



Action plan for the external review of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research

Action plan for the external review of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research



With the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

ISBN [if relevant]

ISSN [if relevant]

Action plan for the external review of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research is one of the deliverables of the project 'Supporting European QA Agencies in meeting the ESG', reference number 898925-SEQA-ESG-EPLUS2020-EHEA09-2019.

The present document can be downloaded from the website of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research at: <https://anacec.md/>

© National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research, 2022, Chisinau.

Quotation allowed only with source reference.

38A, Hîncești sos., Chisinau, MD-2028, Republic of Moldova

Authors: Andrei Chiciuc, Elena Petrov, Sergiu Baci, Felicia Banu, Stela Guvir

Republic of Moldova, Chisinau, 2022

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. History and profile of the agency	6
3. Follow-up to the national action plan – Action lines	9
4. Preparatory steps for the agency’s self-assessment and SWOT.....	19
5. Calendar.....	20
6. Conclusions.....	22

1. Introduction

The *Action plan for the external review of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research* was developed by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (hereinafter - ANACEC) within the project „Supporting European Quality Assurance Agencies in meeting the ESG” (SEQA-ESG).

For the elaboration and consultation of this action plan, a team¹ formed by representatives of the following stakeholders was created:

- At the elaboration level:

1) representatives of ANACEC:

- Andrei Chiciuc, President
- Elena Petrov, Vice-president
- Sergiu Baciuc, Secretary General
- Felicia Banu, Head of Department of Higher Education Evaluation
- Stela Guvir, Head of Public Relations and International Cooperation Office

- At the consultation level:

2) Members of the Governing Board:

- Lilian Șaptefrați, member of the Governing Board
- Alexandr Cauia, member of the Governing Board

3) representatives of the Ministry of Education and Research:

- Nadejda Velișco, Secretary General of the Ministry

4) representatives of the Profile Committee in Higher Education

- Petru Todos, PC Chairman
- Maria Duca, member
- Georgeta Stepanov, member

5) representatives of the Council of Rectors from the Republic of Moldova:

- Emil Ceban, Chairman

6) representatives of the academic environment:

- Virginia Șalaru, Head of the Academic Quality Management Section, State University of Medicine and Pharmacy „Nicolae Testemițanu” from the Republic of Moldova
- Lucia Cebra, Head of the Department of Studies, Curriculum Development and Quality Management, Academy of Economic Studies from Moldova

7) student representatives:

- Irina Carauș, PhD student, Moldova State University

¹ The same working team that was formed and has been involved in the drafting and consultation of the Self-Assessment Report of ANACEC for the purpose of the external review against the ESG.

Action plan for the external review of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research

- Anastasia Ciobanu, Master student, State Pedagogical University “Ion Creangă”

8) representatives of the business environment:

- Marina Bzovii, Executive Director, National Association of ICT Companies (ATIC)
- Iurie Badâr, Head of the Department of Expertise, Evaluation and Services in International Trade, Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The team members were involved both in the development and at the consultation level of this action plan, between August and September 2022.

2. History and profile of the agency

The foundations of ANACEC were laid in 2013, when the *Law on Education* in force at that stage was supplemented with a separate article that provided for the establishment of an entity responsible at national level for the external quality evaluation in education. In the same context, in 2014 the Interim Board was established, which over the course of a year prepared the normative and methodological basis for the establishment of the respective entity. Thus, in 2015, pursuant to art. 115 (1) of the *Education Code* no. 152/2014, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education (ANACIP) was established, with the status of an administrative authority of national interest with distinct responsibilities in the field of quality assurance in education, autonomous from the Government, independent in its decisions and organization.

In 2017, in the context of the implementation of the Strategy on the reform of public administration for 2016-2020 in the Republic of Moldova, through changes in the Education Code, the national system of external quality assurance in education and research was redesigned, including the legal status of the entity responsible for the external quality evaluation at the national level. Later, in 2018, the Government approved, by GD no. 201/2018, the *Regulation on the organization and operation of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research*, which details the mission, functions, tasks, rights of the Agency and the way of organizing its activity.

According to its **Mission**, the Agency implements state policies and contributes to the development oriented towards the best international standards in the areas of competence assigned.

The **functions** established by the legislative and normative framework are carried out in two major areas: (1) general education, vocational education and training, higher education and continuous professional training, and (2) research and innovation.

In order to carry out its mission, the Agency ensures and performs the following processes:

- quality evaluation in general education;
- quality evaluation in vocational education and training;
- quality evaluation in higher education;
- external evaluation of continuous professional training programmes;
- external evaluation of organizations in the fields of research and innovation;
- evaluation of the scientific and scientific-teaching staff;
- quality control of general education, vocational education and training (VET) and continuous education, compliance with accreditation and authorization requirements of entities offering educational programmes and services.

In order to carry out the duties delegated by the Government, the Agency has developed and, after approval by the competent structures, applies a series of methodological documents, including *Methodology of external quality evaluation for the authorization of provisional operation and accreditation of vocational education and training, higher education and professional continuous training study programmes and institutions* (GD no. 616/2016, with subsequent amendments and additions).

Action plan for the external review of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research

Since its establishment, according to the normative regulations in force, ANACIP/ANACEC has mainly focused on the external evaluation of study programmes. The external evaluation processes and procedures used in higher education (HE), VET and continuous training are similar, the applied methodology, accreditation standards and performance indicators being the same (GD no. 616/2016, Annexes 2-7). The operational and instrumental aspects of external quality evaluation and the specifics of HE, VET and continuous training are reflected in the 8 Guidelines of External Quality Evaluation, developed for each level of education and university cycle separately, both for the evaluation of study programmes, as well as for institutional evaluation.

Începând cu 2018, ANACEC a preluat de la Consiliul Național pentru Acreditare și Atestare, și a continuat, procesul de atestare a personalului științific și științifico-didactic conform procedurilor consacrate, realizate de către Consiliul Național pentru Acreditare și Atestare. Totodată, au fost preluate și atribuțiile Inspectoratul Școlar Național. Astfel, începând cu anul de studii 2020-2021, după o etapă de pilotare și perfectare a cadrului metodologic aferent, ANACEC a inițiat, procesul de evaluare externă a instituțiilor de învățământ general și a cadrelor de conducere de la acest nivel. Dinamica numărului de decizii emise de Governing Board în vederea autorizării de funcționare provizorie/acreditării programelor de studii și instituțiilor de învățământ, și a deciziilor care vizează dimensiunea atestării personalului științific și științifico-didactic în perioada 2016 - 2021 este reprezentată în Tabelul 1.

Starting from 2018, ANACEC took over from the National Council for Accreditation and Attestation (NCAA), and continued, the process of attestation of scientific and scientific-teaching staff according to established procedures, carried out by the NCAA. At the same time, the tasks of the National School Inspectorate (NSI) were also taken over. Thus, starting with the 2020-2021 academic year, after a piloting stage and developing the related methodological framework, ANACEC initiated the external evaluation process of general education institutions and management staff at this level. The dynamics of the number of decisions issued by the Governing Board for the authorization of provisional operation/accreditation of study programmes and educational institutions, and of decisions on the attestation of scientific and scientific-teaching staff in 2016 - 2021 is represented in Table 1.

Table 1. Dynamics of the number of decisions issued by the Governing Board, period 2016 - 2021

Governing Board decisions	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total (2016-2021)
Professional training programmes in vocational education and training, and continuous training externally evaluated	38	150	181	224	580	377	1550
Study programmes in higher education externally evaluated	13	145	120	103	33	156	570
TOTAL programme decisions	51	295	301	327	613	533	2120
Institutions externally evaluated	-	2	1	10*	15*	60*	88
TOTAL	51	297	302	337	628	593	2208

Action plan for the external review of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research

Subjects related to the attestation of scientific and scientific-didactic staff	-	-	55	69	75	120	319
---	---	---	----	----	----	-----	------------

* Evaluations of general education institutions

The figures in the table show that between 2016 and 2021, the external evaluation process was organized and completed for **2120 study programmes** in HE (levels 6, 7 and 8 of the NQF), VET (levels 3, 4 and 5 of the NQF) and continuous training. At the same time, it is noticed the doubling of the number of study programmes (especially continuous training programmes) evaluated by ANACEC in 2020, a pandemic year, with multiple restrictions. In 2017 and 2018, **3 institutions** (2 VET and 1 continuous training) were authorized for provisional operation or accredited. Also, 85 general education institutions were externally evaluated in 2020-2021, and in 2022 – the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Moldova.

3. Follow-up to the national action plan – Action lines

This *Action plan for the external review of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research* is developed:

- in accordance with the provisions stipulated in the Education Code no. 152/2014, art. 115, letter (n) (ANACEC „takes the necessary steps to be registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education, no later than 3 years after its establishment”);
- on the basis of the [National action plan on quality assurance of higher education in the Republic of Moldova for period 2021-2023](#), developed and approved by the Governing Board of ANACEC, decision no. 53 of 25.06.2021 (one of the deliverables of the „Supporting European QA Agencies in meeting the ESG” project);
- of the [Action plan for the elaboration of the self-assessment report \(SAR\) of ANACEC for the purpose of external review and accession as a full member of ENQA and registration in EQAR](#) (Romanian), developed and approved by the Governing Board of ANACEC, decision no. 52 of 25.06.2021 and of
- [The activity plan for the year 2022 of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research](#) (Romanian), developed by the Agency's subdivisions and approved by the President of ANACEC.

No.	Main action lines
1	Development of the normative and methodological framework
2	Ensuring quality and transparency in the Agency’s activity
3	Quality evaluation in higher education
4	Strengthening the human resource capacities of ANACEC
5	External review of ANACEC against the ESG

Detailing the main action lines.

1	Title	Development of the normative and methodological framework	
Objectives		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To modify/complete the normative and methodological framework in the field of quality assurance according to the requirements and the national context in which ANACEC and the higher education institutions of the Republic of Moldova operate; • To align the normative and methodological framework to ESG requirements; • To align the normative and methodological framework to European and international good practices. 	
Specific tasks		Responsible(s)	Timeline
1	Amendment of the Education Code on the dimension of quality assurance in	Ministry of Education and Research (MER)	2022

Action plan for the external review of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research

	order to strengthen the independence of the national quality assurance agency	ANACEC	
2	Updating of the Regulation on the operation of ANACEC in accordance with the changes to the Education Code	MER ANACEC	2022
3	Updating the methodology of external quality evaluation	MER ANACEC	2022
4	Amendment of the Guidelines for external evaluation of the quality of doctoral programmes	ANACEC, Department of Higher Education Evaluation	2022
5	Amendment of the Guidelines for external institutional evaluation	ANACEC, Department of Higher Education Evaluation	November, 2022
6	Review of the Post-Evaluation Monitoring Procedure	ANACEC, Department of Higher Education Evaluation	September, 2021
7	Elaboration of the External Quality Evaluation Procedure for joint study programmes	ANACEC, Department of Higher Education Evaluation	2022
8	Development of the procedure for effective involvement of stakeholders in external quality assurance activities	ANACEC, Department of Higher Education Evaluation	November, 2021
Outcomes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANACEC formulated and sent MER for consideration proposals for amending the <i>Education Code</i> on the „Quality Assurance” component; • In accordance with the amendments to the <i>Education Code</i>, ANACEC will update its <i>Regulation on operation</i>; • ANACEC formulated and sent to the MER requests regarding the necessary changes to be made in the Methodology of External Evaluation in order to align it to the ESG. The changes were implemented and approved by GD no. 79/2022; • The Department of Higher Education Evaluation has started the process of updating the <i>Guidelines for the External Evaluation of doctoral programmes</i>. Subsequently, the work on this partial document was stopped considering the provisions of the „Higher Education” project, financed by the World Bank, which will contribute decisively to the development/updating of the normative framework for doctoral studies; • At the moment, a series of best practice exchange activities with ENQA agencies regarding the institutional evaluation procedure and quality evaluation standards within the „Enhancement of Quality Assurance in Higher Education System in Moldova – QFORTE” project are underway, on the 	

Action plan for the external review of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research

	<p>basis of which the Guidelines for the external evaluation of higher education institutions is to be improved / updated;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Post-evaluation monitoring procedure of vocational education and training, higher education and continuous training study programmes and institutions, second edition (updated), was approved by the GB of ANACEC, decision no. 23 of 01.04.2022; • The draft of the <i>Procedure for the External Quality Evaluation for Joint Study Programmes</i> has been developed and will be put to public discussion, and subsequently approved by the GB of ANACEC; • The Regulation on the involvement of stakeholders in external quality assurance activities carried out by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research was developed and approved by the GB of ANACEC, decision no. 56 of 28.04.2022. 		
Risks		Mitigation actions	
Long (difficult) time in the process of completing the normative and methodological framework, especially the one that must be approved by Government Decisions (e.g., the external evaluation methodology, the ANACEC organization and operation regulation, etc.)		Continue efforts to ensure cooperation and constructive dialogue with other decision-makers at national level (e.g. ministries) and higher education institutions.	
The armed conflict at the country's borders could cause political instability that would delay the process of amending the legislative framework.			
Effort		Impact	
Score	Comments (optional)	Score	Comments (optional)
5		5	
Additional comments (optional)			

2	Title	Ensuring quality and transparency in the Agency's activity
----------	--------------	---

Action plan for the external review of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research

Objectives		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To implement internal quality assurance mechanisms within ANACEC; To ensure the transparency of the quality assurance activities carried out by ANACEC for the general public, through the permanent, prompt and qualitative updating of the dedicated pages (web page, social networks); To involve foreign experts in the external quality evaluation activities carried out by the Agency. 	
Specific tasks		Responsible(s)	Timeline
1	Stakeholder consultation	ANACEC, Department of Higher Education Evaluation	1-2 times a year
2	Elaboration of thematic studies	ANACEC, Department of Higher Education Evaluation	2022-2023
3	Expanding the practices of co-opting and involving foreign experts	ANACEC, Department of Higher Education Evaluation	2-3 times a year
4	Updating the Agency's web page with relevant information	ANACEC	Permanently
Outcomes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The consultation of stakeholders (expert evaluators, educational institutions) is carried out through questionnaires (at the end of the external evaluation process of the study programme), meetings, seminars or webinars regarding the updating of the normative framework, external evaluation guidelines, evaluation standards, etc., as part of the consultative process and the collection and systematization of feedback (at the time of operation of the updates, elaboration of the respective framework); Two thematic studies are being developed (draft version); ANACEC involves foreign expert evaluators, mainly from ARACIS, as members of external evaluation panels, in the evaluation of study programmes; In order to ensure the transparency of the external evaluation results, the Agency places on the official website https://anacec.md/ the external evaluation reports for the evaluated study programmes, GB decisions, applied normative acts, news, press releases and others. 	
Risks		Mitigation actions	
Limited number and flow of staff within the Department of Higher Education Evaluation and their overload.		Maintaining qualified staff by offering the possibility of competitive salaries in the market and career development opportunities.	

Action plan for the external review of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research

The entire external evaluation process is carried out in Romanian, which makes it very difficult to involve experts from abroad.		To make it legally possible for the Agency to be able to conduct the external evaluation in English, as well.	
Both for ANACEC, its experts and higher education institutions the knowledge of English is also a shortcoming and a challenge when it comes to drafting all the documentation and conduct the evaluation process, an interpreter being needed (translation is quite costly).		To extend the practice of enhancing English knowledge skills of ANACEC staff by providing them with opportunities to learn the language (N.B. Before the pandemic, ANACEC staff benefited from English language courses the cost for which was covered by the Agency).	
Effort		Impact	
Score	Comments (optional)	Score	Comments (optional)
5	Limited human resources on the dimension of external quality assurance in higher education.	5	Ensuring quality and transparency in ANACEC's work is very important, especially to strengthen relationships based on trust with all stakeholders.
Additional comments (optional)			

3	Title	Quality evaluation in higher education	
Objectives		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure an external evaluation process in accordance with the requirements and quality standards established at the national level; To synchronize the evaluation process of specialties in the first cycle, Bachelor, and in the second cycle, Master; To carry out the external evaluation in accordance with ESG; To permanently update the ANACEC's Register of expert evaluators; To train the current and future expert evaluators and the representatives of higher education institutions involved in the evaluation, regarding the external evaluation procedure. 	
Specific tasks		Responsible(s)	Timeline
1	External quality evaluation of study programmes	ANACEC, Department of Higher Education Evaluation	Upon request
2	Maintaining, updating and completing ANACEC's Register of expert evaluators	ANACEC, Department of Higher Education Evaluation	Permanently
3	Maintaining a database on the results of external quality evaluations in higher education	ANACEC, Department of Higher Education Evaluation	Permanently

Action plan for the external review of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research

Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANACEC organizes the process of external evaluation of the quality of study programmes taking into account the intentions of higher education institutions, as well as the priorities of MER; • ANACEC carries out trainings for various categories of beneficiaries in order to identify expert evaluators and for representatives of higher education institutions involved in evaluations; • The results of external evaluations of quality in higher education will be permanently included in the Database. 		
Risks		Mitigation actions	
Large number of requests/applications for external evaluation of study programmes from higher education institutions		Organization of the external evaluation process of study programmes by fields/cycles of education	
Limited human resources on the dimension of training and coordination of the external evaluation process		<p>Proposing amendments to the legal framework on increasing the number of staff to be employed (currently, this number is strictly regulated).</p> <p>Attracting and organizing competitions for employment in vacant public positions.</p> <p>Financial and non-financial motivation of the Agency's staff and their continuous professional development.</p>	
Effort		Impact	
Score	Comments (optional)	Score	Comments (optional)
5		5	
Additional comments (optional)			

4	Title	Strengthening the human resource capacities of ANACEC	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure the information/training of representatives of various categories to identify potential ANACEC evaluators; • To ensure continuous information/training of ANACEC experts; • To ensure internal and external training opportunities for employees. 		
Specific tasks		Responsible(s)	Timeline

Action plan for the external review of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research

1	Organization of information and training sessions for potential ANACEC expert evaluators by fields and evaluator categories	ANACEC, Department of Higher Education Evaluation	2021-2023
2	Organization of internal information and training sessions for own employees	ANACEC, Department of Higher Education Evaluation, Legal and human resources office	Permanently
3	Identifying external training opportunities for employees	ANACEC, Legal and human resources office	Annually
Outcomes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANACEC organizes information sessions for potential ANACEC experts by fields/categories of evaluators; • ANACEC carries out training sessions for potential evaluators within the training courses; • ANACEC organizes information/training sessions for its employees; • ANACEC provides external training opportunities for its own employees. 	
Risks		Mitigation actions	
The high workload of the staff		Co-opting new employees.	
Staff migration		Offering motivating salaries; Carrying out work visits and training courses abroad.	
Lack of qualified staff		Organization of short-term staff training activities (training, workshops, sessions, etc.), in order to improve their skills; The organization of upskilling and the provision of continuous training activities for the purpose of training new skills in the field; Organization of work visits to agencies abroad in order to familiarize the staff with new practices in the field.	
Impossibility to attend training due to pandemic restrictions		Organization / participation in online training.	
Identification of certain categories of evaluators (teachers, students) for some fields (engineering, medicine, arts)		Co-opting foreign experts (from the „teaching staff” category) in the external evaluation process.	
Low interest from potential evaluators		Developing a strategy to promote the role of the Expert evaluator in order to increase its attractiveness and complete the Register of expert evaluators.	
Effort		Impact	
Score	Comments (optional)	Score	Comments (optional)

Action plan for the external review of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research

5		5	
Additional comments (optional)			

5	Title	External review of ANACEC against the ESG	
Objectives		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To initiate the self-assessment process of ANACEC in accordance with ENQA / EQAR requirements; To elaborate the self-assessment report of ANACEC; To carry out the external review of ANACEC by ENQA / EQAR; To obtain the ENQA membership and EQAR registration. 	
Specific tasks		Responsible(s)	Timeline
1	Initiation of the self-assessment process of ANACEC in accordance with ENQA / EQAR requirements	ANACEC, Governing Board	June, 2021
2	Establishing and approving the composition of the working group for the elaboration of the Self-Assessment Report of ANACEC	ANACEC, Governing Board	June, 2021
3	Elaboration of the Self-Assessment Report of ANACEC	ANACEC, The established working group	August 2021 – June 2022
4	Stakeholder consultation and feedback collection	ANACEC, Department of Higher Education Evaluation	June – August, 2022
5	Submitting the application for external review of ANACEC to the ENQA Secretariat and initiating the process	ANACEC, Public Relations And International Cooperation Office	23 May, 2022
6	Completing EQAR's online registration form	Public Relations And International Cooperation Office	1 September, 2022
7	Submitting the Self-Assessment Report of ANACEC to ENQA	Public Relations And International Cooperation Office	1 October, 2022
8	External review visit of ENQA / EQAR experts to ANACEC	ENQA/EQAR	February 2023

Action plan for the external review of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research

<p>Outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action plan for the elaboration of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) of ANACEC for the purpose of external review and accession as a full member of ENQA and registration in EQAR elaborated and approved by the GB of ANACEC, decision no. 52 of 25.06.2021 (Annex no. 1); • The composition of the Working Group established for the elaboration of the Self-Assessment Report of ANACEC approved by the GB of ANACEC, decision no. 52 of 25.06.2021 (Annex no. 2); • On the website of ANACEC, the section Transparency / ANACEC International External Evaluations was created (https://anacec.md/en/content/transparency), where the GB decision of ANACEC no. 52 of 25.06.2021 can be found; • The draft version of the ANACEC Self-Assessment Report (in Romanian) was developed and placed on the web page (https://anacec.md/en/content/transparency); • Stakeholder consultation and feedback collection regarding the content of the ANACEC Self-Assessment Report was carried out via email and the ANACEC web page (Transparency / Public Consultations section - https://anacec.md/en/content/transparency); • The normative-methodological documents were translated into English and placed on the web page to facilitate the access of foreign experts, as well as the international public; • The application for external review against the ESG was submitted to the ENQA Secretariat in May 2022 (application no. 487-01 of 23 May 2022). 		
<p>Risks</p>		<p>Mitigation actions</p>	
<p>Overburdening the staff with various activities related to the performance of work tasks</p>	<p>Announcing and holding competitions for employment in vacant positions. Completing the staff positions in order to ensure the balance between the amount of the work tasks and the possibilities of achieving them within the established timelines.</p>		
<p>Lack of qualified staff</p>	<p>Carrying out thematic trainings regularly. Financial and non-financial motivation of the Agency's employees and their continuous professional development. Organizing information sessions, as well as delegating staff to training sessions to increase their skills in the field.</p>		
<p>Effort</p>		<p>Impact</p>	
<p>Score</p>	<p>Comments (optional)</p>	<p>Score</p>	<p>Comments (optional)</p>

Action plan for the external review of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research

5		5	
Additional comments (optional)			

4. Preparatory steps for the agency's self-assessment and SWOT

The activity of initiating the self-assessment process of ANACEC in accordance with ESG requirements and the ENQA Guidelines for Agency Reviews started already in the summer of 2021. At that stage, it was developed and approved by the Governing Board of ANACEC ([decision no. 52 of 25.06.2021](#)) the *Action plan for the elaboration of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) of ANACEC for the purpose of external review and accession as a full member of ENQA and registration in EQAR* (Annex no. 1) and established the *Composition of the Working Group constituted for the elaboration of the Self-Assessment Report of ANACEC* (Annex no. 2).

Although the activity of drafting the Self-Assessment Report and submitting the application to the ENQA Secretariat for external review and registration in EQAR started and was supposed to be completed in November 2021, it was extended (the deadline for submitting the Self-Assessment) until October 2022 for various reasons, such as:

- updating the normative methodological framework;
- the existence in the implementation phase of European projects, where ANACEC is a partner (e.g. *SEQA-ESG* – with the general objective of supporting quality assurance agencies and national authorities in creating a quality assurance system in compliance with the ESG 2015; *QFORTE* - among the objectives being the operation of the amendments to the Education Code, the updating of the Methodology of External Evaluation, the Guidelines for Institutional External Evaluation, the elaboration and approval of the external evaluation procedure of the joint study programs);
- the existing human factor, namely the limited number and flow of qualified staff within the Department of Higher Education Evaluation, a subdivision of ANACEC responsible for the activities of external evaluation of the quality of study programmes and higher education institutions.

Thus, up to now, several steps/actions have been planned and carried out regarding the realization of the Agency's self-evaluation process, detailed in this Action Plan (see the following section – 5. Calendar). It should be noted that the Self-Assessment Report, elaborated in Romanian and placed on the ANACEC website, also contains the SWOT analysis itself, currently in draft version.

5. Calendar

At this stage, based on the Action Plan approved in 2021, you can see in the table below the activities carried out, in progress and the next steps.

No.	The action planned	Responsible(s)	Timeline	Note
1.	Initiation of the Self-Assessment Report drafting procedure	Secretary General of GB	25.06.2021	Governing Board decision
2.	Approval of the <i>Action plan for the elaboration of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) of ANACEC for the purpose of external review and accession as a full member of ENQA and registration in EQAR (Annex 1)</i>	Governing Board Secretary General of GB	25.06.2021	Governing Board decision
3.	Establishing and approving the composition of the working group for the elaboration of the self-assessment report (Annex 2)	Governing Board	25.06.2021	Approved in the Governing Board meeting
4.	Studying the ESG and ENQA Guidelines for Agency Reviews by the members of the working group	The members of the working group	28.06.2021 - 2.07.2021	Meeting held online
5.	Drafting of the Self-Assessment Report in accordance with the ENQA Guidelines for Agency Reviews	The members of the working group	05.07.2021 – 30.05.2022	Online/offline meetings The report elaborated in stages on separate standards
6.	Public (stakeholder) consultation of the draft Self-Assessment Report	President Vice-president Secretary General	1.06-15.08.2022	Dedicated section on ANACEC web page created. Emails sent.
7.	Collecting feedback and systematizing the collected information / proposals	The members of the working group	31.08.2022	ANACEC website Feedback received (email)
8.	Finalizing the Self-Assessment Report	The members of the working group	15.09.2022	SAR with annexes finalized

Action plan for the external review of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research

9.	Approval of the Self-Assessment Report	Governing Board	September, 2022	Governing Board decision
10.	Submission to ENQA and EQAR of the application with the request to initiate the external review procedure with a view to joining ENQA and registration in EQAR	President	May 23, 2022	Application submitted
11.	Identification and translation of relevant documents (methodology, procedures, guidelines, regulations, external evaluation / self-evaluation reports, ANACEC Self-Assessment Report, etc.)	Public Relations And International Cooperation Office	01.07.2021-30.09.2022	Documents translated and placed on the ANACEC web page
12.	Registering the Agency and completing the online form on the EQAR website	Public Relations And International Cooperation Office	25.09.2022	
13.	Sending the English version of the ANACEC Self-Assessment Report to the ENQA Secretariat	ANACEC management	01.10.2022	
14.	Communication with the person designated by ENQA as coordinator of the review process	ANACEC management, Public Relations And International Cooperation Office	Ongoing (until the end of the external review procedure)	
15.	External review visit to ANACEC	ENQA / EQAR Expert evaluators ANACEC MER HEIs Other stakeholders (upon request)	February, 2023	
16.	Decisions of the ENQA and EQAR Boards on the results of the external review	ENQA / EQAR	December, 2023	ENQA Board / EQAR Committee meeting

6. Conclusions

The Action plan for the external review of ANACEC is a result of the efforts made by the Moldovan agency in achieving some of its important objectives, namely aligning / connecting processes to ESG requirements, registering in EQAR and obtaining ENQA membership status.

The project „Supporting European QA Agencies in meeting the ESG (SEQA-ESG)”, coordinated by ENQA, which aims to support quality assurance agencies and national authorities in creating a quality assurance system in line with the European Standards and Guidelines is, therefore, an extraordinary opportunity for ANACEC, as a partner, to achieve these objectives. At the same time, we emphasize the weight and importance of the events organized within the project through the expertise offered and the significant contribution of the experts within the project in the deeper understanding of ESG, the connection of processes and procedures in order to achieve the objectives that the Agency has set forward. The peer learning meetings and workshops, held both online and physically, had a significant role in the development and implementation of concrete actions to align ANACEC with ESG, presented in the context of this Action Plan. Another important result is the fact that the Agency has started the self-assessment process and is currently in the phase of finishing and submitting the Self-Assessment Report for external review against the ESG by ENQA and EQAR.