Approval of the Application by Agence pour l'Evaluation de la Qualité de l'Enseignement Supérieur (AEQES) for Renewal of Inclusion on the Register

Application of:	2020-12-31
Agency registered since:	2011-06-01
External review report of:	2022-04-27
Review coordinated by:	European Association for Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ENQA)
Review panel members:	Padraig Walsh, Oana Sarbu, Damian Michalik, Carmen Fenoll
Decision of:	2022-06-27
Registration until:	2022-02-28
Absented themselves from decision-making:	Jacques Lanares
Attachments:	1. External Review Report (separate file), 2022-04-27

1. The application of 2020-12-31 adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.

2. The Register Committee confirmed eligibility of the application on 2021-01-22.

3. The Register Committee considered the external review report of 2022-04-27 on the compliance of AEQES with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015 version).

Analysis:

4. In considering AEQES's compliance with the ESG, the Register Committee took into account the following activities:

- *Programmatic evaluation,* including its two formats:

  - *Initial evaluation procedure*, when a study programme is assessed for the first time

  - *Continuous evaluation procedure*, when the study programme has already been assessed

- *Institutional review*

5. The Register Committee found that the report provides sufficient evidence and analysis on AEQES's level of compliance with the ESG.

6. With regard to the specific European Standards, the Register Committee considered the following:

ESG 3.1 – Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

7. The Committee concurred with panel's conclusion, but highlighted the panel's recommendation that AEQES should find ways of attracting students in QA and involve students beyond the Steering committee and the evaluation panels (for example in the Appeals Commission).

ESG 3.3 – Independence

8. Since 2014, the agency is independent in defining the number of staff members, selection criteria in the hiring processes and in managing its own staff budget. The lack of legal personality, however, prevents the agency from being itself the legal employer; the staff has thus been technically employed by the Ministry (also discussed in ESG 3.5). The panel was confident that, despite this arrangement, the agency is autonomous in its decision making on staff matters.

9. **The Committee was able to concur with the panel's conclusion and agreed that the independence of the agency was assured currently. The Committee, however, noted that the current arrangement of employing staff could, theoretically, enable an infringement on the independence of the agency in case the Ministry were to misuse the powers it has as the legal employer. These arrangements should therefore receive close attention in future reviews.**

ESG 3.5 – Resources

10. Since the registration of AEQES on EQAR in 2012, the Register Committee flagged for attention the limited financial resources of the agency. Such conditions also hindered the hiring process, leading to overburdening of the staff members. The panel noted that since the last review the budget of the agency has increased, ensuring greater sustainability of the agency's activities. AEQES has also hired additional staff in the recent years.

11. From the report, however, the Committee learned that the type of employment contracts are defined by the Ministry; the staff is mainly hired through temporary contracts rather than statutory ones, leading to frequent staff turnover.

12. **The Register Committee welcomed the efforts made by the agency, and found that AEQES has addressed earlier raised flags on the sufficiency of its resources. The Committee agreed that the agency is now compliant with the standard, but highlighted the panel's recommendation that AEQES**

and the Ministry should work towards finding solutions that ensure more stable work arrangements that prevent the staff turnover.

13. For the remaining standards, the Register Committee was able to concur with the review panel's analysis and conclusion without further comments.

Conclusion:

14. Based on the external review report and the considerations above, the Register Committee concluded that AEQES demonstrated compliance with the ESG (Parts 2 and 3) as follows:

Standard	Review panel conclusion	Register Committee conclusion
2.1	Full compliance	**Compliance**
2.2	Full compliance	**Compliance**
2.3	Full compliance	**Compliance**
2.4	Full compliance	**Compliance**
2.5	Full compliance	**Compliance**
2.6	Full compliance	**Compliance**
2.7	Full compliance	**Compliance**
3.1	Full compliance	**Compliance**
3.2	Full compliance	**Compliance**
3.3	Full compliance	**Compliance**
3.4	Full compliance	**Compliance**
3.5	Full compliance	**Compliance**
3.6	Substantial compliance	**Compliance**
3.7	(not expected)	**Compliance** (by virtue of applying)

15. **AEQES complies with all standards and therefore continues to comply substantially with the ESG as a whole.**

16. **The Register Committee approved the application for renewed AEQES's inclusion on the Register. AEQES's renewed inclusion shall be valid until 2027-04-30**[1].

[1] Inclusion is valid for five years from the date of the external review report, see §4.1 of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.