



**CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

**STRATEGIC PLAN**

2014–2016

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Vilnius

2014



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## **ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) is an independent budgetary organisation established in 1995. The Centre implements the national policy of research and higher education of Lithuania within the limits of its competence and ensures compatibility of the Lithuanian higher education system with the provisions of the European Higher Education Area.

The SKVC undertakes to promote the quality of Lithuanian higher education as well as quality culture, create favourable conditions for studies and professional activities, the free movement of persons, and seek compatibility of the Lithuanian higher education system with the provisions of the European Higher Education Area.

The Law on Higher Education and Research and the SKVC Statute define the following main objectives of the Centre:

1. To promote the quality of activities of Lithuanian higher education institutions through an external assessment and accreditation of institutions and study programmes;
2. To create favourable conditions for the free movement of persons when organising and carrying out assessment and/or recognition in Lithuania of higher education-related qualifications awarded by foreign institutions and fulfilling other functions of the Lithuanian ENIC/NARIC (the networks of European National Information Centres and National Academic Recognition Information Centres) centre in the Republic of Lithuania.

Since its establishment, the SKVC performs two main functions:

- It carries out the external assessment of higher education institutions and their study programmes, which is used as the basis for accrediting higher education institutions and their provided study programmes. In implementing this activity, the SKVC has become a reliable and recognised agency for evaluating higher education quality. By inviting Lithuanian and foreign experts – academicians, students and professionals – to carry out external assessment, the SKVC contributes to the systematic improvement of higher education quality;
- It recognises foreign secondary and higher education qualifications and fulfils other functions of the Lithuanian ENIC/NARIC centre. These functions have been fulfilled by the SKVC since 1999; the Centre shares a considerable relevant experience by providing consultations and information to natural and legal persons about academic and professional recognition of foreign qualifications, Lithuanian and foreign education systems, recognition of periods of study and other issues.

Alongside principal activities, seeking to achieve its aim, the SKVC has been actively and systematically cooperating with higher education institutions. It provides organisations with individual consultations and shares available information as well as the best practice in trainings, seminars and conferences, covering both quality

assurance and recognition of foreign qualifications. The aim is to inform the biggest possible concerned audience about activity results and accumulated knowledge; therefore, various information dissemination channels and measures are used to maintain constant contact with student organisations, schools, foreign communities, related public authorities and business structures. Although stakeholders provide a positive feedback about SKVC activities, in order to improve public awareness of activity results more efforts will be exerted to make SKVC activities public.

The SKVC is constantly changing to keep pace with the shifting directions of the development of higher education. The increasing volume of assessment of study programmes and the growing scope of individual mobility may present a challenge due to the limited nature of financial and human resources and infrastructure development.

International cooperation plays a particular role in SKVC activities – the Centre is a member in international networks and is involved in joint projects as well as partnerships with analogous organisations of other countries. Due to its active operation beyond the territory of Lithuania, the SKVC has become known and appreciable on the international arena, and its employees communicate the gained knowledge to Lithuanian higher education institutions and other organisations.

The planned improvement of SKVC activities through optimisation of the quality management system and digitisation of activities and services will lead to the better satisfaction of target group needs. In order to enhance efficiency of external assessment, the Centre plans to conduct research of the impact of this assessment on higher education.

The SKVC aspires to achieve that external assessment makes a positive impact on Lithuanian higher education and that services related to the recognition of foreign qualifications reduce obstacles to academic mobility and internationalism of organisations.

## VISION

**The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education is an influential generator, implementer and disseminator of the ideas of the improvement of quality and enhancement of internationalism in higher education in both Lithuania and Europe.**

The SKVC aspires to become an expert organisation operating and recognised by partners at the international level. The important direction of the Centre's development is generation of new ideas with respect to assurance of quality in higher education and recognition of qualifications. SKVC activities are inseparable from the adoption and spread of the best international practice as well as active contribution to its formation. All

this not only determines professionalism of the organisation, but also provides prerequisites for conducting public education on the issues of quality of studies and assessment and recognition of qualifications. Thus, in its vision the SKVC sees itself not only as an active player on the national and regional arena, but also declares its aspiration to contribute to quality assurance in higher education across Europe.

### VALUES

- **Professionalism and quality.** Competent and efficient fulfilment of functions; quality of the activities is achieved through activity analysis, continuous learning and experience sharing;
- **Independence and impartiality.** We are an independent organisation; our operation is based on the principles of transparency, publicity and impartiality, following the pre-defined and announced criteria and procedures; our decisions are based on facts and their evaluation;
- **Respect and trust.** We respect the official language, the choice of persons and institutions, listen to their opinion and seek to assist them in improvement;
- **Cooperation.** We base our operation on partnership within the organisation as well as with stakeholders both in Lithuania and abroad.

### MISSION

**To create favourable conditions for the improvement of higher education quality in Lithuania and the free movement of persons in the world with the aim of enhancing competitiveness of Lithuanian higher education and clarity of qualifications.**

It should be noted that the SKVC is actively involved in the development and improvement of the national legal environment for higher education and research and implements the national external quality assurance policy in higher education. The SKVC forms the attitude towards higher education as a public good bringing benefit to society and individuals and as a value encouraging conscious and responsible choice, providing objective information about education systems and their quality. Higher education quality is the agreement between the academic community, employers' representatives and students regarding the aims, content, resources and measures, results, as well as constant (self-)improvement. The basis for quality is the interaction of teachers, students and the learning environment of the institution. Responsibility for the quality of higher education and the development of quality culture within the institution primarily lies with the higher education institution. The role of the SKVC is to promote these processes by defining quality assurance aims, evaluation criteria and measurement indicators as well as analysing the impact of quality assurance.

The SKVC appreciates the benefits and challenges brought by academic and professional mobility to an individual and community. By performing the functions of the national information centres (ENIC/NARIC) the SKVC acts as an intermediary and facilitator between individuals and institutions both in Lithuania and abroad. The Centre also performs an important role in implementing the best practice of recognition of foreign qualifications and ensuring its consistency in Lithuania.

In its daily activities the SKVC draws on the experience of the best international practice and promotes ongoing institutional and individual professional improvement. Engagement in higher education quality improvement process is sought to be based on professionalism, impartiality, cooperation and international practice.

### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ACTIVITIES**

The **SKVC undertakes** to promote the quality of Lithuanian higher education as well as quality culture, create favourable conditions for studies and professional activities, the free movement of persons, and seek compatibility of the Lithuanian higher education system with the provisions of the European Higher Education Area.

#### **Long-term SKVC objectives:**

1. To promote the quality of activities of Lithuanian higher education institutions through an external evaluation and accreditation of institutions and study programmes;
2. To create favourable conditions for the free movement of persons when carrying out recognition of higher education-related qualifications awarded in foreign institutions and providing information about education systems and qualifications.

#### **Medium-term SKVC objectives for 2014–2016:**

**To promote the quality of activities of Lithuanian higher education institutions through an external evaluation and accreditation of institutions and study programmes:**

- To accomplish the first cycle reviews of higher education institutions for the purpose of conformity of the activities;
- To start the external review of higher education institutions targeted at quality improvement;
- To carry out the evaluation of study programmes according to fields;
- To ensure that only high quality study programmes are accredited;
- To expand communication with different SKVC audiences.

**To create favourable conditions for the free movement of persons when carrying out recognition of higher education-related qualifications awarded in foreign institutions and providing information about education systems and qualifications:**

- To support the decentralised system of qualification recognition;
- To improve information management and provision;
- To adapt the qualification recognition system to SKVC specific needs groups;
- To strengthen the international aspect of higher education institutions and other organisations in the area of higher education.

Seeking successful implementation of long-term objectives, the following measures for organisation strengthening have been envisaged:

- To digitise part of activities and services;
- To optimise the quality management system;
- To upgrade infrastructure;
- To improve the system of internal communication and employee motivation.

Objective-related activities and their expected outcomes as well as measurement indicators are presented in the annex.

The medium-term objectives establish the main criteria for developing a yearly working plan. The working plan comprises the whole of instruments for strategy implementation; it is drawn up for one year and is reviewed and approved every year together with the strategic plan.

**THE OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF SKVC ACTIVITIES IN 2014–2016**

Long-term objectives	Medium-term objectives	Activities	Expected outcome	Measurement indicators
<b>To promote the quality of activities of Lithuanian higher education institutions through an external evaluation and accreditation of institutions and study programmes</b>	To accomplish the first cycle review of higher education institutions for the purpose of conformity of the activities	Organisation of the external review and accreditation of higher education institutions	Accreditation granted to all higher education institutions operating in Lithuania	The percentage of accredited higher education institutions of the total number of higher education institutions operating in Lithuania
	To start the institutional review of higher education institutions targeted at quality improvement	Creation of the review model for the activities of higher education institutions	Launched application of a new institutional review model for higher education institutions	Created review model for higher education institutions
		Discussion of the review model with stakeholders		The volume of feedback on the new review model
		Drafting of legal acts		Approved legal acts
	Organisation of reviews according to the new model	The number of performed reviews in accordance with the new model		
To carry out the evaluation of study programmes according to fields	Amending of legal acts	Launched application of an evaluation model for ongoing study programmes according to fields	Approved legal acts	



		Organisation of evaluations according to fields		The number of performed evaluations of ongoing study programmes in accordance with the new model
	To ensure that only high quality study programmes are accredited	Creation of a new evaluation model for new study programmes	Launched application of a new assessment model for new study programmes	Created evaluation model for new study programmes
		Discussion of the evaluation model with stakeholders		The volume of feedback on the new evaluation model for new study programmes
		Drafting of legal acts		Approved legal acts
		Organisation of the external evaluations of new study programmes in accordance with the new procedure		Evaluations performed by applying the new assessment model for new study programmes
	To expand communication with different SKVC audiences	Analysis of external evaluation results	Dissemination of analysis results adjusted according to different SKVC audiences	The number of conducted analyses of external evaluation results
		Information dissemination to hard-to-reach audiences (pupils, students, employers)	Information measures targeted at students, employers, pupils	The volume of prepared information measures
<b>To create favourable conditions for the free movement of</b>	To support the decentralised system of qualification recognition	Development of competences of higher education institutions in the area of recognition of	Created and/or implemented measures to enhance the competences of higher	Developed methodical and information tools for the recognition of qualifications

<p><b>persons when carrying out recognition of higher education-related qualifications awarded in foreign institutions and providing information about education systems and qualifications</b></p>		qualifications	education institutions to independently carry out the assessment of foreign qualifications	
				The number of recommendations and consultations provided to higher education institutions
				The number of organised trainings and other events to higher education institutions
	To improve information management and provision	Consistent collection and systematisation of information on the practice of recognition of foreign qualifications and the education systems of other countries	Implemented model of systematic information management and provision	The number of developed tools (descriptions/compendiums, etc.)
		Development of information publicity and dissemination		The number of implemented electronic means of information provision to target groups
To adapt the qualification recognition system to SKVC specific needs groups	Creation of the model of the qualification recognition system for refugees, people from conflict zones, displaced persons, people without identity	Creation of the qualification recognition system for specific needs groups	Approved legal acts	

		documents, etc.		
		Development of system regulation and methodology		
	To strengthen the international aspect of higher education institutions and other organisations in the field of higher education	Development of competences of international cooperation of higher education institutions and other organisations in the area of studies	Created and/or implemented measures to strengthen competences	The number of provided consultations and recommendations
The number of organised thematic events				
The number of developed respective information tools				

**Measures to strengthen the organisation**

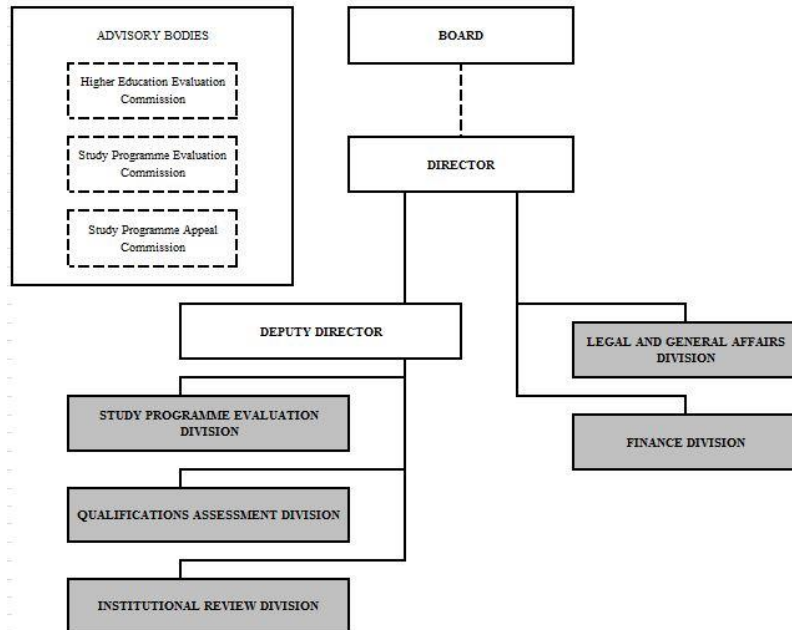
<b>Measures</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Measurement indicators</b>
To digitise activities and services	Digitisation of provided public services	Electronic provision of part of public services	Part of digitised public services
	Electronic data systematisation and analysis	Systematisation of part of information	The duration of provision/receipt of information
To optimise the quality management system	Updating of the quality management system	Updated quality management system	The number of optimised processes
To upgrade infrastructure	Upgrading of the IT infrastructure	Stable operation of the IT infrastructure	The number of system faults
To improve the system of internal communication and employee motivation	Creation of the employee motivation system	An increasing motivation level of employees	Surveys, annual performance assessments
	Improvement of the employee performance assessment system		

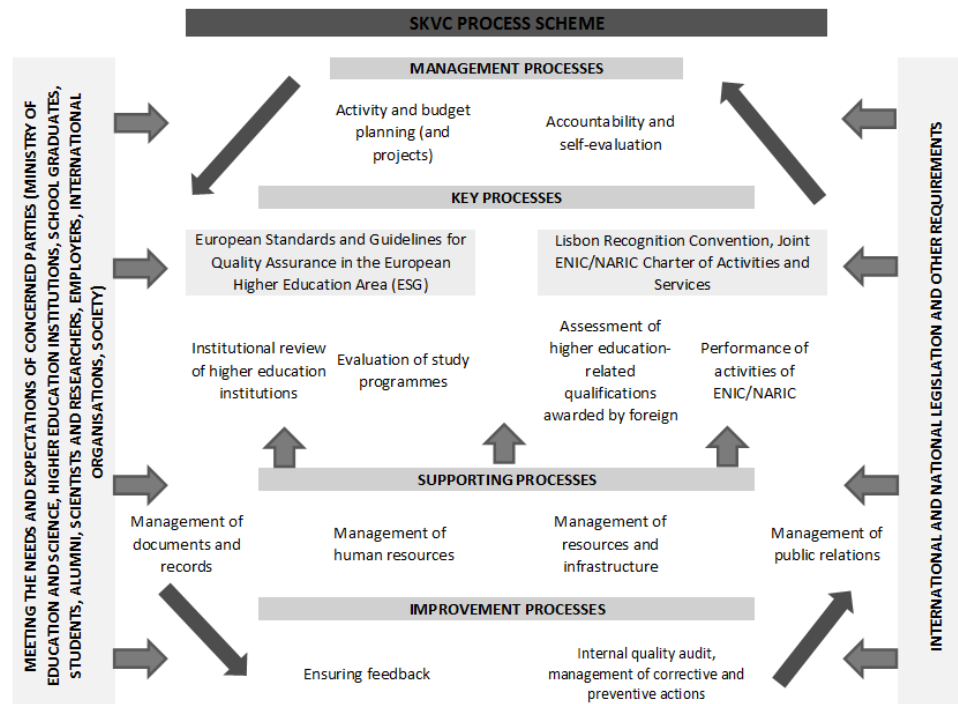
**SKVC ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE**



Approved by Order No V-77 of 29 th October 2015 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education.

**ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**





#### **Annex 4**

#### **DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO WHEN DEVELOPING THE STRATEGIC PLAN**

The SKVC Strategic Plan (2014–2016) has been developed having analysed a diversity of documents that define higher education quality and having reviewed the strategic plans of other similar organisations, as well as having consulted all employees of the Centre. The key documents referred to when developing the Strategic Plan are listed below:

- European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) (3rd edition, 2009) approved at the Forum of European Ministers of Education in 2005 (Bergen)
- Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention)
- Joint ENIC/NARIC Charter of Activities and Services adopted by the Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee, 09.06.2004)
- Resolution No. 212 “On Approval of the Description of the Procedure for Recognition of Education and Qualifications concerning Higher Education and Acquired under Educational Programmes of Foreign States and International Organisations” of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 29 February 2012
- Resolution No. XII-745 “On Approval of the National Education Strategy 2013–2022” of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania of 23 December 2013
- Republic of Lithuania Law on Education
- Republic of Lithuania Law on Higher Education and Research



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- Order No. ISAK-992 “On Approval of the Statute of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education” of the Minister of Education and Science of 1 June 2005