

Ms. Baiba Ramiņa
Director
Academic Information Centre (AIC)
Vaļņu Street 2
LV-1050 Riga
Latvia

Bern, 17 July 2018

Subject: Membership of AIC in ENQA

Dear Ms. Ramiņa,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting of 21 June 2018, the Board of ENQA took the decision that AIC meets the necessary requirements for being granted ENQA Membership for five years from the date of the decision. The Board's decision was based on the review report and report scrutiny, and overall, the Board got a positive impression of AIC's commitments for reaching substantial compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). At the same time, AIC is encouraged to keep developing its activities for instance by giving more attention to its assessment reports to make sure that the rationale for the final decision would always be clearly reflected in each report, as also recommended by the review panel.

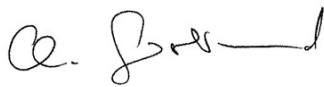
In addition, the Board is of the opinion that the panel's suggestions for further improvement under ESG 3.2 are important and AIC is encouraged to reflect on them. The Board supports the panel's consideration that a communication strategy and some overall "branding" of the agency would benefit AIC in its aspirations.

The Board expects a follow-up report to be based on the recommendations found in the panel report (as outlined in the attached annex) within two years of its decision, i.e. by June 2020.

In addition, the Board encourages AIC to take advantage of the voluntary progress visit – a new enhancement-led feature in the review process. The visit would take place in about two years' time from this decision. The ENQA Secretariat will be in touch with you in about a year's time to discuss this possibility. The costs of this visit have already been included as part of the review fee and are non-refundable except for the travel costs of the experts. More information about the progress visit can be found in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews.

Please accept my congratulations to AIC for the positive review outcome and I look forward to fruitful future cooperation.

Yours sincerely,



Christoph Grolimund
President

Annex: Areas for development

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As outlined by the review panel, AIC is recommended to take appropriate action, so far as it is empowered to do so, on the following issues:

ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

AIKA/AIC is recommended to continue to ensure that all quality evaluation processes (accreditation of study programmes, licensing and institutional accreditation) evolve further to become fully compliant with the ESG. The high-level cabinet regulations still prescribe a quality control approach, which AIKA/AIC should continue to influence positively with the support of HEIs.

ESG 3.3 INDEPENDENCE

It is recommended that the AIKA executive and the Ministry representatives continue to support the concept of the new model for institutional review under the remit of AIC/AIKA. There is also a need to ensure that AIKA requires full independence in designing methodologies going forward.

ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

AIC is recommended to consider developing a comprehensive thematic analysis track, which would evolve analysis driven by the general results of the external quality assurance with a focus on strategic improvement for the higher education system.

ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

It is recommended that AIKA implements the new guidelines for self-evaluation reports and joint expert reports and in doing so are mindful of the need to ensure that:

- the ESG standard 1.7 Information management extends to all three assessment procedures and to ensure they cover the rationale behind the ESG standard;
- the standard for public information (ESG 1.8) and the clarity and objectivity of information about learning outcomes, admission criteria etc. is included for the QA procedure of licencing the study programme.

ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE

The recently revised QA guidelines are a good improvement and well received. Improvement is a continuous cycle and AIKA is encouraged to continue to evolve to ensure that all methodologies continue to be fit for purpose. In doing so, AIKA is recommended to define each individual procedure more clearly including any potential relationship between them.

ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES

The methodologies and criteria applied to the decision-making processes in the CAS and CLSP and the external Council of Higher Education could benefit from additional clarity. The decision-making process applied by the joint committee could benefit by referring the report back to the expert panels where additional information or clarification could be sought in cases where contradictions or discrepancies occur.

ESG 2.6 REPORTING

AIKA is encouraged to provide more information in the final reports on the rationale or analytical side of the decision made and also to include the rich opinion on the professional regulatory context that was considered by the Committee making the final decision.

ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

AIC/AIKA is recommended to consider revising those aspects of the appeals process and procedures which may potentially undermine the perception of an independent objective decision-making and describes in the respective document the impact of the appeal decision made by the Chairperson of AIC on the accreditation decision of CAS/CLSP.