

# KAAs fulfilment of criteria for ENQA membership

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**Title:**

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# 1. Introduction

Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) underwent an early external evaluation by ENQA in March 2019 after KAA was assigned the status “Member under review” in 2018. The evaluation panel appointed by ENQA, after reviewing the documentation and after conducting the site visit, concluded that KAA partially meets the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG). Based on this, in its meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2019, the ENQA Board decided not to renew KAA's membership. In its decision, the Board noted that KAA could reapply for ENQA membership two years from the receipt of the decision, after having carefully followed up and implemented the panel's recommendations before re-applying. In the same decision, KAA was informed about the possibility of hosting a voluntary progress visit, which has an enhancement led approach, in order to determine the KAA's ESG compliance. Similarly, such a visit could take place two years after the receipt of the decision of the ENQA Board.

To this end, because two years have passed and KAA has worked intensively in fulfilling the ESGs and other recommendations given by the evaluation panel, KAA has expressed its interest in undergoing a progress visit which will assist it in identifying challenges in meeting ESGs as well as identifying good practices it has undertaken so far.

The following report presents an overview of the developments of the last two years of the KAA and specifically how the KAA has addressed the fulfilment of the ESGs and the recommendations of the evaluation panel.

## 2. Recent developments at KAA

Since 2019, many important developments have taken place, for which a short summary is provided below:

### - **Election of the permanent director of KAA**

From 2014 the position of the permanent director of KAA was exercised with different acting directors who were appointed by the Minister of Education on trimester basis. In 2020, following an extensive and transparent recruitment process, assisted by the Embassy of the United Kingdom in Kosovo, the new Director was elected and approved by the Government of the Republic of Kosovo. The elected Director of KAA has ensured stability in the works of KAA but also ownership of the external evaluation procedures conducted by KAA. The mandate of the elected director is three years, with the possibility of extension of another three years mandate by the Government.

### - **New membership of the State Council of Quality (SCQ)**

In February 2021, five members of the State Council of Quality, three international members and two local members, including the President and the Vice President of the SCQ, resigned from the Council. Following their resignation, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology opened a call for applications for new members of the Council in April 2021. The application process was handled by a special committee established by MEST, and its nominations were reviewed by the Assembly's Committee on Education as well as the Government of Kosovo, before being passed for final approval in the Kosovo Assembly in June 2021. The constitutive meeting of the State Council of Quality took place on 21.06.2021. The elected President of the State Council of Quality is Hasnije Ilazi, professor of Philosophy of the University of Prishtina.

### - **Organisation of the accreditation process online due to pandemic Covid 19**

Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) managed to successfully complete the accreditation process for the higher education institutions in Kosovo for the last two years. Despite the difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the strict measures applied by the National Health Institute in Kosovo, legal arrangements were enabled from the Minister of Education which allowed KAA to conduct its accreditation process online. Field visits were to be conducted

remotely (online) by the Expert Teams, but the KAA staff were to be physically present in all external evaluation processes in order to facilitate the work of the international experts and validate the information which were provided to them, specifically for the infrastructure and the learning resources. Although in 2020, only a selection of study areas was chosen to be evaluated by the SCQ, in 2021, KAA team managed to successfully conduct the accreditation process for 239 study programs and 9 institutional accreditation processes. KAA team managed to conduct all field visits within the legal deadline and enabled the State Council of Quality (SCQ) to make accreditation decisions in a timely manner. Although, the anti-covid measures have been substantially lifted by the Government of Kosovo, in 2022, KAA has continued to apply the online method mainly because KAA engages only international reviewers and different measures apply differently in European countries.

#### - **New initiatives for the legal changes at KAA**

Since 2019, KAA has been actively engaged in drafting and approving a separate law on the agency and the accreditation process. This initiative was endorsed by the Ministry of Education and the Government of Kosovo and was thus put in the legislative agenda of the Kosovo Assembly. The drafting of the project law on KAA has followed an extensive consultation process which included representatives of higher education institutions, students, civil society, international experts, etc. The scope of the law is to define the role of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency, in external quality assurance processes, including accreditation, monitoring, validation and all other quality assurance processes in higher education according to international best practices, including the relevant European standards in the field of quality assurance in higher education. With the proposal of the Minister of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation, the Government of the Republic of Kosovo, in its meeting held on 10.12.2021, approved the Draft Law on the Kosovo Accreditation Agency. Further to this, the Kosovo Assembly have approved the initial draft version of the Law on KAA, and this will follow a second and final approval in the Assembly. Currently, the Assembly's Commission on Education is conducting its final public hearing for the law, which have involved, in separate hearing sessions, various important actors such as rectors of the higher education institutions, quality assurance coordinators, representatives of civil society, etc.

#### - **Increased involvement of external stakeholders in KAA activities**

In the last two years, all meetings of the State Council of Quality have been monitored by the media and civil society representatives. In addition to the memorandum of cooperation with the consortium of civil society organisations dealing with education, KAA has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the QAIN project, which enables the local organization ORCA to monitor the work of the Agency and SCQ. Also, the work of the SCQ is monitored by BIRN, an investigative reporting network which promotes the freedom of speech, human rights, and democratic values in Southern and Eastern Europe. *See the [ORCA Report on the KAA on the Website](#)*

### - **Increased cooperation with higher education institutions**

The President of the State Council of Quality (SCQ), members of the Council and the director of KAA, have conducted site visits to all accredited institutions of higher education in Kosovo. During the visits, in addition to the senior management, meetings were held with student representatives and other members of the academic community. The aim of these meetings was to collect inputs from various stakeholders of higher education institutions about the accreditation procedures and the decision-making processes of SCQ. Concrete recommendations for increasing the quality of accreditation procedures and the overall quality of higher education system in Kosovo have been received from various stakeholders of HEIs which have been seriously addressed by the SCQ. *See the news from the sites visits on the KAA Website*

### - **Increased promotional activity of KAA**

The management of KAA has been committed to promotional activities aiming to increase the awareness among students about the accredited degrees offered in Kosovo. On 06.08.2021 KAA published the list of accredited programs in higher education institutions in the Republic of Kosovo for the new academic year 2021/2022. The list of decisions with accredited programs includes the decisions of the State Council of Quality (SCQ) dated 27.07.2021, but also the programs that have had previous accreditation. Also, with its own budget, KAA has published an advertising video which advises young students to visit the KAA website before deciding to apply in any of the Kosovo HEIs. We consider that through this promotional video, we reach to new students of Kosovo in order to inform them that no study program which is not on the list is valid. *See the list of accredited programmes on the KAA website; See the Promotional Video on the KAA Website.*

### - **Drafting of documents and policies**

Since 2019, KAA has undertaken serious activities to draft and approve several policies and procedures which formalise the accreditation procedures but also formalise the internal quality assurance system of KAA. These documents and policies have been mainly supported by donors through international expertise. The various new documents and policies produced and approved by KAA in the last two years, include the Follow Up and Monitoring Methodology, the Guideline for Expert Teams, the Regulation on Systematisation of Jobs at KAA, the Manual on Internal Evaluation of KAA staff, etc. More details about these documents are elaborated under chapter 3 of this document.

### - **Increased number of projects by donors**

Since 2019, KAA has increased the number of projects implemented by different donors and agencies. This includes the project on implementing a feasibility study for the overall digitalisation process, funded by the United States Embassy in Pristina - Fulbright Project.

With this support, the KAA on November 25, 2021, has finalized the project of implementing a feasibility study for the overall digitalization of processes. This project contributes to the digitalization and automation of all processes in KAA and will enable increased transparency for the public. Another important grant is the TAIEX grant, a European Union program dedicated to assisting and supporting institutions with Euro-integration aspirations. The project aims to support the KAA in the process of adopting and implementing European Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015). Thirdly, KAA was announced the winner of the USAID project "Increasing the participation of students in internal and external quality assurance processes in Kosovo".

#### - **Increased cooperation with other quality assurance agencies**

In the last two years, KAA has increased its cooperation with relevant regional and international quality assurance agencies. With the support of the Heras Plus project, funded by the Austrian Agency for International Development (ADA), the Kosovo Accreditation Agency is twinned with the Austrian counterpart Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation. The twinning project aims to exchange Austrian experiences for the KAA, through mutual visits, conferences, trainings, and consultations in the field of implementation of ESG standards. KAA staff will visit the Austrian Accreditation Agency and the Austrian partners will also visit Kosovo, where they will exchange experiences and best practices of institutional management, process management, quality assurance and results monitoring. Exchanges will take place at all levels related to quality in higher education.

At the invitation of the American counterpart agency - Association for Technology, Management and Applied Engineering (ATMAE), which accredits all academic programs in the field of technology and engineering in the US, the delegation of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) and MESTI (NARIC Center), in November 2021 stayed for a week in Orlando, Florida, USA. During meetings with US counterparts, ATMAE has expressed its readiness to support KAA with eminent experts to promote the development of academic programs in the field of technology and engineering in Kosovo. ATMAE executives have expressed their readiness for KAA staff to be involved, in the capacity of external experts, in the process of accreditation of academic programs in the USA. This is strong evidence that American counterparts believe in the values, academic and institutional integrity that the KAA represents.

Thirdly, it is important to mention the cooperation agreement signed with the Albanian Quality Assurance Agency. Through this cooperation agreement, it is planned to increase the cooperation between two agencies and thus impact the quality of educational institutions and academic degrees in the Albanian speaking countries.

# 3. Fulfilment of ENQA review recommendations

## 3.1 Activities, policy, and process for quality assurance

1. Find as soon as possible HE-wide consensus and consequently decide on a KAA Strategic Plan, including solid activity plans with performance indicators and well-defined responsibilities, so as to prepare a sound basis for regular future activities.

In the last review conducted by ENQA, the standard 3.1. Activities, policy, and processes for quality assurance, has been evaluated as partially compliant. To this end, KAA initiated a process of drafting a new strategic plan based on a comprehensive process which involved many stakeholders. The KAA Strategic Plan was initially drafted by the Agency staff, then 4 local experts were engaged and finally, with the support of the Heras Plus Project, a German expert was engaged to verify whether the strategic plan is in line with European standards and recommendations and ENQA. Details about the public discussion process can be found under the link:



<https://akreditimi.rks-gov.net/2021/12/01/aka-paraqet-ne-diskutim-publik-planin-strategjik-2021-2025-dhe-metodologjine-e-monitorimit/>

The State Council of Quality in the meeting held on December 18, 2021, has approved the Strategic Plan of KAA 2021-2025. The KAA Five-Year Strategic Plan has the following objectives:

- a) Restoration of KAA membership in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Register for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (EQAR).
- b) Consolidated legal framework that guarantees the institutional and financial independence of the KAA in conducting external quality assurance processes.
- c) Advanced management and administration system of KAA through the increase of physical and professional capacities.
- d) Improving the quality of the higher education sector through efficient and effective accreditation and monitoring procedures.
- e) Advanced digitalization of KAA procedures for an effective management of information and data of external evaluation procedures.

The approved Strategic Plan:



[https://akreditimi.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Plan-Strategjik-i-AKA\\_2021-2025\\_ALB.pdf](https://akreditimi.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Plan-Strategjik-i-AKA_2021-2025_ALB.pdf)

## 2. Involve students in the daily activities and the decision-making structure of KAA.

In the recent years, KAA has worked on establishing the mechanisms which allow the formal participation of students in the daily activities of KAA but also in its decision-making structures. Apart from inviting students to all its workshops and working groups, such as the working group for the revision of the Accreditation Standards, the working group for the drafting of the Law on KAA, and other formal meetings, KAA has planned under its Strategic Plan several activities which aim at increasing the involvement of students in its operations. The third strategic objective "Advanced management and administration system of KAA through the increase of physical and professional capacities", contains one measure which aims to strengthen the internal quality assurance system of KAA through increasing the cooperation with relevant stakeholders, such as students.

Additionally, in order to increase the involvement of students in decision making structure of KAA, the project law of KAA to be approved by the Assembly, stipulates that the State Council of Quality will consist of one student representative. Although KAA has advocated that student representatives in the decision-making body of KAA should have the equal right to vote as other members of the SCQ, the current text of the draft law on KAA stipulates that the student representative will be member of the SCQ without the right to vote. We acknowledge that this provision is not in line with the requirements of ESG and with the recommendations of the ENQA review panel, however we consider that this is a first important step towards raising the awareness among the academic community in Kosovo that students should be involved in senior decision-making bodies such as the State Council of Quality.

Further to these, KAA, supported by the US Embassy in Kosovo, is implementing a project entitled "Increasing Student Participation in Internal and External Quality Assurance Processes in Kosovo." The aim of the project is to encourage student participation in quality assurance activities in order to contribute to the improvement of the teaching and learning process. International and local experts engaged in the implementation of this project, have drafted a research report which provides a clear overview of student involvement in internal and external quality assurance processes and provides guidance for student engagement from Kosovo in these processes. Also, this research report is based on a comparative analysis made on the basis of best practices in Europe, on a local analysis made on the basis of KAA accreditation reports, on the legal requirements in force, as well as on a questionnaire conducted at the national level with more than 1000 students from public and private higher education institutions of Kosovo (HEIs). Following this research report, a Guideline for Student Engagement in QA will be produced which will be disseminated to all students and higher education institutions.

The research report about student involvement in internal and external quality assurance can be found here:



<https://akreditimi.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/1.Research-report-Increasing-student-participation-in-internal-and-exter....pdf>

### 3.3 Independence

*In conducting evaluations according to the new procedures as described in the Accreditation Manual 2018 make sure that operational independence and independence of formal outcomes is guaranteed.*

In the last review conducted by ENQA, the standard 3.3 Independence has been evaluated as partially compliant. The most important development which took place towards this standard is the drafting of the new law on Kosovo Accreditation Agency which will establish and strengthen the role and the scope of the KAA as an independent quality assurance agency in the Republic of Kosovo. It is important to note that the current political establishment in Kosovo has strongly supported the independence of KAA which has resulted in the fast procedures for the drafting of the new law on KAA, and its initial approval by the Government of Kosovo and the Kosovo Assembly.

### 3.4 Thematic Analysis

*Use data collected during accreditation processes and other activities to carry out thematic and system-wide analysis in order to support further development of the HE system in Kosovo.*

One of the most important developments which have taken place with regards to the implementation of ESG is thematic analysis, which has been evaluated as partially compliant in two evaluation processes conducted by ENQA in 2014, respectively in 2019. With funding from the Embassy of the United States of America, KAA has been supported by WUS Kosovo which implemented the project "Support to the Kosovo Accreditation Agency to meet some of the recommendations of ENQA." The project was implemented in the period September 2020 - September 2021 and aimed at establishing the KAA's Methodology for Thematic Analysis. KAA has, in addition to approving the Thematic Analysis Methodology, also implemented two thematic analyses:

- a) Preparing Kosovar Graduates for the Labour Market - The Perspective of Employers and Graduates.
- b) Thematic Analysis for Institutional Accreditation for HEIs.

Part of this project was also the training of KAA staff to implement in the future thematic analysis of topics of interest to the higher education system. This project involved all actors in higher education in Kosovo and the business community.

↓ [Methodology on thematic analysis](#)

↓ [Thematic analysis 1](#)

↓ [Thematic analysis 2](#)

### 3.5 Resources

*Take all necessary actions in order to assure adequate human and financial resources needed for conducting the activities expected from KAA.*

In the last review conducted by ENQA, the standard 3.5. Resources has been evaluated as partially compliant. One of the most important developments that took place in this regard is the election of the permanent Director of KAA. After almost six years, the new Director was elected and approved by the Government of the Republic of Kosovo. The mandate of the elected director is three years, with the possibility of extension of another three years mandate by the Government.

With regards to administrative officers, currently KAA employs eight (9) staff, of which 1 Finance Officer, 1 Administrative Officer, 1 IT Officer, 1 Legal Officer and 5 Officers for Evaluation and Monitoring. It is important to note, that in 2022 several announcements for Officers for Evaluation and Monitoring were opened. KAA is underway to finalise the recruitment process and by the end of the year to increase the number of staff to total 32 staff members.

The rest of the recruitment procedures for the approved 32 positions, will be concluded gradually, after KAA will move to new headquarters which were approved by the Government of Kosovo. The facility is modern with over 1000 square meters and meets all the needs of the KAA. The construction of the new headquarters is planned to be completed during 2022 and it is expected that KAA will move to the new facility by the end of 2022.

It is important to note that a Regulation on Systematisation of Jobs at KAA as well as a new organisational structure has been drafted and approved by SCQ.

### 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

*In order to collect feedback KAA should increase and describe in documents the implementation of formal rather than informal mechanisms to create solid routines of internal quality assurance based on principles like closed-loop practices and the four-eye system.*

In the last review conducted by ENQA, the standard 3.6. Internal quality assurance and professional conduct has been evaluated as partially compliant. In this direction, with the support of the WUS Kosova project, KAA has approved the Guide for Internal Evaluation of KAA staff. The purpose of this guide is performance management as an ongoing organizational process that is carried out to maximize staff productivity with the overall goal of improving the effectiveness of the agency. This guide is in line with the strategic goals of the KAA and requires open communication between managers and staff.

The document can be found under the link:



[https://akreditimi.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Manuali-per-Vleresimin-e-Stafit-te-AKK-ne-shqip\\_39100.pdf](https://akreditimi.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Manuali-per-Vleresimin-e-Stafit-te-AKK-ne-shqip_39100.pdf)

## 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

*Take care that in institutional and programme self-evaluations, in site visits and in review reports the ESG 2015 Standards Part I are addressed clearly.*

In the last review conducted by ENQA, the standard 2.1. Consideration of internal quality assurance conduct has been evaluated as substantially compliant. The revision of the current Accreditation Manual which has involved international and local expertise, is focused on harmonising the accreditation standards with the quality assurance arrangements employed by the higher education institutions.

## 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

*Make sure that during accreditation activities the workability of the methodologies is guaranteed.*

In the last review conducted by ENQA, the standard 2.2. Designing methodologies fit for purpose, has been evaluated as substantially compliant. KAA has continued to ensure full involvement of stakeholders drafting documents and revising its current policies. The drafting of the new Standards for PhD study programs ensured that all institutions of higher education were present and participated actively in the drafting of the new document.

Similarly, KAA has undertaken the reviewing process of the Accreditation Manual which applies for the BA and MA study programs. Funded by the Austrian ADA, the revision process has been initiated in 2021 and has included MESTI, SCQ, KAA, HEIs, local and international experts, representatives of donors, civil society, academia, students, etc. Roundtables and conferences were held with all higher education actors. There is now a revised draft of the Accreditation Manual which goes through the public review procedures. The new standards are expected to enter into force by May 2022, while trainings with HEIs will be held for 6 months to prepare for their application in October 2022.

## 2.3 Implementing processes

1. *Monitor and evaluate the implementation of accreditation activities from 2019 onwards thoroughly.*

In the last review conducted by ENQA, the standard 2.3. Implementing processes has been partially evaluated. To this end, in compliance with the Law on Higher Education of the Republic of Kosovo No. 04/037, the Administrative Instruction on Accreditation of HEIs in Kosovo 15/18 as well as the Accreditation manual, KAA has drafted a document which defines the follow up procedures and introduces a monitoring component which both complement the accreditation cycle. The document will serve as a guide for the KAA, higher education institutions, international experts, and the public at large to implement fair and transparent follow up procedures and monitoring procedures. In accordance with the national law but also with the ESG Standard 2.3 which defines that the nature of the follow-up will depend on the design of the external quality assurance, KAA has introduced a new feature of monitoring which aims to assess whether the accreditation conditions given by the SCQ continue to be met by KAA.

It is important to note, that all higher education actors were involved in the design of this document, through conferences, interviews, roundtables, and public hearings. This document was implemented with the support of the QAIN Project, funded by the Austrian Agency ADA. The document has been put on the agenda for approval at the SCQ meeting in February 2022.

The KAA Methodology on Monitoring and Follow Up can be found under the link:



<https://akreditimi.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/03-KAA-Methodology-on-Monitoring-and-Post-accreditation-Procedures-Report-Eng-Web-01.pdf>

2. *Concentrate on quality improvement, when monitoring the follow-up of recommendations to HEIs provided by expert panels.*

The Follow Up and Monitoring Methodology will start to be implemented by the end of year 2022. Until now there are no evidence of its implementation. However, the approach of the document is supportive towards the higher education institutions for the implementation of the accreditation standards. This approach which is embedded in the document, will ensure that the follow up and monitoring procedures aim for the quality improvement and quality enhancement of Kosovo HEIs.

## 2.4 Peer-review experts

*1. Make sure that the level of degree-work can and will be judged properly by the expert panels.*

In the last review conducted by ENQA, the standard 2.4. Peer – review experts, has been partially evaluated. To this end, KAA has undertaken efforts to both increase the number of its expert pool by conducting a transparent call for application for new members of the expert pool but also for the training of experts prior to their engagement in external reviews in Kosovo.

KAA with the support of the Heras Plus Project has approved an Information and Training Manual to provide practice-based guidance for international assessment experts conducting an external evaluation of higher education institutions in Kosovo. The manual is vital as the Agency has started to use it to provide experts with formal training on relevant topics of the accreditation process and the contextual understanding of the higher education landscape and related processes. The project has directly affected the quality of the services of the KAA for the external evaluation of higher education institutions, but also meets the ESG standards regarding the training of reviewers and producing of quality evaluation reports.

As the accreditation process in 2021 and 2022 is conducted online, all expert panels were all briefed about the document and were trained prior to their engagement in accreditation procedures in Kosovo.

The Training Manual can be found under the following link:



<https://akreditimi.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/The-KAA-Manual-2021-Albanian.pdf>

*2. Make sure that full students' participation in institutional reviews and program evaluations is guaranteed.*

KAA has seriously addressed the recommendation to ensure the full student's participation in institutional reviews and program evaluation. In 2021, KAA has increased considerably the number of student reviewers in the evaluation panels. Out of 120 accreditation panels at the program level, 90 of them included student reviewers. Whereas in 2022, from 130 accreditation panels for program evaluation, 120 have included a student reviewer, which is a significant progress compared to last three years, where the number of student reviewers for program panels was very low. In regards to institutional evaluations, the student representation on the panels has been fully accomplished, with 100% of the panels including at least one student.

3. *Build a network of national experts, including students, in order to participate in activities such as monitoring of the follow up of recommendations provided in review reports.*

The issue of building a national pool of experts has been extensively discussed among the academic community in Kosovo. Specifically, during the drafting of the Law on KAA, members of the working group have discussed the importance of having national peers in the evaluation panels, however, the present text of the Law on KAA again defines that only international experts are part of the evaluation panel. This prevents KAA from initiating the establishment of a national pool of experts. However, for national student reviewers, under the project "Increasing student participation in internal and external quality assurance processes in Kosovo" a Manual has been drafted which guides the student engagement in external quality assurance. Although the present law on higher education and the present text of the draft Law on KAA, defines that only international experts can be engaged, KAA can consider increasing its efforts for capacity building of Kosovar student representatives through engagement in different quality assurance exercises, such as introducing local student as observers in the accreditation procedures.

## 2.5 Criteria for outcomes

*Monitor how the existing rules for assessing standards and for decision making work out in reality. If needed, improvements both in decision rules and by way of trainings, may have to be considered.*

In the last review conducted by ENQA, the standard 2.5. Criteria for outcomes, has been evaluated as substantially compliant. In order to increase the transparency of SCQ decisions, KAA has initiated a project for drafting the document "Kosovo Subject Area Code". Through this document, KAA will clarify better the criteria for the outcomes when judging the study programs and the study field of the academic staff. The document, which has been supported by the QAIN project, currently is being under public discussion, and will be finalised by the June SCQ meeting.

## 2.6 Reporting

*Improve the quality of reports and make sure that they contain deeper analysis and a better connection with evidence and that the full reports are regularly published.*

In the last review conducted by ENQA, the standard 2.6. Reporting has been evaluated as partially compliant. To this end, two important developments need to be presented. At first, it is the introduction of the Training Manual for the Experts which has increased the quality of evaluation reports produced by the Expert Teams. Secondly, funded by the Embassy of the United States, the new KAA website has been developed and launched. The site is published in three languages, Albanian, English, and Serbian. All decisions and developments in KAA are published on the website. KAA has also launched the official Facebook profile, where all news, announcements, and developments in KAA are published.



See the new KAA Website: <https://akreditimi.rks-gov.net/>

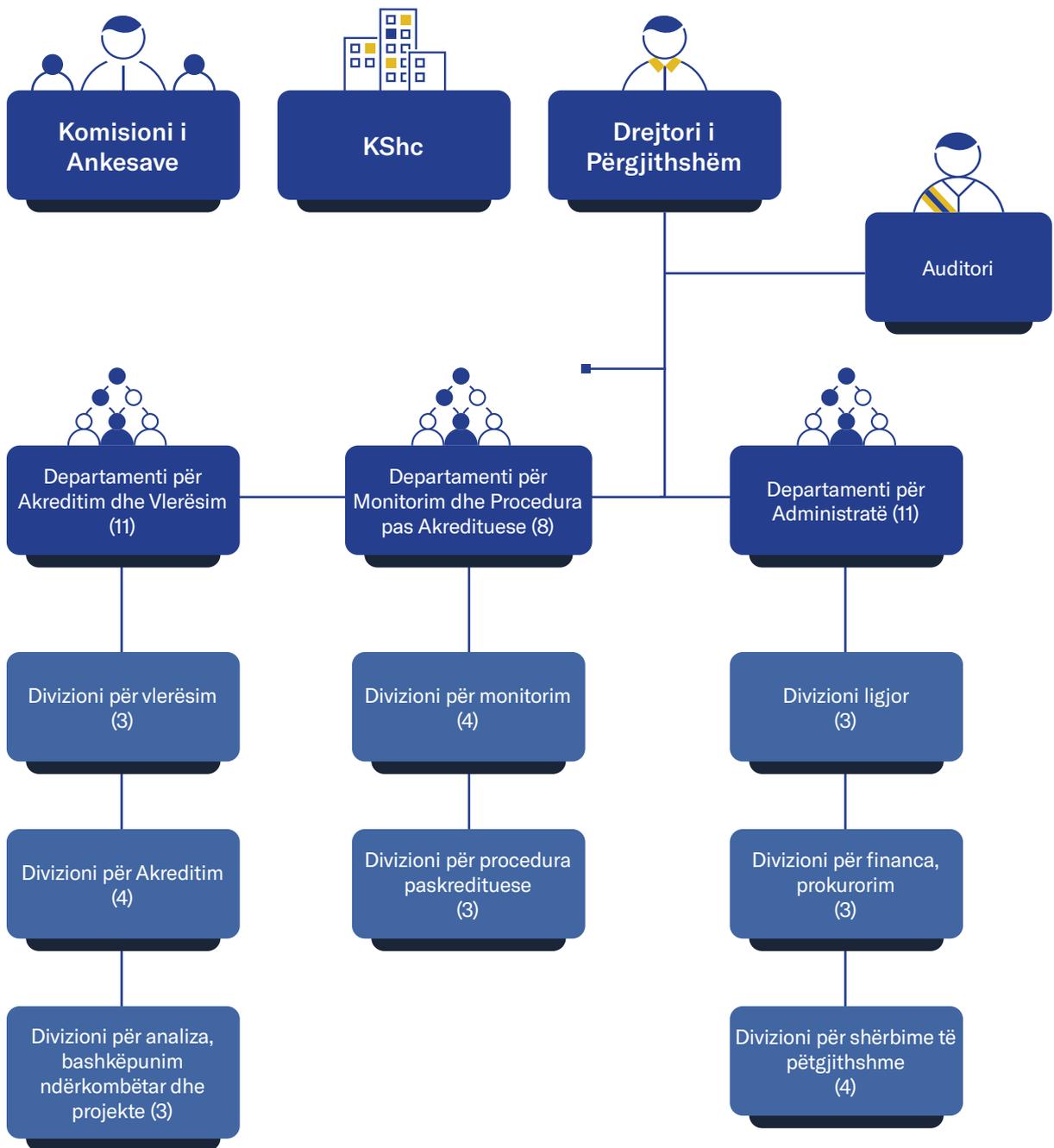
See the new official Facebook profile: <https://www.facebook.com/KAACosova>

## 4. Shortcomings and recommendations yet to be addressed

Despite the efforts made by the management of Kosovo Accreditation Agency, there are still shortcomings and flaws that needs to be addressed, as identified on the ENQA report for KAA. These shortcomings are of different nature and shall be addressed each accordingly.

One of the biggest challenges for KAA remains adoption of the Law on Accreditation Agency. First, the law is still in the process of approval within the Kosovo Assembly, and there is no clear deadline on when it will be approved. Furthermore, KAA has expressed concern about the content of the law, with some provisions being in contradiction with the ESG, especially in regards to the involvement of the students and industry in KAA and the system of Higher Education in Kosovo. In the ESG Standard 3.1 Activities, policy, and process for quality assurance, ENQA has evaluated KAA as only partially compliant with the standard, and has recommended that KAA should involve students in the daily activities and the decision making processes but also in the structure of KAA. However, in its draft law for KAA, students remain only as an observatory body, a practice which is in contradiction with the ENQA standards.

In the *ESG Standard 3.5, Resources*, which requires that agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, KAA has been evaluated as only partially compliant. Currently KAA operates with only 10 employees which is not an improvement of the existing situation. Although the new adopted organogram of KAA has a total of 32 positions approved, the recruitment process has stagnated due to the failure of Kosovo government to pass the Law on Public Administration. This has affected KAA tremendously, and if the recruiting process does not take place ahead of ENQA evaluation, KAA seriously risks to fail yet another standard, which would have colossal consequences in its objective. KAA has already drafted an organogram, which is expected to be approved along with the Law on KAA (*please see below*).



European and Kosovo context differs a lot in the way they are established and how the quality culture is perceived. Whilst most European countries use more flexible methodologies of evaluation, such as auditing of quality, Kosovo on the other hand uses a system which is built in the mandatory criteria, and it is composed of very strict and rigid procedures. All this lack of flexibility is a result of the national context where the system is vulnerable and academic integrity is not up to the desired level. This has imposed KAA that its main feature which is evaluation of institutions and their study programmes to be conducted with international experts. Local experts are permitted by law to take part in any sort of evaluation with KAA. Furthermore, even the new Law on KAA will impose this ban on local expert. Whilst this could be viewed as a positive aspect which will avoid any sort of nepotism or other sort of influences, it also comes at a price. Lack of local expert involved in the evaluation hinders the national context, and important inputs are left out due to these permissions. Although in its report, *Standard 2.4*, ENQA made it clear that KAA should build a network of national experts, including students, in order to participate in activities such as monitoring of the follow-up of recommendations provided in review reports, KAA has it legally forbidden to use such practice (see Article 6, Paragraph 1.6 and Article 11, Paragraph 1.9 on the Law on KAA



<https://konsultimet.rks-gov.net/viewConsult.php?ConsultationID=41176>.

## 5. Conclusion

There have been many developments which have affected positively the work of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency. The drafting of the new law on KAA is clearly seen as one of the most important documents which will have direct impact in the strengthening of the KAA operational and decision-making independence. The drafting and approval of the new Methodology for Follow Up Procedures and Monitoring is also seen as an important policy because it will ensure the continuity of quality assurance activities conducted by KAA by bridging the gap between accreditation visits.

However, KAA acknowledges that more work is needed to be done in different segments which affect the overall quality of the external quality assurance procedures. KAA is very thankful for the opportunity of this progress visit, as through it will be able to identify its shortcomings and thus take actions for improvement.



