** is the best evaluated indicator.

Tutoring is well presented in the SER, but often without adequate evaluation, as is the case for ***support for students*** and alumni clubs. In the area of ***students with disabilities***, responses are evenly distributed between the categories ***presented, evaluated*** and ***not addressed***. ***Student surveys*** are always presented and often evaluated, while the ***ECTS student workload*** is not monitored in two thirds of cases. Also poorly presented and evaluated are ***participation of students in study programme updating*** and ***students' scientific and research work,*** which are not addressed by half of the SERs. ***Premises*** are well evaluated, same as ***library services.*** Most reports cover all areas of assessment according to the Accreditation Criteria, with the results slightly indicating the answer

Example of inappropriate practice:

The SER discusses in detail the research projects and programmes that took place during the self-evaluation period, classifying them according to themes and individual chairs or departments. While it discusses in detail the subject of the research and the methods used, there is no assessment of the project's or programme's success, international visibility and contribution to science.

"YES". However, the predominant answer to the indicator on whether the assessment areas are evaluated in a balanced way is "NO", which is comparable to the independent institutions. Most SERs address the ***implementation of the measures*** from the previous self-evaluation, and about the same number derive ***measures for improvement.*** However, most SERs do not include an action plan and do not address the strengths, deficiencies and opportunities for improvement arising from the findings.

Study activities are addressed at institutional level, but the content of the programmes is not analysed, which is to be expected given our focus on the institution SER. ***Achievement of knowledge*** is also presented at the level of the institution, but study programme updating is poorly addressed. ***Delivery of programmes*** appears to be poorly evaluated, with the most frequent answer to the question on the delivery of programmes being "NO".

6.3 Independent higher education institutions

For independent higher education institutions, most SERs outline the institution's ***objectives and strategy,*** but do not evaluate them. Many institutions do not address the ***governance*** indicator, although the proportion is slightly lower than for those that do evaluate governance. ***Scientific and research work*** is evaluated by 37% of institutions, 36% only present it, while 27% do not address it at all.

Practical training is mostly poorly represented. Most institutions do not present it at all and only 27% evaluate it. A similar proportion applies to ***employability***, which is evaluated in only 23% of the SERs and mostly only presented, which is comparable to the treatment of vocational counselling. One of the reasons may be the fact that most students are part-time and already employed.

Competences are evaluated by less than a quarter of the institutions and merely presented by 40%. ***Satisfaction of employees*** is not addressed by half of the institutions. ***Human resources structure*** is more strongly represented, with a third of institutions evaluating it, while the opposite is true for the ***quality of teaching,*** which is not evaluated by more than half of institutions, and the ***scientific and research work of teachers,*** which is evaluated by less than one percent of institutions.

Mobility is often addressed in the SERs, while *tutoring* is only presented in most institutions but evaluated only in 20% of cases. ***Alumni clubs*** are often presented, but the indicator ***students with special needs*** is under-evaluated, being mentioned in only 13% of reports and not addressed in more than 50%.

Student surveys are well presented, but the ECTS workload remains poorly evaluated – in 65% of SERs it is not even presented. ***Participation of students in study programme updating*** is even worse, with 78% of SERs not addressing this area at all. Students' scientific and research or professional work is also under-represented, not evaluated or presented in 55% of SERs. Support for students is described but frequently not evaluated.

Facilities, finances and equipment are presented in two thirds of the SERs, but only 28% of the institutions evaluate them. The results are similar for ***libraries*** – a third of institutions evaluate them, while 27% of SERs do not.

SERs largely do not take into account all the assessment areas according to the Accreditation Criteria; in 65% of cases, individual areas are not evaluated. The ***implementation of the measures from the previous self-evaluation*** was addressed in two thirds of the reports, which shows that the SER is perceived as a strategic document. Similarly, 70% of the SERs show that institutions are implementing ***measures for improvement.*** However, only a small proportion of reports include an ***action plan.*** Just over half of the institutions derive an ***action plan*** from the findings, identifying strengths, deficiencies and opportunities for improvement.

Study activities are mainly addressed at institutional level, but often also at the level of individual study programmes. SERs are more likely to analyse the achievement of knowledge and competences at the level of the institution as a whole, while the treatment of study programme content and updating is under-represented. ***Programme updating*** is most often marked "NO", indicating a lack of a systematic approach to improving study programme content.

6.4 Summaries and findings of the analysis of self-evaluation reports of higher education institutions

The analysis of higher education institutions' SERs showed a mixed picture of the quality of evaluation practices. Independent higher education institutions often present their objectives but rarely evaluate them, especially in the areas of cooperation with the environment, employability and competences of graduates.

Scientific and research work is better evaluated at institutional level but insufficiently addressed at the level of individual teachers and students, which is understandable given the nature of the SER. Human resources structure is often evaluated, but satisfaction of employees is evaluated less frequently. A comparison between private and public institutions shows that private institutions are less concerned with ***satisfaction of employees,*** which can be linked to the lower proportion of full-time employees. The previous systemic analysis also showed that this indicator was not present in almost half of the SERs.

Some areas and indicators are not better addressed, while most areas show progress. Although many reports present data, there is a lack of deeper reflection and evaluation, especially on ***study programme updating, participation of students and ECTS workload monitoring,*** and on ***competences***, which are the least evaluated indicators, as also identified in the previous systemic analysis. For example, in the previous analysis, ***competences*** were not evaluated in more than half of the SERs. ***Cooperation with the environment*** is mostly presented in the list of companies cooperating with institutions, but rarely evaluated, so it is difficult to see from the SERs how close the cooperation is and in which areas it is taking place, as also noted in the previous systemic analysis.

Cooperation with the environment is still perceived mainly as cooperation with the economic sector, and less so with the non-economic sector, which is also an important factor in the quality of study programmes. The evaluation of the ***governance of the institution*** is slightly weaker, as the previous analysis found that 53% of the SERs evaluate this area adequately, while the data show that 16% of the SERs evaluate it.

In most cases, ***action plans*** have been found to be inadequately designed or implemented, which limits the usefulness of the SERs for strategic planning and quality improvement. Action

plans are often too vague, with no indication of the responsible persons or of the deadlines for achieving the objective. For some categories, the SER acts mainly as a formal document, summarising achievements but not evaluating them.

Premises and equipment are well evaluated in both types of institutions, with ***libraries*** achieving a higher level of quality in public than in independent institutions. Public higher education institutions evaluated ***scientific and research work*** slightly better; in other indicators such as ***employability*** and ***quality of teaching,*** however, the results are similar to those of independent institutions. The fact that the coverage of some of the categories is weaker in the case of independent institutions is due to the fact that most of the students at these institutions are part-time or already in employment, so the institutions address them in a different way.

Similar as in the analysis of the experts' reports, the analysis of the SERs shows that institutions focus more on categories that are easier to measure. SERs still rely heavily on surveys, both of students and employees, while other methods of data collection account for a smaller part of the information obtained.

However, progress has been made – SERs have improved and institutions are paying more attention to evaluating their performance and strengthening quality culture, as evidenced by the results of the analysis. However, the evaluation of areas that were less well presented should be strengthened, as a presentation that does not include in-depth analysis is not sufficient. Greater attention should also be paid to the development of clear action plans, including specific tasks, responsible persons and timelines, which play an important role in ensuring that measures are actually implemented. The Agency also advises institutions to introduce more detailed monitoring of the ECTS student workload and to include this indicator in regular evaluations to ensure that the workload is in line with student expectations and quality standards.

Focusing on the SER of the institute as a whole naturally reduces the possibility of getting answers to some of the questions asked at the Agency.

6.5 Key highlights and general conclusions of the analysis

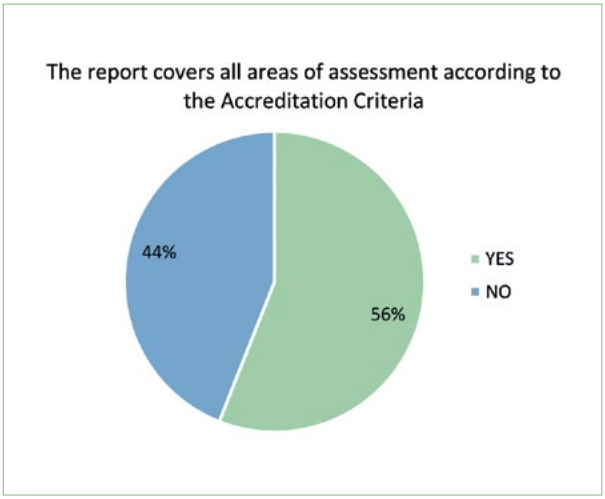
Category	Details
General characteristics of the review of SERs of higher education institutions	• 205 self-evaluation reports • Indicators grouped by categories: No; Yes, this is presented; Yes, this is presented and evaluated
General findings of the review of SERs of higher education institutions	• Most self-evaluation reports cover all areas of assessment, indicators better than in previous systemic analysis • Scientific and research work evaluated best • Many areas still only presented and not evaluated • More attention paid to indicators easier to measure
Quality indicators in the SERs that are adequately presented	• Mission, vision and strategy • Research or artistic work at the level of institution • Human resources structure • Mobility • Student survey • Support, assistance and counselling for students • Premises, equipment and library resources and services for education and professional activities
Quality indicators in the SERs that are not presented and evaluated comprehensively enough	• Professional work at the institution level, professional work at the level of teachers and participation of students in professional work • Governance and stakeholder participation and cooperation with the environment • Participation of students in professional work and management, provision of information for students on matters related to education, and participation of students in study programme updating • Quality of teaching • Monitoring of ECTS student workload • Research or artistic work at the level of teachers • Monitoring graduates' competences, learning outcomes and employability
Comparison with previous systemic analysis	• The number of areas not represented at all is lower, but the number of indicators evaluated has not increased • Results worse than in the previous analysis • Improvement in the area of competence monitoring • Improved governance and participation of key stakeholders in management • Cooperation with the environment less well evaluated • Improvement in the area of students with special needs • Monitoring of ECTS student workload and participation of students in scientific and artistic work and participation in study programme updating still remain a challenge
Recommendations for higher education institutions	• Pay more attention to categories covering quality culture • Raise awareness of the importance of self-evaluation procedures and the preparation of self-evaluation reports in cooperation with different stakeholders • Strengthen the evaluation of learning outcomes, competences and employability of graduates • Broaden the understanding of the environment category to include the non-economic environment • Consider human resource structures and qualifications of employees more systematically when evaluating human resources structure • Monitor ECTS student workload more closely to ensure that workloads are in line with student expectations and quality standards • Make clear action plans based on evaluation findings; the plans should include concrete tasks, responsible persons and timelines to enable the actual implementation of measures • Involve students more actively in study programme updating, study programme modifications and study content updating

7. Analysis of Self-Assessment Reports of Higher Vocational Colleges

7.1 Review and assessment of quality indicators of higher vocational colleges

The survey consisted of 34 questions and covered 76 SERs of 38 higher vocational colleges (hereafter: HVC), which is almost 85% of all (45) accredited higher vocational colleges in Slovenia. Of these, 28 are public and 17 private colleges, so 62% of the SERs analysed are those of public higher vocational colleges. Four SERs were not made public and are therefore not covered by the numeric data. The analysis of the reports covers the academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22 and focuses on the evolution of the self-evaluation practices of the higher vocational colleges since the last systemic analysis period.

Chart 42:
Compliance with the areas of assessment according to the Evaluation Criteria



The SER analysis addressed six areas of assessment according to the scope and depth of the evaluation. The analysis was made by four members of the Agency staff. The coordination of the data classification method took place in several coordination meetings. The assessment focused on whether certain areas of assessment, quality standards or indicators are covered by the SER and what is their evaluatory manner or depth of addressing.

The overall results show that 56% of the analysed SERs, on average, covered all the assessment areas of the Evaluation Criteria.

Below is a breakdown of the quality indicators in each of the areas of assessment.

(1) The first area is the **integration with the environment**, where we took the following indicators into account in the self-evaluation analysis:

- **cooperation of higher vocational colleges with the economic sector** in terms of partnerships, applied projects for industry, the participation of experts or representatives of the economic sector in teaching; as well as public services, meeting public sector requirements, intellectual and cultural integration with the environment;
- **learning outcomes and competences** by education and skills;
- **employability and competitiveness** of graduates in terms of employability and labour market competences;

Integration with the environment was better documented and evaluated than some other areas of assessment, exceeding the total average results. Thus, while higher vocational colleges documented their ***cooperation with the economic and non-economic environment*** relatively frequently (52% of SERs), they less frequently presented the performance of their students and graduates in terms of ***learning outcomes and acquired competences*** (32% of SERs only present them, 23% also evaluate them) and ***employment***-related issues, which are not presented by the majority of SERs. Colleges performed worst in ***monitoring ECTS workload***, as 86% of the SERs do not address this. This is also the worst evaluated among the indicators, same as in higher education, as shown in the previous section.

Chart 43:
SER quality indicators in the area of integration of higher vocational colleges with the environment

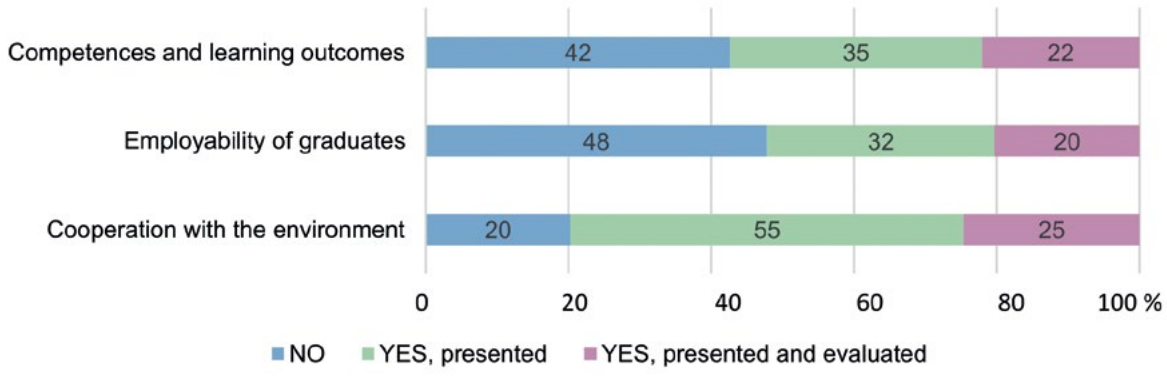
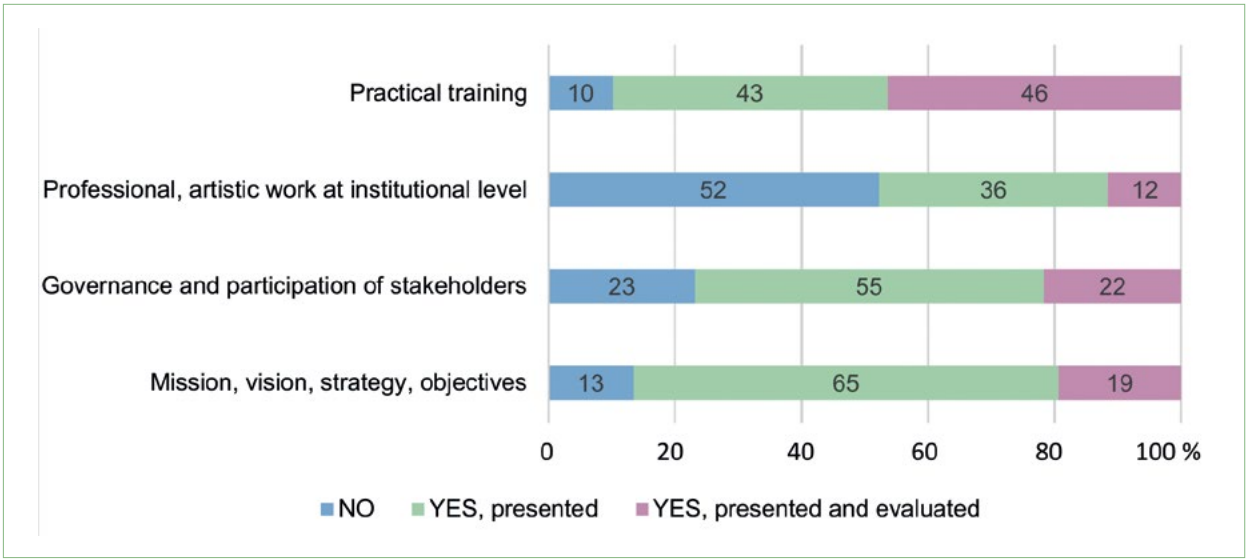


Chart 44:
SER quality indicators in the area of operation of higher vocational colleges

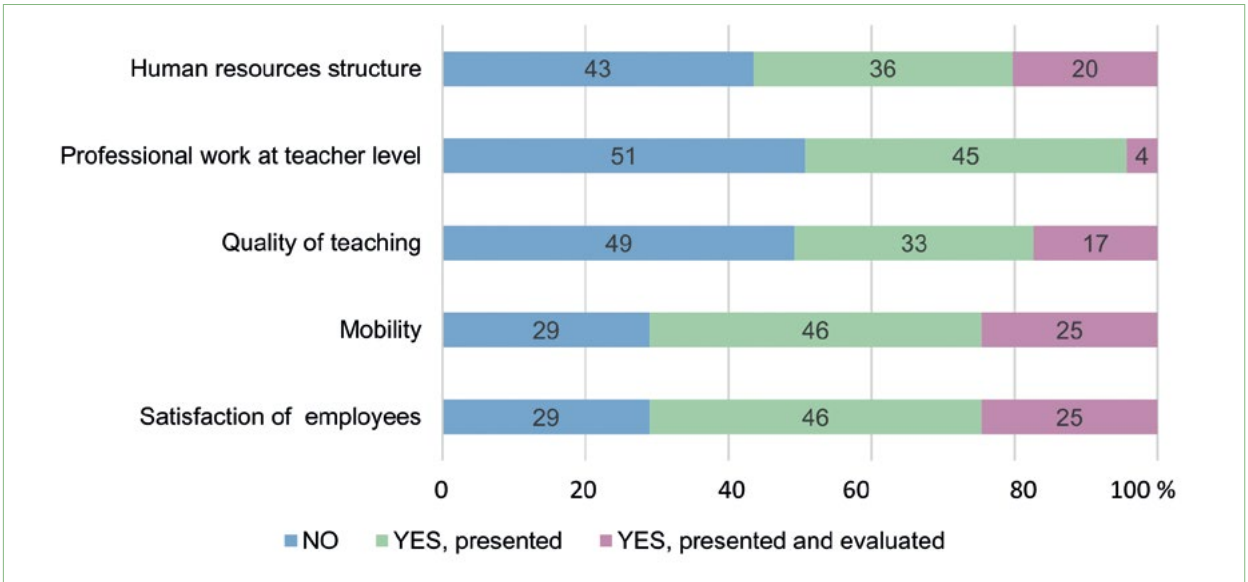


(2) In the next area of assessment, the **operation of the higher vocational college,** we took into account the following quality indicators:

- **mission, vision and strategy** in relation to the implementation of organisational objectives and plans;
- **management of the higher vocational college,** including the participation of key stakeholders in it;
- **professional or artistic work** in terms of professional research or artistic work, achievements and prizes at institutional level;
- **practical training** in terms of organisation and delivery.

The chart shows the analysis of four different aspects of the SERs within the area of operation of the higher vocational college. Most reports present ***mission, vision and strategy***, but fewer evaluate this area. Fifty-five percent of SERs also present ***governance of college***. The area of practical training, which is the cornerstone of the colleges, is the most frequently presented and evaluated area in the SERs, while the area of ***professional work***, which was evaluated in 12% of the reports, is presented and evaluated less frequently.

Chart 45:
SER quality indicators in the area of human resources of higher vocational colleges



(3) In analysing the **human resources** self-evaluation, the following quality indicators were taken into account:

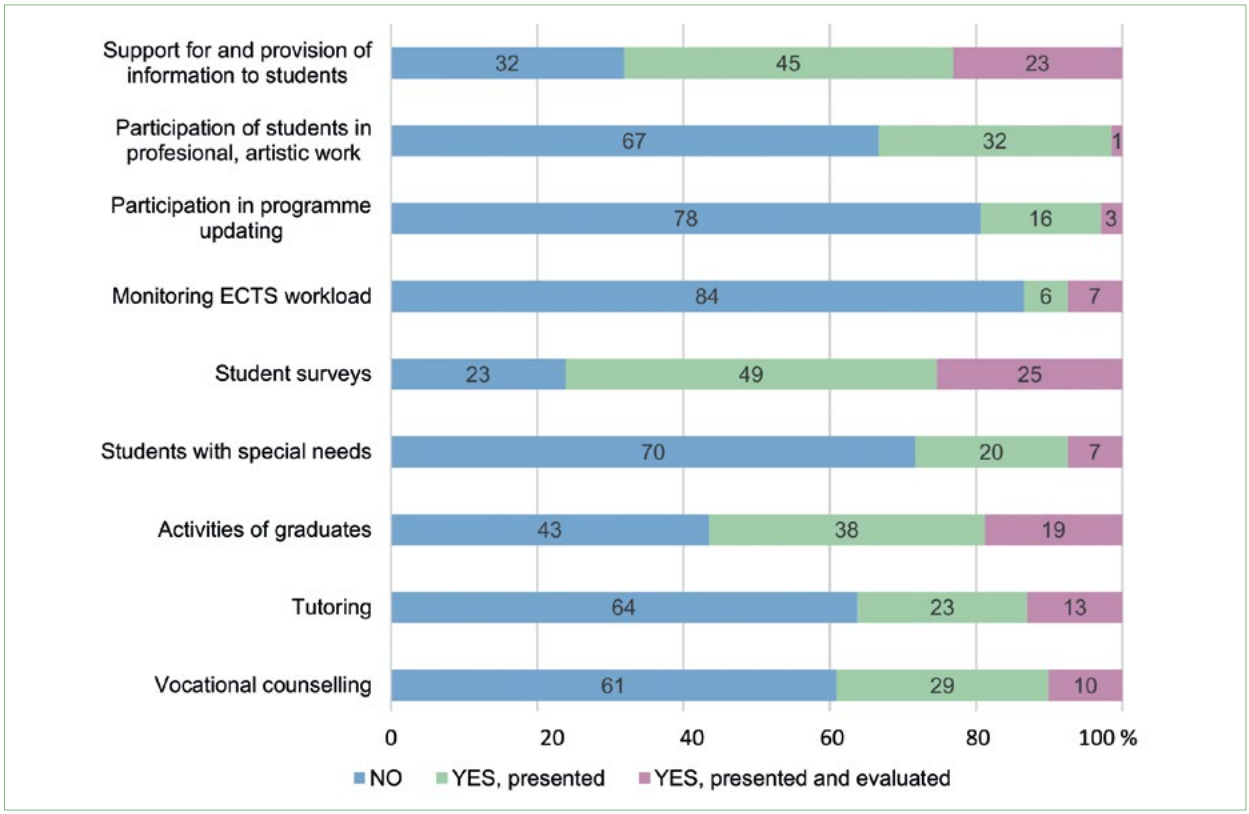
- **satisfaction of employees** according to surveys or interviews on employee satisfaction;
- **mobility** in terms of teacher and faculty assistant mobility and student mobility, its organisation and actual exchanges;
- **teaching work;**
- **professional or artistic work of teachers** – at the individual, not institutional level;
- **human resources structure** in terms of stability and nature of the employment of teachers and researchers at the higher vocational college.

Similarly to the first area of assessment (integration with the environment), ***professional work at teacher level*** is the aspect least often presented in the area of human resources. Higher vocational colleges also pay less attention in the SERs to the quality of teaching, i.e. ***teaching work*** (not addressed in almost 50% of the reports), while ***satisfaction of employees*** and the ***human resources structure of employees*** are better presented than in the previous systemic analysis. ***Mobility*** (of both students and teachers) is also well presented and evaluated, achieving the same results as teacher satisfaction.

(4) The following quality indicators have been taken into account for **students**, who are covered in all other areas:

- **career counselling** in the context of the activities and services of career centres or other organisational units;
- **tutoring** in terms of organisation and activities;
- **alumni-related activities**, including the organisation and operation of alumni clubs or other organisational units promoting dialogue with alumni and employers;

Chart 46:
SER quality indicators in the area of students of higher vocational colleges



- **students with special needs** in terms of special adaptations to facilities, special equipment, as well as rules (rights and obligations) and support;
- **student survey** in terms of its results and implications;
- **inclusion in professional or artistic work** in terms of students' actual or potential participation in professional, research or artistic work;
- **provision of information and support for students,** which refer to the IT services of the higher vocational college and the scope of information provided to students on affairs related to education, employability and self-evaluation, as well as to general administrative support for study, i.e. enrolment services, services of the student affairs office and the international affairs office, and support to extracurricular activities.

The area of students shows the highest number of quality indicators that are least addressed.

The SERs of higher vocational colleges pay least attention to ***ECTS workload monitoring, participation of students in study programme updating, participation of students in professional work, consideration of students with special needs, tutoring and vocational counselling,*** seeing that these areas are not even presented in the majority of reports. The results are better in the areas of ***support for students, student surveys and alumni activities.*** Evaluation is lacking in all indicators.

Most SERs address the area of ***student surveys,*** with 23% of them also evaluating this aspect of quality. This is followed by a large share of SERs addressing ***support for students*** (46% present this aspect and further 21% evaluate it). SERs also strongly emphasise ***monitoring of graduates and operation of alumni clubs.*** Less attention is paid to ***vocational counselling,*** and the least evaluated are **adjustments for students with special needs**, which are largely absent. Although colleges address ***participation of students in professional work*** relatively frequently (29%), they evaluate it less frequently (4%). According to the SER data, institutions rarely include ***students in study programme updating.***

(5) In analysing the **material conditions** self-evaluation, the following quality indicators were taken into account:

- **premises and equipment** in terms of facilities for education, professional or artistic work, as well as equipment for these activities;
- **library work and services** in terms of professional support for students, teachers and researchers as well as library resources – physical copies of academic and research literature and access to databases.

Material conditions appear relatively frequently in the SERs, are well presented and evaluated. For example, ***library services and resources*** at higher vocational colleges are less frequently presented, and almost a third of the SERs do not address this aspect of quality.

Chart 47:
SER quality indicators in the area of material conditions of higher vocational colleges

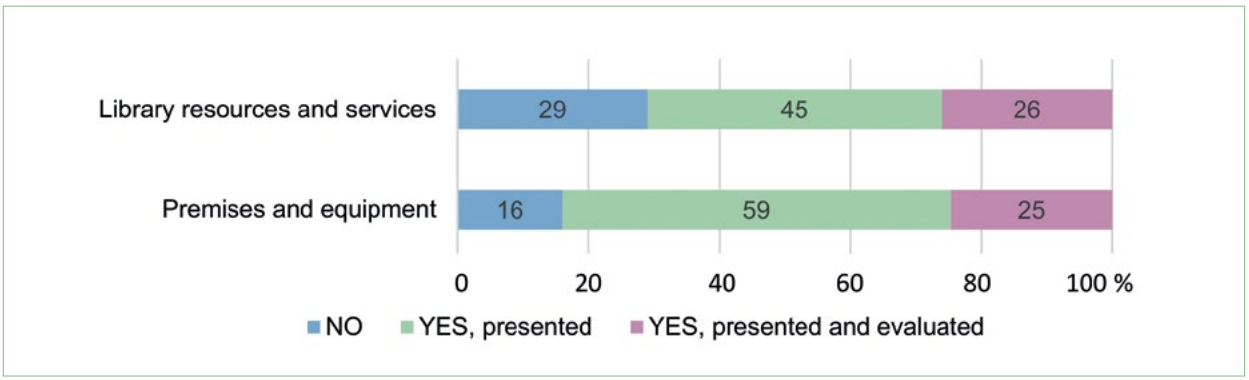
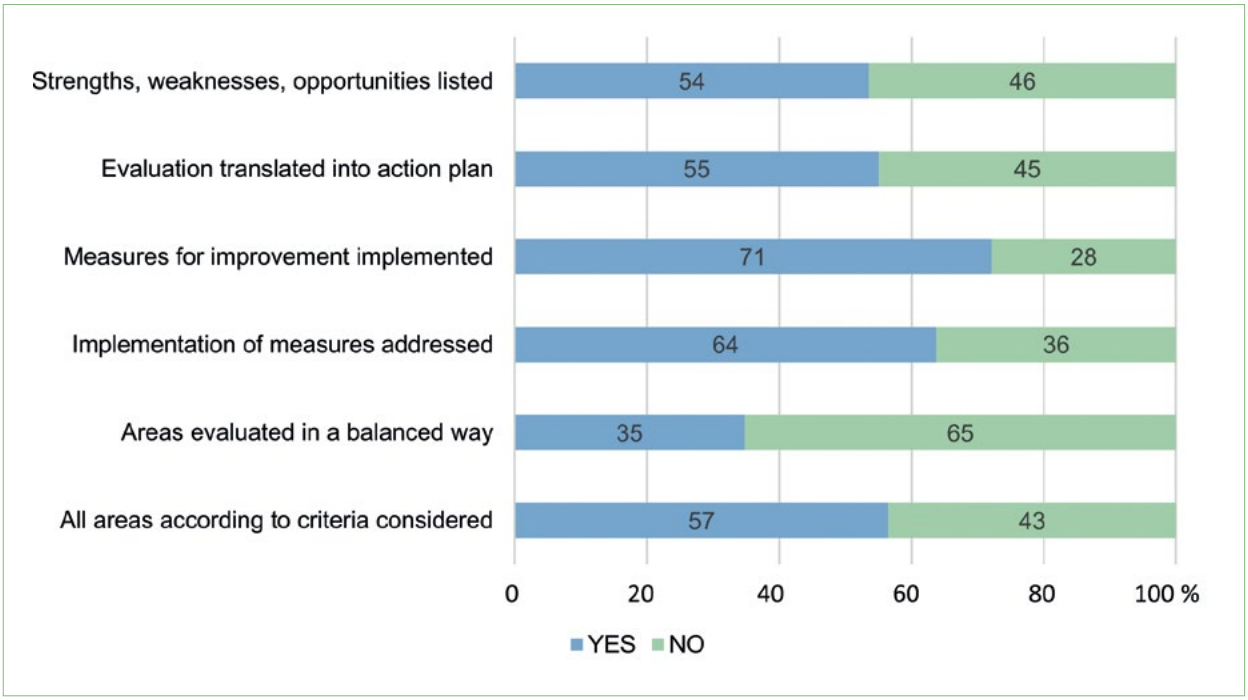


Chart 48:
SER quality indicators in the area of quality assurance of a higher vocational college



(6) For the assessment area of **quality assurance**, we have taken into account the following objective characteristics of the SERs:

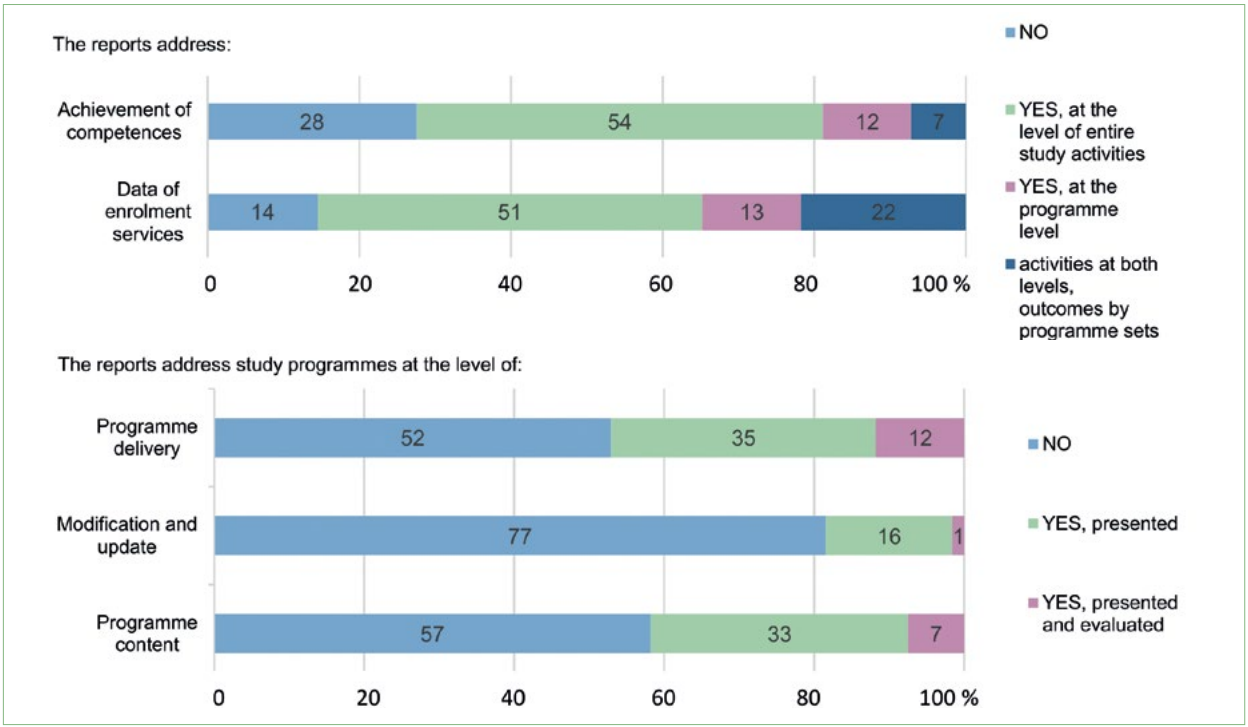
- **balance of the evaluation,** in particular whether the presentation and evaluation of the areas of assessment are individually and mutually balanced in terms of scope, but also in terms of the depth of the self-evaluation;
- **strengths and opportunities for improvement** – whether a SER based on evaluation findings translates these into strengths and opportunities for improvement, or into a SWOT or similar analysis;
- **action plan** – in particular whether the self-evaluation report has been translated into an action plan setting out the specific tasks, the people responsible for them and the corresponding deadlines;
- **measures for improvement** and whether they come from a SER based on evaluation findings and derived measures for improvement;
- **implementation of previous measures for improvement**, in particular whether the SER documents or evaluates the implementation of measures for improvement resulting from the previous self-evaluation;
- **correspondence with the areas of assessment** – specifically whether all areas of assessment are included in the SER according to the Evaluation Criteria.

In the area of assurance and improvement of quality, 71% of the SERs derive ***measures***, 64% address the ***implementation of measures*** from the previous self-evaluation, 58% of the reports also derive an ***action plan*** with responsible persons and deadlines for the implementation of the actions, and more than half of the SERs follow the guidelines to ***identify strengths, deficiencies and opportunities*** from the evaluation.

(7) In the final area of assessment, the **organisation and delivery of education**, the following quality indicators were taken into account in the self-evaluation:

- **delivery of education** in the light of self-evaluation of education and study, focusing on enrolment, progression, transfers and graduation;
- **acquisition of knowledge, learning outcomes and competences** in the light

Chart 49:
SER quality indicators in the field of organisation and delivery of education at a higher vocational college (how is it addressed in the reports, at which level, what data does it include)



of exam performance, quality of theses, student achievements, stakeholders' perceptions of the knowledge acquired;

- delivery of study programmes in relation to another quality indicator – delivery of education, but with a specific focus on the **delivery of study programmes in relation to the accredited status**, the method of delivery and stakeholder satisfaction with the delivery of study programmes.

In order to examine in more detail the evaluation scope or depth of self-evaluation in higher vocational colleges, in particular the distinction between self-evaluation of the institution and of the programmes, additional indicators to the above quality indicators have been introduced. The experts determined whether the self-evaluation was taking place

- at college level or at the level of the entire educational activity,
- at the level of study programmes (individual or sets thereof)
- at both levels or
- at neither one.

The analysis also looked at how colleges ***present study activities and achievement of knowledge*** in their SERs. In more than half of the cases, the study activities are presented by most SERs only at institutional level.

Similarly, in more than half of the cases, ***achievement of knowledge*** is most often presented at the level of the study activities as a whole, even though colleges should also present the achievement of knowledge at the level of individual study programmes. Opportunities for improvement appear in the area of presentation and evaluation of content and monitoring of study programmes.

7.2 Comparison with previous period

The consideration of areas showed that only some categories of the reports exceeded the results of the previous analysis, which covered data from 2014 to 2017.

Cooperation with the environment and ***employability of graduates*** were presented and evaluated more than in the previous period, while ***learning outcomes and competences*** were presented and evaluated roughly the same in both periods.

The ***mission, vision and strategy*** of the higher vocational colleges were presented and evaluated in a significantly higher proportion of reports than in the past, and more than a quarter of reports addressed and evaluated the ***governance of college*** and the ***participation of key stakeholders***, which is an improvement on the previous analysis. In comparison with the previous period, reports more frequently address ***professional work*** and present and evaluate ***practical training*** delivered by colleges, which is an important development, as practical training is a key element of their studies.

Compared to the previous systemic analysis, higher vocational colleges have significantly improved their consideration and evaluation of ***mobility.*** The area of ***professional work*** is slightly better addressed and evaluated, meaning that more colleges evaluated their professional work than in the previous period, but still in a very small percentage. The consideration and evaluation of the ***adequacy of the human resources structure*** has increased by a quarter in the SERs, while ***satisfaction of employees*** remains about the same. In the area of students, the colleges have again focused most of their attention on the consideration and evaluation of the ***student survey,*** but less than in the previous period. The indicators ***support for students*** and ***alumni activities*** are addressed more frequently this time. In the area of students, the least addressed indicators are monitoring of ECTS workload and ***participation of students in professional work.***

Compared to the previous systemic analysis period, this time the evaluation shows an improvement in the area of material conditions for the indicators ***premises and equipment*** and ***library resources and services.***

Almost a quarter of colleges address their ***study activities*** at both college and study programme level, which is comparable to the previous period. The ***achievement of knowledge by study programmes*** is addressed in one in ten reports, which is slightly lower than in the previous period, but comparable. In more than half of the cases, reporting on the achievement of knowledge is only done at college level and provides aggregate information for the entire educational activity. As many as a third of the reports do not address the ***achievement of knowledge, learning outcomes and competences of students.***

In more than half of the cases, the ***study activities*** are presented by most SERs only at institutional level. Similarly, in more than half of the cases, achievement of knowledge is presented at the level of the study activities as a whole and not at the level of individual study programmes. Opportunities for improvement have been found in the area of presentation and evaluation of content and monitoring of study programmes.

The areas of assessment are still not evaluated in a balanced way and the results are very similar to those of the previous period of analysis. In terms of whether a report translates the evaluation of the situation into strengths, deficiencies and opportunities for improvement, the situation is slightly worse. The reports also less often include an action plan. In the previous period, evaluation was mostly followed by a more appropriate ***action plan***. Colleges may develop their action plans in other documents or may be content with implementing improvement measures that are not action plans (e.g. without a precise timeline and persons responsible for implementing the measures, etc.). The result of the indicator on the implementation of SER-based measures improved by a few percentage points compared to the previous analysis, while the addressing of the implementation of measures improved by a factor of two.

7.3 Findings and summary of the analysis of self-evaluation reports of higher vocational colleges

The analysis shows that higher vocational colleges have significantly improved in some of the categories covered by the analysis. This has resulted in much better documentation and evaluation of cooperation with the environment, in particular with the economic sector. However, learning outcomes and competences and employability of graduates remain at similar levels as in the previous period, suggesting that higher vocational colleges should do more to improve these indicators, as also shown by the analysis of higher education institution SERs. The reports still do not address all areas of assessment in a balanced way, which remains a challenge for improvement. The proportion of colleges deriving strengths, deficiencies and opportunities for improvement from the evaluation has even fallen slightly compared to the previous analysis. The decline in the preparation of action plans is also apparent. Despite the improvement in the implementation of improvement measures (from 18% to 36%), progress is still insufficient.

In the area of self-evaluation of human resources, there has been a significant improvement in the treatment of mobility compared to the previous period, while progress in addressing professional work has been negligible. There has also been an increase in the consideration of the ***adequacy of the human resources structure,*** but more than half of the colleges still do not include this in their reports.

Support for students and alumni activities are more frequently addressed, while participation of students in professional work is still rarely addressed, which is also linked to evaluation in the area of human resources.

Higher vocational colleges could improve their SERs if they paid more attention to the evaluation of professional and practical training. Although progress is already being made in these areas, it makes sense for colleges to focus on monitoring the professional work of their staff and the transfer of knowledge to students.

Comparison with the previous analysis shows that higher vocational colleges have made progress in some key areas, such as integration with the environment, operation of colleges and material conditions. However, there are still important opportunities for improvement, in particular in the evaluation of teaching, participation of students in professional and research work, and the human resources structure and student workload.

7.4 Key highlights and general conclusions of the analysis

Category	Details
General characteristics of the review of SERs of higher vocational colleges	• 76 SERs of 38 higher vocational colleges: 21 public and 17 private • Indicators grouped by categories: No; Yes, this is presented; Yes, this is presented and evaluated
General findings of SERs of higher vocational colleges	• On average, more than half of the SERs analysed did not cover all areas of assessment • The area of integration with the environment is better documented and evaluated than other areas of assessment • Practical training evaluated by most higher vocational colleges • Less emphasis on monitoring the ECTS student workload, evaluation of professional work at different levels (institutional level, professional work of teachers, participation of students in professional work), evaluation of modifications and updates of study programmes and content, and professional work in all study programmes implemented by the higher vocational college
Quality indicators in the SERs that are adequately presented	• Mission, vision and strategy • Cooperation of higher vocational colleges with the economic and non-economic sectors • Practical training • Support, assistance and counselling for students • Facilities for education and professional activities
Quality indicators in the SERs that are not presented and evaluated comprehensively enough	• Professional work at the institution level, professional work at the level of teachers and participation of students in professional work • Participation of students in professional work and management, provision of information for students on matters related to education, employability and self-evaluation, participation of students in study programme updating and student mobility • Quality of teaching and professional work of teachers • Monitoring of ECTS student workload and evaluation of acquired competences and learning outcomes • Participation of students in study programme updating; modification and renewal of study programmes • Consideration of students with special needs • Tutoring and vocational counselling
Comparison with previous systemic analysis	• Improvement in the area of cooperation with the environment • Improved evaluation of mission, vision and strategy • Improved governance and participation of key stakeholders in management • More frequent presentation and evaluation of practical training • Better consideration and evaluation of the area of mobility • Better consideration of support for students and alumni activities. • Challenges remain in systematic monitoring of ECTS workload and participation of students in professional work
Recommendations for higher vocational colleges	• Improve the importance of self-evaluation procedures and the preparation of SERs among different stakeholders • Strengthen the evaluation of learning outcomes, competences and employability of graduates • Deepen the analysis of professional work, both at institutional level and with teachers and students • Systematically consider human resource structures and qualifications of employees • Systematically monitor ECTS student workload • Make action plans based on evaluation findings • Involve students more actively in study programme updating, study programme modifications and study content updating • Pay attention to addressing students with special needs

Conclusion and recommendations

The Systemic Analysis of Quality in the Slovenian Higher Education and Higher Vocational Education Area 2018-2022 provides insights into the field of quality assurance. The analysis is based on the review of expert group reports in accreditation and evaluation procedures and self-evaluation reports (SERs) of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges. This enables progress to be understood, challenges to be identified and recommendations for further improvements to be made. The findings confirm that quality is improving in a number of areas, but also reveal that some gaps remain and require focused attention and systematic action.

The analysis shows that quality indicators in individual areas have improved over the period under review. However, there is still room for progress that could raise the quality of study to a higher level. The non-compliances or major deficiencies in reports of groups of experts in procedures of accreditation and reaccreditation of higher education institutions most frequently refer to organisation and management of institutions, research, professional and artistic work, work of teachers at the level of individuals, quality of self-evaluation (particularly in terms of consistency) and delivery of study programmes in accordance with accredited syllabi.

The analysis of the expert group reports on accreditation and evaluation of study programmes showed marked differences between the two procedures. Accreditations showed more non-compliances, while evaluations of study programmes showed more opportunities for improvement. The common finding of both procedures is that teachers' scientific and research work is rarely considered a strength. The most frequently identified areas of non-compliance in the evaluations were the closure of quality loop and the participation of external stakeholders, which remains an ongoing challenge.

Accreditations of study programmes showed more non-compliances, while evaluations of study programmes showed more opportunities for improvement. In both procedures, teachers' scientific and research work is rarely recognised as a strength. The most frequently identified areas of non-compliance in the evaluations of study programmes referred to the closure of quality loop and the participation of external stakeholders, which remains an ongoing challenge.

Reports on evaluation of higher vocational colleges show that the key challenges concern the operation of internal quality assurance system, closure of quality loop and quality of self-evaluation. Additional deficiencies concern the mission, vision and strategy of the college, participation of key stakeholders in management and general organisation and governance of the colleges.

Gaps are also highlighted in the participation of students in professional work and decision-making and in provision of information to students on matters related to education, employability and self-evaluation. It is recommended that higher vocational colleges strengthen the importance

of self-evaluation procedures and the preparation of SERs, systematically monitor ECTS student workload and develop action plans based on evaluation findings.

The analysis of the SERs of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges found that they focus more on quantitative, measurable data and less on in-depth analysis and self-reflection of areas of quality. Many of the reports contain general descriptions of objectives, achievements and activities, but often without concrete action plans or clear steps to achieve improvements. However, there have been positive developments in the monitoring of competences, in the governance and participation of stakeholders, and in addressing students with special needs.

It can be observed that groups of experts are reserved in identifying non-compliances or major deficiencies. The proportion of assessed non-compliances is relatively low, and the reports often take a balanced approach between citing strengths and opportunities for improvement. Some content is addressed in too little depth or in too general terms, such as self-evaluation of individual study programmes and the achievement and monitoring of learning outcomes and competences.

The systemic analysis shows that there are many strengths in the Slovenian higher education area, which outweigh the identified non-compliances in terms of proportion, but also challenges, especially in terms of self-evaluation, stakeholder participation and ensuring the closure of quality loop.

The analysis confirms that the Slovenian higher education area has a number of strengths that provide a solid basis for further development. Nevertheless, focusing on more consistent and in-depth self-evaluations, strengthening research and professional work, and systematic participation of students and external stakeholders in quality processes are key to long-term quality assurance. Particularly important is the creation of binding action plans to ensure that the findings of evaluations are not just written down, but translated into concrete improvements at the level of institutions and programmes. The consistent implementation of these measures will bring us even closer to European quality standards and to the ENQA recommendations, which emphasise the integrity, transparency and sustainable development of quality assurance systems. This will ensure the further strengthening of the quality of the Slovenian higher education area and its successful integration into the wider European higher education area.

Table 4:
Comparative review of findings of expert reports and SERs

Aspect	Reports in higher education institution reaccreditation procedures	Reports on accreditation and evaluation of study programmes	Evaluations of higher vocational colleges	Self-evaluation reports of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges
Categories of assessment	Strengths, opportunities, non-compliances, not addressed	Strengths, opportunities, non-compliances, not addressed	Strengths, opportunities, non-compliances, not addressed	No; Yes, presented; Yes, presented and evaluated
Methodological highlights	Survey questionnaires, balance between strengths and opportunities; low perceived proportion of non-compliances	Differences between accreditations and evaluations; experts focus on indicators from the Accreditation Criteria; most indicators are not addressed	Prevalence of strengths, practical training rated very highly; often balanced	Focused on compliance of SERs with the Accreditation Criteria; most areas addressed but often without evaluation
Most common strengths	Organisation and management, administrative support, premises, programme delivery	Premises and equipment, some compulsory components of programmes	Practical training, cooperation with the economic sector, quality of teaching, premises, equipment	Mission, vision, human resources structure, mobility, support for students, premises/ equipment
Opportunities for improvement	Participation of stakeholders, human resources structure, teaching work, internal quality assurance, modifications of programmes	Programme development, quality culture, appointment to titles, scientific and research work, clearer distinction between categories	Mission, vision, management, participation of students, internal quality assurance	Cooperation with the environment, participation of students in professional work, quality of teaching, monitoring of ECTS student workload and competences
Most common non-compliances	Organisation and management, research and artistic work, quality of self-evaluation, delivery of syllabi	Closure of quality loop, participation of external stakeholders	Internal quality assurance system, closure of quality loop, quality of self-evaluation	Evaluation of human resources structure, participation of students, monitoring employability and competences
Comparison with the previous period	General improvement, most challenges found in participation of stakeholders, human resources and internal quality assurance	Improvement, but still insufficient in research work and quality culture	Improvement in strategy, cooperation with the non-economic sector, quality assurance system; lower ratings in organisation and provision of information to students	Results worse than before; fewer areas not addressed but no more indicators evaluated; improvements in competences and students with special needs
Recommendations	Strengthen participation of stakeholders; improve internal quality assurance system; monitor modifications of programmes more consistently	Higher level of criticism in the evaluation of habilitation and research work; more focus on quality culture; broaden understanding of the category "environment"	Strengthen the internal quality assurance system; improve provision of information to and participation of students; strengthen strategy and governance	Improve the evaluation of learning outcomes, competences and employability; broaden the understanding of the category "environment"; introduce clear action plans; involve students more actively in programme updating

Acts and implementing regulations

- Higher Education Act (ZViS), Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [Uradni list RS], No. 67/93, as amended.
- Criteria for the Accreditation and Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes, Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No 95/2010, as amended.
- Criteria for the Accreditation and Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes (new), Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No 22/2019.

Reports and materials

- Reports of groups of experts on accreditation, reaccreditation and evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes, 2018-2022.
- Self-evaluation reports of higher education institutions and higher vocational colleges, study periods 2020/21 and 2021/22.

European Quality Framework

- *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).* (2016). Translated by: J. Širok. NAKVIS

IV.

THE USE OF AI IN QUALITY ASSURANCE

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IV. 1

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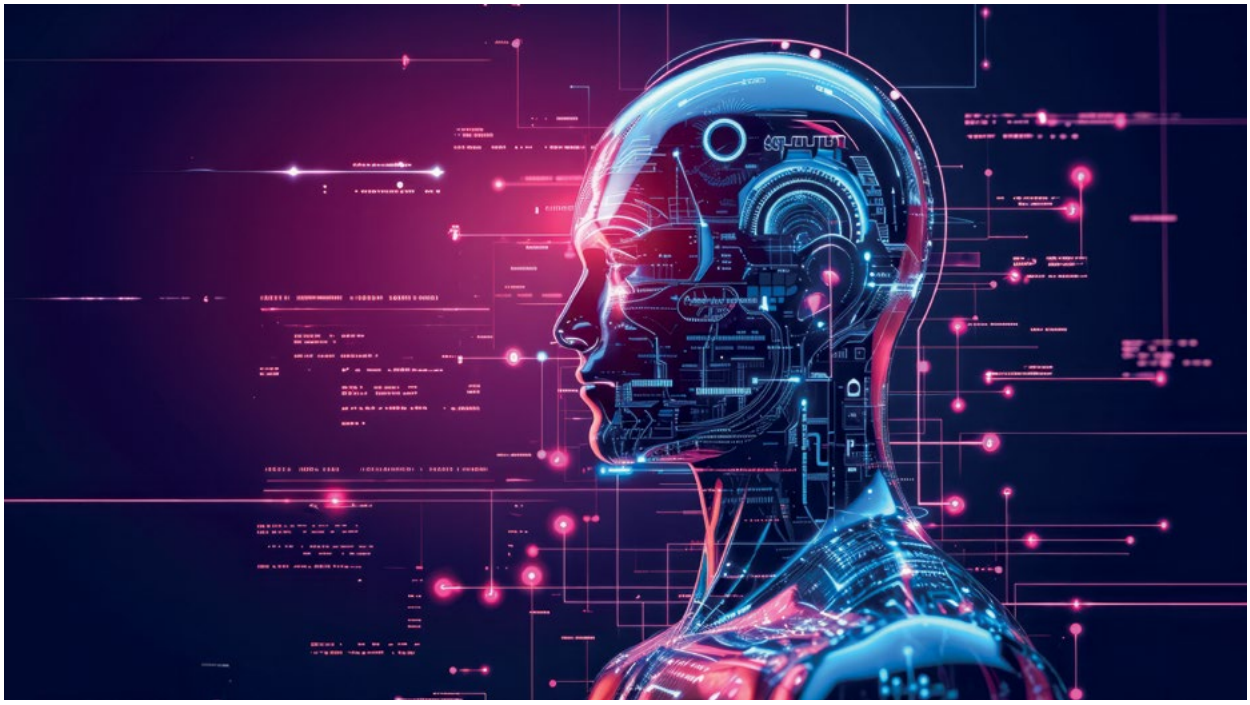


THE USE OF LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS IN ANALYTICAL PROCESSES: Experiences from NOKUT's Thematic Analyses

Background and Purpose

In our latest thematic analysis, we explore the use of large language models, specifically Google DeepMind's NotebookLM, in supporting analytical processes for external quality assurance in higher education. Drawing on all 48 institutional review reports from NOKUT's third round of periodic reviews (2017–2024), we examine how language models can complement or enhance traditional manual analysis. The central aim is to evaluate the potential and limitations of artificial intelligence in extracting insights from large document collections and to reflect on practical experiences gained during the process.

Context of NOKUT's Institutional Reviews

NOKUT's periodic reviews play a key role in Norway's quality assurance system for higher education. These reviews evaluate whether institutions meet regulatory requirements for systematic quality work, continuous improvement, and inclusion of student feedback. Historically, this work has relied on manual review and interpretation by expert committees, who assess both institution-level and program-level documentation.

With advances in artificial intelligence, there is increasing interest in whether language models can help streamline these reviews by organizing and synthesizing information, revealing recurring patterns, and generating new perspectives, without replacing the critical role of human expertise.

Methodology and Analytical Approach

In the thematic analysis, methodology centers on the use of NotebookLM, which is designed to analyze only user-supplied documents, rather than drawing on information from the broader internet. This approach reduces the risk of fabricated or inaccurate answers but places greater importance on how well the documents are structured and prepared. Institutional review reports reports are quite streamlined, but occasionally headings of the different chapters and sub-chapters can differ. This made it challenging for the language model locate relevant findings.

The data set consisted of 48 institutional review reports produced by various expert committees, which, despite following a general template, showed some variation in language and organization. These inconsistencies created several initial challenges:

- The total material was too voluminous for the model to analyze at once
- Terminology and document structures could vary from one report to another
- Abbreviations used for institutions confused the language model

To address these issues, the review reports were grouped by institutional type, and the data were systematically prepared. The team developed a training document for the model, including detailed prompts designed to extract key information such as institutional accreditation levels, challenges related to specific regulations, and examples of good practice. This process, known as prompt engineering, proved critical for obtaining accurate and relevant results.

Preparation and Use of Prompts

Effective prompt design emerged as a key methodological component. The team iteratively improved their prompts and sometimes used other language models (like ChatGPT-4o) for additional guidance and to refine prompts that Agency got from another model. They also supplemented the analysis with supporting documents, such as NOKUT's own guidelines and lists of institution names, to ensure consistency.

Practically, the analysis involved dividing the material into smaller, more manageable groups ("chunking") of different types of the institutions, standardizing terminology and file names, and switching between exploratory and highly structured instructions. This approach made it possible for the model to deliver more focused and comparable insights across institutional types.

Experiences and Key Observations

The use of NotebookLM revealed both promise and limitations in the context of quality assurance analysis. On the positive side, the model excelled at organizing and summarizing large quantities of text, linking findings directly to relevant regulations (Agency used our guidelines for institutional reviews), and identifying recurring challenges and best practices across different institutions. Its ability to process references also aided in validating and auditing results.

However, the model was sometimes hindered by inconsistencies in terminology, document structure, or naming conventions, which could cause it to confuse institutions or misinterpret sections of the review reports. Information dispersed across different sections or expressed ambiguously was occasionally overlooked or misunderstood. Most notably, the model could not interpret implicit context, professional judgment, or the "nuance" behind statements, making human validation an essential step. Workers at the Agency have more tacit knowledge from interviews and contact with the institution, which the language model does not have.

Manual versus AI-Assisted Analysis

Manual analysis remains superior for interpreting context, understanding nuances, and assessing the maturity and depth of institutional quality work. Human analysts are better equipped to "read between the lines" and to evaluate significance in a holistic way. On the other hand, language models offer real value in processing and organizing large data sets, quickly surfacing patterns and highlighting areas that may warrant closer investigation. The most effective approach combines both: using AI for structuring, summarizing, and flagging issues, and human expertise for deeper interpretation and final assessment.

Requirements for Successful AI-Assisted Analysis

The successful use of language models in analytical processes depends on several key factors. Input documents must be well-structured, with consistent templates and terminology, to help the model extract information accurately. Careful attention to naming conventions and document organization reduces the risk of error. Agency did not do anything with the original review reports, but it did upload two support documents: a guidance to institutional reviews for the institution (with information on our periodic reviews that we share with the institutions and our review experts), and created a list of the different institutional types/accreditation authority and the correct abbrevations of every institution. The rest work was refining prompts.

Well-designed prompts are necessary to focus the model on relevant questions. Above all, human oversight is crucial; AI can organize and identify patterns, but only experts can provide interpretation and validation.

Training and methodological support are needed for staff to become adept at prompt design, data preparation, and critical evaluation of model outputs. Ethical considerations (including data privacy, transparency, and the environmental impact of AI) must also be taken into account in any implementation strategy.

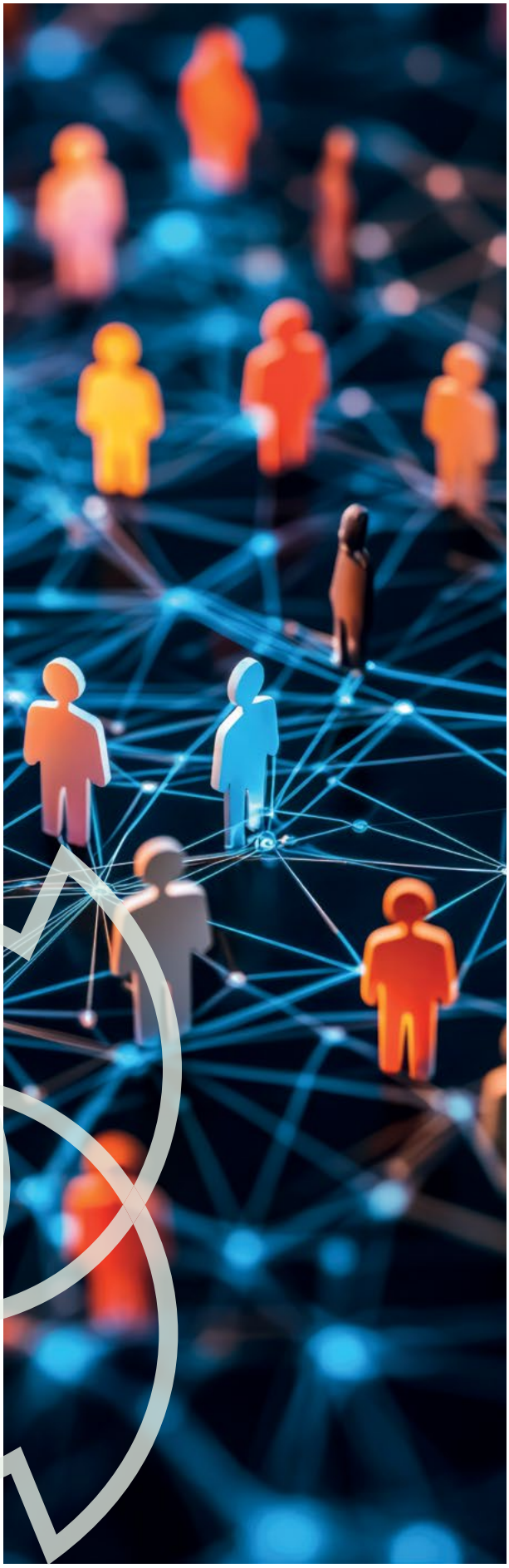
Conclusions and Recommendations

In our final report, we conclude that large language models like NotebookLM have significant potential as analytical support tools in higher education quality assurance. Their main strengths lie

in organizing, summarizing, and detecting patterns in large sets of documents, enabling analysts to concentrate on deeper interpretation and quality assurance tasks. However, their effectiveness depends on the quality of the input data, the specificity of the prompts, and the continuing involvement of human experts.

AI should be viewed as a complement rather than a replacement for human expertise. We recommend investing in standardized templates and terminology, providing targeted training for staff, establishing clear guidelines for AI use, and keeping pace with technological developments to continually refine analytical practices. We encourage further research to explore whether systematic use of language models can improve efficiency and sustainability in quality assurance work.

In sum, while language models open new possibilities for the analytical work of higher education quality assurance, success depends on thoughtful integration, ongoing human oversight, and an understanding of the tools' strengths and limitations. As AI technology continues to evolve, organizations like NOKUT aim to maintain a critical and adaptive approach to the responsible use of artificial intelligence in their core activities.



IV. 2

Marie Gould,
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TRANSFORMING EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE IN IRISH HIGHER EDUCATION: A GenAI Approach to Thematic Analysis

Introduction

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is transforming our world and fundamentally changing the ways in which we conduct both our professional and everyday tasks. Within the context of higher education, there is a significant body of research exploring the impact of GenAI on teaching, learning and assessment processes, and there are increasingly innovative examples of the integration of GenAI into teaching and learning, and curricula. Increasingly, educators, researchers, and policymakers argue that GenAI proficiency is no longer optional – it should be treated as a ***fundamental skill*** for today's graduates, akin to digital literacy or writing skills (World Economic Forum, May 2025). 'Artificial intelligence is no longer just a frontier technology - it's a pervasive force reshaping how we live, work and learn' (Ibid). Although external quality assurance agencies (EQA) and accreditation bodies are increasingly actively exploring the potential of GenAI to enhance efficiency in EQA processes (ENQA 2025, INQAAHE 2025, CHEA 2025),), there is currently a lack of experience and practice, and agreed-upon shared principles at the European level. Despite the challenges inherent in adopting GenAI such as managing the 'inconsistencies' and 'hallucinations' and the need for proofing and validation processes to ensure validity (Perkins and Roe, 2024), there are significant opportunities in GenAI tools to enhance the rigour and agility of EQA.

EQA often involves reviewing extensive documentation (self-evaluation reports, institutional review reports, accreditation submissions, etc.). GenAI tools can assist by summarising and extracting key information from these large texts and expediting this process. The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) require that agencies in the course of their work should 'regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities' (ESG 3.4).

This case study outlines how Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) are integrating GenAI tools — notably **Copilot** – alongside qualitative analysis software **MAXQDA**, to enhance the rigour, agility, and impact of thematic synthesis in Irish higher education.

National Context and Strategic Commitment

According to Ireland's National AI Strategy – AI Here for Good (Refreshed 2024) 'AI holds great promise for the delivery of better Public Services, and there is a strong ambition across the public service to harness trustworthy AI for this purpose, as part of the digital transformation of the Public Service' (p.20). The Irish Government Guidelines for the Responsible Use of AI in the Public Service (2025) sets out a comprehensive framework including seven core principles for the responsible use of GenAI in the Irish public sector.

QQI is the national state agency responsible for the quality assurance of Irish higher education and further education providers. QQI plays a statutory role in safeguarding and enhancing the quality of tertiary education in Ireland. The opening remarks of the Chair and CEO in QQI's Statement of Strategy (2024-2027) reinforces the agency's commitment to 'continue to share our insights, research, and analysis…' and to ensuring QQI remains a 'resilient, inclusive and agile organisation, delivering responsive, transparent, and effective services to all our stakeholders' (p.3). Within this current strategy QQI also makes an explicit strategic commitment to 'publish system-level analysis of our annual monitoring and periodic evaluation of providers, using artificial intelligence where appropriate' (p.14).

In 2024 the Tertiary Education Monitoring and Review division (TEMRU) of QQI initiated a pilot programme to explore the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in thematic analysis of qualitative data arising from the outcome of external quality assurance processes, namely, institutional review reports and annual quality reports. The first small scale pilot, as presented at

INQAAHE 2025 based on a case study (Lin 2025) used a licensed version of Microsoft Copilot[1] to support a thematic analysis of four institutional review reports. This pilot work was extended to using MAXQDA Tailwind[2] to support the thematic analysis of annual quality reports which are submitted to QQI by fifteen public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and larger private and independent HEIs every year. This case study describes how GenAI tools were used for thematic analysis in this process.

Process Innovation: MAXQDA Tailwind and Copilot

The annual quality reports are comprehensive quality reports submitted by HEIs that provide an overview of each institution's internal quality assurance (QA) activities, developments, and strategic priorities over the previous academic year. These reports typically include updates on governance, teaching and learning, assessment, and student engagement, strategic developments and enhancements and external impacts. The reports which typically extend to over 60 pages are published on QQI'sQQI's Review and Monitoring Library and incorporate institutional updates and reflections on a wide range of internal QA themes and topics pertinent to contemporary higher education. QQI publishes an annual synthesis of these reports, such as Quality in Higher Education 2024.

The synthesis reports to date have been produced both in-house by QQI executive and contracted to external consultants. The publication of such data is a strategic priority for QQI. The annual synthesis reports provide a valuable insight into institutional practices and emerging trends within both higher education institutions and the wider sector. sector. They are, however, time consuming and if externally outsourced, can be costly to produce. GenAI tools afford an opportunity to both enhance thematic insights and achieve significant efficiencies, reducing both costs and timelines, and in production of these annual synthesis reports.

MAXQDA Tailwind

MAXQDA Tailwind is a GenAI research and qualitative analysis tool. It functions by assisting in the coding and analysis of qualitative data, such as the annual quality reports. The tool assists in organising and categorising information in key themes and allows the identification of trends and cross cutting topics. To enhance the efficiency and depth of our thematic analysis a licenced version of MAXQDA Tailwind was purchased and used to code and analyse the 2025 annual quality reports.

The thematic coding was structured using the annual quality report template. Core categories were first entered into Tailwind, which was then used to identify key themes arising within these categories. In addition, the tool was requested to identify further cross cutting themes. Some examples of the categories and themes emerging are listed below:

- **Strategy, Governance and Management of QA:** Strategic alignment of QA, sustainability, EDI, collaborations, and partnerships.
- **Effectiveness and Impact of QA:** Use of data, student experience, learner supports, teaching and assessment, staff development.
- **Academic Integrity.**
- **Programme Development and Delivery.**
- **Research and Innovation.**
- **Monitoring and Review.**
- **Emerging Themes:** Digital transformation, GenAI, Cybersecurity, micro-credentials.

1 A generative AI chatbot developed by Microsoft
2 A generative AI research and qualitative analysis tool

Through this structured approach, MAXQDA helped in uncovering specific insights across the HEIs, for example,

- Increased use by HEIs of **data analytics** to inform QA decisions.
- Enhanced **student support services** and well-being initiatives being developed and implemented.
- Strategic integration of **EDI goals** into QA frameworks evident across HEIs.
- Expansion of **transnational education partnerships** as a strategic goal.

Use of Microsoft Copilot (GenAI)

A recent feature of Microsoft Copilot allows for role-based interactions with customised agents, which can be created with specific profiles.

For the purposes of this pilot (and other pilot work within the division), three 'agents' were created.

- **Researcher:** Conduct specific research tasks.
- **Quality Analysis Assistant:** Suggesting quality analysis, such as thematic analysis.
- **Writing and Proofreader:** Spell and grammar check, enhancing clarity.

In this thematic analysis pilot, three agents contributed to the process: the **Research Assistant Agent** assisted in identifying preliminary cross-institutional trends and extracting specific institutional examples; the **Quality Analyst Agent** provided suggestions for refining the thematic categories; and the **Proofing Agen**t was used for spelling and grammar checks.

Impact and Outcomes

The integration of MAXQDA and Copilot has delivered several benefits:

- **Improved efficiency** in processing large volumes of qualitative data – savings in both costs and time.
- **Deeper thematic insights** across institutions and QA processes.
- **Stronger sectoral synthesis** to inform policy and institutional enhancement.
- **Capacity building** in digital literacy and GenAI among the team.

Reflections and Lessons Learned

Key reflections from the pilot include:

- **Data Security:** A secure licenced version of both GenAI tools were used, not open AI.
- **Cost of licence:** Purchase of secure tools incurs costs.
- **Human-AI collaboration and oversight is essential:** GenAI tools are 'tools' they make mistakes; they do not replace but support person-led activity.
- **Training and capacity building** are critical to successful adoption.
- **Ethical considerations** must be embedded from the outset, particularly around data governance and transparency.

Next Steps

QQI plans to explore the use of GenAI across other QA processes, including programme validation and monitoring. There are also plans to develop a governance framework for the use of GenAI, including for example a transparency statement on QQI website.

Conclusion

QQI's approach to piloting GenAI in EQA reflects a strategic commitment to continuous improvement and digital transformation, in line with Irish public sector strategies This case study invites dialogue and shared learning with international QA agencies as we collectively navigate the opportunities and challenges of GenAI in higher education.

Note

MAXQDA Tailwind and **Microsoft Copilot** were used in the development and refinement of this case study.

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IV. 3

Blaž Zupan, PhD, Janez Demšar, PhD
University of Ljubljana

Universities of the future are data literate

The following summary is based on the paper of the same name presented by one of the co-authors (B. Z.) at the international conference Use of Artificial Intelligence in Quality Assurance at NAKVIS, while also presenting the authors' opinion on the introduction of education in the field of artificial intelligence. The document refers to education across the entire spectrum, from primary school to corporate training, but its core focus is on higher education. In conclusion, it briefly touches on the possible role of NAKVIS and its contribution to quality in this area.

Basis

The authors base their considerations on three decades of experience in the practical application of machine learning and data analytics and, above all, on teaching non-computer scientists and the general population of all ages about these sciences. At the end of the 1990s, we began developing the free open-source programme Orange (http://orangedatamining.com), which makes advanced data analytics, machine learning and artificial intelligence accessible to anyone who can turn on a computer and use a mouse.

Today, the tool is used by hundreds of thousands of researchers in academia and industry, and is also popular in education, as it is used in teaching at more than 500 universities around the world; in some places it is also a recommended tool for teaching in secondary schools. Its broad applicability stems from an approach based on stacking widgets. The widgets represent different steps in data processing, visualisation and modelling. The stacking of widgets makes the tool flexible while also allowing us to observe what happens to the data during preprocessing, what the results of each individual step are, and what patterns are revealed by each visualisation or model. This is essential both in science – for example, in medicine, where the first users of the tool come from – and in teaching.

We began teaching non-computer scientists more extensively in 2014, when we organised a large workshop for researchers in the life sciences in Houston. The three-hour workshop was designed to introduce techniques for discovering knowledge from data and was structured in such a way as to avoid overwhelming participants with slides, instead presenting concepts through live examples, with participants using software tools themselves during the workshop. The workshop led to the development of lectures for doctoral students in non-computer science fields in the US and then in Slovenia, and in Russia for doctoral students in economics. This was followed by more than 200 workshops attended by students of virtually all profiles, fields and levels, conducted around the world by members of our group at the University of Ljubljana and training future engineers, anthropologists, biologists, humanists, and other diverse groups of students.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Google's European office asked us why we did not offer courses on machine learning and data science for schools. By then, we had already experimented with a few one-hour workshops in secondary schools, but we had not yet systematically addressed the issue. This was followed by the Pumice project (http://pumice.si), in which we still create content and implement pilot projects for introducing data science into secondary schools, and the European project DALI4US (https://www.dali4us.eu/), in which we are working with colleagues from Luxembourg and Ireland to design lessons that could be suitable for introducing artificial intelligence teaching in primary schools and could be implemented within existing curricula.

Artificial intelligence, machine learning and data literacy

The recent »surge« in artificial intelligence has been driven by ***advances in theory***, the development of powerful machine learning methods, and ***technological progress***, alongside increased data availability and improved hardware. Put simply, machine learning builds predictive models based on data. Past data can be used to predict

whether Tartini Square will flood tomorrow, the five-year survival rate of a patient with a certain type of cancer, and our next purchase. Similarly, machine learning models can predict the next word, sentence or paragraph based on a few words in a sentence, or even compose an entire answer based on a question. Machine learning has been a scientific discipline for over 80 years, but it is still actively developing; the success of large language models is also due to some recent brilliant breakthroughs in the design of artificial neural networks. As mentioned, the technological basis of modern artificial intelligence is data and hardware. For (machine) learning from data, we naturally need data: more data generally means a better model. The development of the internet and the reduction in data storage costs have enabled (especially for large companies) the use of machine learning predictive models trained on vast amounts of text, image and other types of data. At the same time, larger amounts of data also mean longer learning processes and larger models that require enormous amounts of computer memory. Another reason for the sudden breakthrough of artificial intelligence is the development of fast computing chips, particularly suited for use in deep neural networks, and larger, more powerful and cheaper memory devices for storing vast amounts of data.To understand artificial intelligence, we need to be familiar with the idea of machine learning while also understanding how today's world revolves around data, its collection and techniques for recognising data patterns.

(Un)familiarity with artificial intelligence in society and its absence in education

Artificial intelligence is a regular topic in the media today; it has found its way into political party programmes and is the subject of virtually all discussions about the future of this world. However, surveys and personal experiences with students, industry employees and representatives of the public sector and politics show that we actually know little or almost nothing about it.

This raises concern. How can a politician decide on the area they do not know? How can a researcher, civil servant or business employee effectively use tools whose operation is a complete mystery to them? And finally, how are our pupils, secondary school and university students supposed to find their way in a high-tech world in ten years' time when they know virtually nothing about it? Lack of knowledge about artificial intelligence hinders society in all areas and at all ages; research shows that even the understanding of young people as 'digital natives' is just a myth.

As we mentioned, this is not a new field – machine learning has been around for more than 80 years. What is more, Slovenian researchers are among the pioneers of machine learning and have contributed greatly to its development. So how is it possible that learning about the concepts on which artificial intelligence is based has been completely overlooked by the Slovenian education system? Today, the curricula of Slovenian schools practically no longer include computer science, let alone artificial intelligence, machine learning or data literacy, through which students would learn where to find data and how to work with it. Slovenian schoolchildren learn data literacy only in terms of ***statistical literacy***. But this approach is very different: while machine learning enables the discovery of new, potentially unexpected patterns and facts, statistical literacy is limited to calculating basic statistics and then focusing on testing (or rejecting) pre-established hypotheses.

School programmes have largely ignored data literacy. While other developed countries have recognised this shortcoming and are rapidly implementing reforms, Slovenia has once again fallen behind – at times seemingly by choice.

Slovenia's flawed understanding of digital literacy

The introduction of data literacy, algorithmic thinking and and indeed anything that would lead to an understanding of artificial intelligence is sig-

nificantly hindered by a mistaken and overly narrow conception of digital literacy. This term, which we encounter in the media, debates, and strategies, is usually understood by decision-makers in the sense of the use of computer programmes. Even the (rare) school or university subjects that have 'computing' or 'informatics' in their name deal solely with the use of information technology, such as using programmes for browsing the web, writing texts or creating video content. It is kind of like limiting the teaching of mechanical engineering to the use of washing machines and refrigerators.

Digital literacy is important, but if we understand it only in the narrow sense, it turns us into mere users of technology developed elsewhere. If we want to understand how artificial intelligence works, using tools based on it will help us as much as using an electric radiator helps us understand physics. The only way to understand technology and use it effectively is to learn its fundamentals – in the case of artificial intelligence, through data literacy, algorithms and machine learning.

Teaching artificial intelligence

So how could we introduce teaching artificial intelligence? In schools, universities, companies, public institutions? Practically, with examples. Not by overwhelming learners with definitions and endless slides. Any learning should start with examples and problems that participants solve themselves. Examples should be interesting and, if possible, contain an 'aha' moment.

Let us proceed step by step and in line with our experiences in the (educational) pilot projects mentioned in the introduction to this article.

Primary schools. We teach data literacy, at least initially, without computers. The pupil begins, for example, by collecting pictures of characters from popular cartoons and then looks for classmates with the most similar selection. The cartoons chosen by these classmates, but not by the pupil, are recommendations for future viewing. This allows every schoolchild to learn how recommendation systems work, such as those used by Netflix and YouTube, as well as social networks and other similar sites that they are exposed to for the first time at this age. Another example is grouping images of climate graphs from Asian cities according to similar profiles: in this way, pupils in a geography class can independently discover climate zones, while at the same time intuitively (and without formal terminology!) learning about ***clustering*** and ***unsupervised machine learning.***

As an additional geography task, they can place the cities on a map. In maths, we can hand out pictures of gnomes and encourage pupils to associate their features (Does he have a lamp? Does he have a belt buckle?) with their occupations. The activity is very much like what we used to do in maths with plastic tiles of different colours, shapes, sizes and thicknesses, except that here, without much effort, we learn about one of the first predictive models from the early days of machine learning.

This kind of teaching triggers certain patterns of thinking and approaches to problem-solving. Perhaps one of the students will go on to study

medicine and then understand how machine learning builds models that predict a diagnosis from symptoms and how much to trust and how much not to trust them, or work in banking and understand the limitations of models that assess the creditworthiness of customers.

In the DALI4US European project, in which we are developing such activities, we have found that it is important for schools to conduct at least the initial activities as games without the use of computers. The actual use of the computer comes later, at the teacher's convenience. This is more attractive to students and makes it easier for teachers to implement, and above all, experience – including foreign experience – shows that even using a programme as simple as Orange all too quickly turns into learning how to use the programme instead of learning what the programme achieves, which is the real goal of the lesson. (It is like typing on a computer in your Slovenian lesson and spending most of the time typing instead of writing and mastering capitalisation.)

An extensive study is currently underway where pupils in Slovenia, Luxembourg and Ireland are learning data skills and machine learning in this way, using the challenges described on the https://pumice.si/izzivi. Unfortunately, the design of the study has already shown how the Slovenian school system is more restrictive than those in Luxembourg and Ireland, and how Slovenian teachers – unlike their counterparts abroad – have their hands tied by rigid curricula and an overabundance of rules and bureaucracy.

Secondary schools. Similar to primary schools, we must begin with the problems here as well. These can be diverse, but each needs to be linked to existing subjects and curricula. Examples include identifying typical paintings by Slovenian artists (art education), discovering animal trees (taxonomy in biology), determining climate zones from temperature profiles of cities (geography), finding similarities between NBA players (maths) and classifying fiction texts (Slovenian). In these activities, students learn how to describe the world around us with data and how to build classification or prediction models from it, or just discover interesting patterns that reveal the problem domain and provide new knowledge. Again, we start with examples, not machine learning theory; that can follow. We use a computer to help us, of course, as there is often a lot of data. We learn about software specifically designed for machine learning, e.g. Orange of course :), and learn how to work with workflows. We are also developing examples for these activities, which, including additional materials for teachers or for those interested in learning more, can be found at http://pumice.si.

The mentioned activities are linked to specific existing courses. We learn about data literacy in the proper context – from the point of view of problem solving and learning new material. It can be learned as a tool and an approach, and – unless absolutely necessary – without a specific introduction to algorithms and machine learning terminology. Such an approach, of course, requires extending teachers' skills and recognising that much of the existing curriculum is already connected to material that can be more engagingly explored through data. Do we even need a special course in data literacy, algorithmic thinking and computer science? That depends on whether we want to be competitive with countries that have such courses. If we use a water heater in a home economics lesson, we can learn about physics at the same time, but surely our schoolchildren would end up knowing less about physics than their competitors, sorry, their peers from abroad. We could also cover maths in home economics, learning how to multiply the amount of pasta per person by the number of people, but we would probably want our children to understand maths a little more deeply.

In the long term, therefore, there is an urgent need for a course covering computing and data literacy. Unfortunately, the current political decision-makers in Slovenia believe that it is enough for students to learn about artificial intelligence, and computer science in general, in extracurricular activities. In today's world, such ideas are as backward as if maths were removed from the curriculum and taught in other subjects and after-school clubs.

University. Need I even mention how important it would be to introduce all students to artificial intelligence and approaches from data science and machine learning? Can we imagine the momentum Slovenia could achieve if graduates across all professions were able to recognise the opportunities and benefits offered by machine learning and artificial intelligence? So where are we on the spectrum? Unfortunately nowhere. With a few exceptions, this content is at best delivered in selected engineering faculties. Solution? Simple and proposed a long time ago. The school system should offer elective courses or units, along the lines of the American "major/minor" scheme, where lecturers who are actually skilled in both the delivery and the understanding of the material can do this for all students at the university. Of course, "major/minor" does not mean that such a "minor" set of courses exists only for artificial intelligence; it exists for all interesting and topical fields of study, which can be chosen by students who are interested in technologies and behaviours from interdisciplinary fields in addition to the core course ("major").

It is time to finally see through the Bologna reform, which introduced credits but left the old year-by-year study system, and actually introduce credit-based studies. It is also time to end the silo culture and allow students at university to take their chosen interdisciplinary subjects from the best lecturers in the university, not necessarily from professors who, because of some recruitment history, just happen to be at a certain faculty, so that every other faculty has its own economist, computer scientist, physicist and Slavist.

Companies. The situation is far from rosy: there are very few companies in Slovenia that are actually innovating using machine learning and artificial intelligence techniques. This is also because this branch of science, i.e. computer science, data science and machine learning, has so far been left out, ignored or trivialised by Slovenia's education system, so that we are lagging far behind developed countries in this area. Of course, we need to reboot the education system and integrate the approaches of the modern, data-driven world, but industry must not wait either. Europe today is full of ideas for employee training, most of them based on specialised courses supported by microcredentials and relevant certificates. Slovenia is also breaking new ground in the field of education, developing courses and content that are practical, not overwhelming participants with slides, and based on our own software (for an example of such course material, see e.g. https://notes.biolab.si/books/arisa/intro-ml-concepts). The question is whether we will be able to seize this opportunity, or whether we will leave it to other countries to better promote and apply in education the content developed in Slovenia. The state plays a central role here – in Slovenia and abroad – by subsidising both the courses and the rather time-consuming preparation of the training materials.

And NAKVIS?

The consultation, which gave a brief presentation of the issues we are writing about here, was entitled Using Artificial Intelligence in Quality Assurance. Our presentation went a bit off course, in the direction of education on artificial intelligence, but it is crucial that NAKVIS itself sets the criteria to ensure that in higher education, artificial intelligence is introduced in different contents, subjects and programmes. NAKVIS should also, in our view, work towards the rapid introduction of modules that would enable all students at individual universities to learn about artificial intelligence. In doing so, it should put the brakes on the harmful fragmentation of knowledge and the silo culture in faculties. It should encourage a change in the system so that credit-based studies finally come into their own, rather than only being experienced when students go on exchange abroad. It should comprehensively regulate the system of microcredentials, as it does not make sense for each educational institution to set it up on its own. Of course, it should also make sure that this content is delivered with quality and not just according to some bureaucratic criteria.

Speaking of the latter, they have recently become very widespread, but it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss them.

IV. 4

Interview with ***Franci Demšar, PHD***

NAKVIS' perspective on the use of artificial intelligence in quality assurance processes

Artificial intelligence has been one of the key areas of technological development in recent years, with a significant impact on many social and economic processes – including in education and quality assurance in higher education. The deployment of such tools opens up many opportunities, but also raises questions about ethics, the human role, data security and accountability in their use.

NAKVIS is aware that new technologies cannot be ignored, so it actively engages in the debate on their meaningful and safe use. Part of its work is testing how artificial intelligence can help make processes more efficient, transparent and consistent without compromising the fundamental principles of professionalism and human judgement. This was also the focus of the international consultation "Use of Artificial Intelligence in Quality Assurance", organised by NAKVIS in 2025.

The Agency's views on artificial intelligence, concrete examples of its use in everyday work and the principles guiding the use of these tools were presented by the Director of NAKVIS, Dr Franci Demšar. He was interviewed by Filip Draženović, NAKVIS.

What is the Agency's view on new technologies, in particular the emergence of artificial intelligence, which has recently become one of the most important new fields?

Artificial intelligence (hereafter AI) is, of course, neither the first nor the last new technology. In my own lifetime, I have followed with interest the emergence, development and use of various technologies, including their positive and negative aspects. The first new technology I encountered was the tractor – I was about six years old. My family and I lived in a small village. One day, on my way home, I was picked up by a neighbour with a cart and a horse, who told me that a man from the village had bought a tractor. The neighbour was convinced that it would not survive and that he would never buy a tractor himself. As a well-mannered child, I told him that horses had many advantages, but somehow I felt that tractors would mostly replace horses. And indeed they did: horses are hardly used for farm work in Slovenia today. The tractor brought advantages as well as disadvantages, such as accidents that could be fatal – this was also the case in our village; they rarely happened with horses and carts. Moreover, the tractor has not replaced the horse in all respects: the horses that once pulled the cart knew where home was and could easily take the master there, while autonomous tractors are not (yet) widely used. I bring up this story because things are similar with AI: we think of many positive possibilities, but we also need to be aware of the challenges and the dangers. A quality assurance agency cannot stand by – it needs to be involved in the debate on the use of AI, bearing in mind at all times that AI brings not only benefits but also risks.

At the international consultation "Use of Artificial Intelligence in Quality Assurance", you presented the use of artificial intelligence at NAKVIS. Which AI tools has the Agency already used in its work?

When preparing for the consultation, the Agency systematically reviewed where AI could be useful

in relation to our activities. We looked at appropriate AI tools that could be used for each activity.

NAKVIS generally performs four types of tasks: accreditation and evaluation procedures, analyses – mainly thematic analyses related to the procedures – and activities in the areas of IT (publicly accessible and transparent display of data) and general affairs (internal functioning of the Agency).

The paid version of ChatGPT was the one we used most in our testing. The Perplexity tool proved useful in the literature review. We use GitHub Copilot for our programming; we also work with a programmer who develops dedicated software for us. We consulted our personal data security adviser and organised training for our employees.

Accreditation procedures are one of the most important areas for the Agency. How do you use AI tools in different phases of a procedure?

The accreditation or evaluation procedure can be divided into several phases: firstly, there is the preparatory phase, in which we review the application received and prepare for the evaluation, followed by the evaluation procedure itself, then a selective language review of the report, an event at which we present the institutions that have been granted a full reaccreditation and present them with the reaccreditation charter, and finally a follow-up report, which is designed to monitor the implementation of the recommendations made to the institution in relation to the compliance with the standards and which is carried out two years after the end of the procedure. Let me present our experiments or experience so far with AI by these phases.

In the preparatory phase, a group of experts reviews the accreditation documentation – the two central documents are the application form submitted by the HEI, which includes a form and annexes, among which the self-evaluation reports of the HEI are particularly important, and our Guide to External Assessments. We asked ourselves whether it would be useful for the AI to read these documents and to make brief technical recommendations for experts on what to focus on. We have found that ChatGPT is very good at quickly detecting technical errors in an application (e.g. missing documents, duplications). If we proceed standard by standard and provide it with the relevant part of the application, it can make useful comments on each standard. Challenges remain with regard to scanned documents, "softer" standards (competences, research) and the generation of questions, which are often too long and therefore less useful.

In the process itself, we check that the experts' reports are in line with the Guide to External Assessments and truly address the content of each standard. ChatGPT is useful here, but mainly if we proceed by individual standards. If we try to compare the full report with the Guide, the results are often inconsistent. A possible solution is a dedicated application to structure the process.

All expert reports are public – available on our website and in the international EQAR database (DEQAR). We want the reports to be uniform in format and, to some extent, in language, especially with regard to basic technical terminology. And, of course, to have as few linguistic errors as possible. For this reason, we have decided for selective language review of the reports. We are developing our own AI-based text editing application, which has already proved useful in a trial phase for checking technical terminology, correct numbering of standards, uniform citation, consistent use of abbreviations and elimination of typos and double spaces. We plan to go one step further.

The reports of the group of experts not only make recommendations, but also outline the strengths of the institutions. We aim to showcase these at an annual event at which we award a special charter to institutions granted full reaccreditation (with no identified non-compliances with the standards). It turned out that ChatGPT was able to extract the identified strengths from the report and formulate them into a relatively consistent text of the same length, on the basis of which – with the necessary expert corrections – we pro-

THE TEN DRAFT PRINCIPLES FROM TALLINN

1. AI must serve strategic goals, not drive them
QA agencies must adopt and publish a clear, organisation-wide AI strategy to its use as a tool rather than a goal in itself.

2. Respect ethics in HE provision, academic autonomy, and sustainability in use
Agencies must ensure AI use aligns with ethical standards, inclusivity, environmental sustainability, academic autonomy, and relevant legal and human rights frameworks.

3. Ensure transparency of AI use
Agencies should openly communicate how AI is used in external QA, including public declarations of use and transparent processes with stakeholders.

4. Protect data and require consent
AI use must comply with data protection laws. No personal or other sensitive data should be processed without explicit consent from HEIs and review panel members.

5. Ensure equitable access to AI
AI practices should ensure fair access to AI for all stakeholders and avoid reinforcing existing inequalities in higher education or QA processes.

6. Promote AI literacy and regular training
All staff and reviewers involved in external QA should be regularly trained in AI tools, risks, and opportunities to promote responsible and informed use.

7. Use AI only when fit for purpose
Agencies should use AI tools only when appropriate and continuously monitor, evaluate, and improve their effectiveness, accuracy, and alignment with QA goals.

8. Keep human judgment central
AI must support - not replace - human judgment. Final decisions remain the responsibility of human experts, who must critically assess AI outputs.

9. Encourage innovation – with caution
Agencies should create space for experimentation and innovation with AI, while applying clear guidelines to safeguard quality and integrity.

10. Review principles regularly to stay relevant
Agency level principles and strategies for AI use must be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect technological developments and changes in the HE landscape.

duced short presentation films on the strengths of the institutions found by the experts in the assessment. Two years after the end of the process, institutions report on what they have done about the recommendations; the NAKVIS Council takes note of this and informs the HEI of the adequacy of its response to the recommendations.

The AI is very useful because the recommendations and responses from the institutions are usually listed exhaustively. The ChatGPT can prepare a summary table in the light of the recommendations, the institute's response and the findings of the Agency Council, indicating whether the response is appropriate or adding any comments it may have. Such a table is helpful to the Council members, but of course it is not the only document on which they base their decisions. To give an example: the recommendation was to set up a system of (international) benchmarking of a study programme by 2025; the report after two years says that the implementation process is still ongoing. The AI may consider this to be a partially adequate answer, as the system should already be in place.

AI-based tools are certainly also interesting for analysis; is NAKVIS using or developing them in this area?

The Agency is constantly striving to keep abreast of the latest development trends and to integrate both domestic and European relevant themes and guidelines into our work. We are currently preparing a new strategy for the development of NAKVIS, and have therefore checked with the AI whether our strategic orientations are in line with the current objectives of European and international organisations in the field of higher education (e.g. OECD, EU, UNESCO, ENQA, EQAR, etc.).

For thematic analyses, there are two main sources: expert reports and institutions' self-evaluation reports. The analysis of the latter is difficult due to their diversity in terms of scope, inclusion of different documents and structure, which makes it difficult to draw comparable conclusions. This has led to reflections on the appropriateness of a more uniform structure of self-evaluation reports, especially in higher professional education – my colleague is working on her PhD thesis on this topic – but it is also relevant for higher education institutions. ChatGPT works well for analysing expert reports when reviewing individual standards in different institutions, but is less useful when analysing all of them at once. Here, too, the Agency is considering a dedicated app.

What about the use of AI in the information technology area?

For example, we have programmed a chatbot for our website. We want visitors to find the content they want on our website quickly, and a chatbot can be very useful for this. The programming relied on similar assistants on large websites.

Our IT team uses the GitHub Copilot tool for software development. It has the advantage of speeding up simpler programming tasks and supporting learning and exploring alternative approaches, as well as getting routine work done faster and reducing the chance of mistakes. However, in some cases the tool produces inaccurate or incomplete solutions, so it is essential that developers keep monitoring and checking the results. Clear and precise cueing for the AI remains crucial.

Each institution has a general affairs department. Are you considering using AI for the Agency's internal functioning and legal work?

The main activity in this area is the drafting of implementing regulations. The new Higher Education Act was adopted this summer; we have half a year to prepare and harmonise the implementing regulations. We apply AI in the final stage: we are comparing the new Act, the existing implementing regulations (there are seven) and our draft, which has already gone through first harmonisation. AI often makes small but important suggestions, which we take into account.

We also use AI to help take minutes of meetings. When drafting minutes, it turns out that English – the language in which more sample texts are available to AI – is often more "favourable" to the AI than Slovenian. Nevertheless, ChatGPT is already a useful writing tool for us. We are in a learning phase and we believe that we will come up with a tool that will be very useful for different types of minutes.

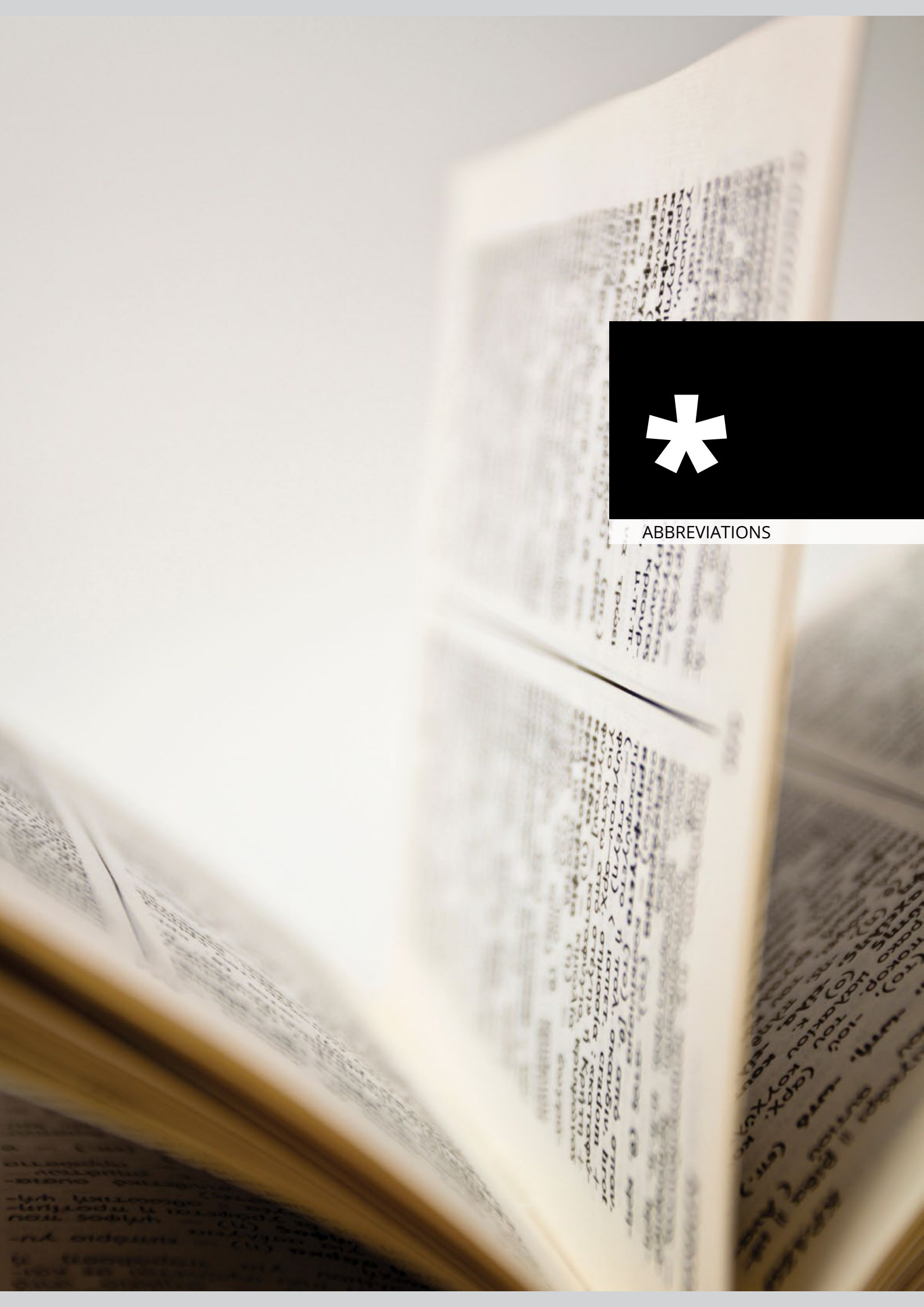
Is there a plan for AI to be used by the Agency's experts in their work?

If we find a user-friendly and reliable way to use it, we will offer it to the experts. There is no definitive answer yet.

To sum it all up – what are your final thoughts?

AI will not replace humans, but those who use AI will replace those who don't – that's the oft-quoted thought of former IBM CEO Ginni Rometty. Yuval Noah Harari has a different view, warning that by 2030 humans could become "slaves" to AI. Predictions about the effects of AI vary widely, which highlights the riskiness of making predictions in this area.

I would like to conclude by thanking my colleagues for co-authoring the paper Using Artificial Intelligence in Quality Assurance in Higher Education, presented at the international consultation "Use of Artificial Intelligence in Quality Assurance". We prepared for it by reviewing the Agency's work in relation to the (potential) use of AI and by dividing the tasks among colleagues according to each aspect – to look into them in greater depth and to highlight the strengths and limitations. This is also the starting point for my answers in this interview. The co-authors were: Mateja Bajuk Malešič, Meta Bajželj, Filip Draženovič, Tilen Heco, Andrej Krček, Oskar Opassi, Gregor Rebernik, Matjaž Štuhec, Klemen Šubic, Maruša Trobec, Julija Uršič and Barbara Zupančič Kočar.



ABBREVIATIONS

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AQU Catalunya – Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency

AVORS – Agency for Higher Education and Quality Assurance of the Republic of Srpska

BFUG – Bologna Follow-Up Group

CEENQA – Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

DEQAR – Database of External Quality Assurance Results

ECA – European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education

ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

eNakvis – External Information System of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

ENQA – European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

EQAR – European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education

ESG – Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

eVŠ – Register of Higher Education Institutions

Frascati – Frascati classification system of fields of science and technology (Frascati Manual)

HAKA – Estonian Quality Agency for Education

iNakvis – Internal Information System of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

INQAAHE – International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

IZUM – Institute of Information Science (Slovenia)

KLASIUS-P-16 – Classification System of Education and Training (KLASIUS-P-16)

KPK – Commission for the Prevention of Corruption

KAA – Kosovo Accreditation Agency

MAB – Hungarian Accreditation Committee

Criteria for Accreditation – Criteria for Accreditation and External Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes

NOKUT – Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

SICRIS – Slovenian Current Research Information System

SBRA – Slovenian Business and Research Association (Brussels)

SMEQA – Strengthening Capacities and Mechanisms for Enhancement of Quality Assurance System in Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina

SOK – Slovenian Qualifications Framework

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

VTI – Transnational Higher Education

ZSZUN – Act on Professional, Scientific and Artistic Titles

ZViS-1 – Higher Education Act

QQI – Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (NAKVIS/SQAA) was established in 2010 for accreditations and external evaluations in higher education and higher vocational education, as well as for development in this field. It operates responsibly, professionally, impartially and independently in line with European and global trends. Through membership in international associations, it strengthens its reputation and ensures comparability and international visibility of the Slovenian higher education area. It is committed to continuously improving quality, including cooperation with and counselling to all stakeholders in tertiary education.

nakvis

NACIONALNA AGENCIJA REPUBLIKE SLOVENIJE
ZA KAKOVOST V VISOKEM ŠOLSTVU

SLOVENIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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Family Friendly Enterprise

NAKVIS is a member of the following European and other international associations

INQAAHE Since 1991

ENQA

EENQA

ECA The European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education

eqar European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education