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# **IO7 - Methodological approach to the European public administration accreditation in the new EU member countries**

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in cooperation with all partners of the PAQUALITY project

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*Note: The report expresses the opinion of the authors and contributors. The EC doesn't have responsibility for any utilisation of information included.*



## Contents

Introduction to the IO7 .....	5
I. Recommendations for improvement of EAPAA criteria and procedures.....	6
1 Introduction.....	6
2 Survey methodology .....	6
2.1 Main research questions .....	6
2.2 Sample .....	7
2.3 Survey respondents .....	9
3 Main findings.....	11
3.1 Reasons for applying for the EAPAA accreditation .....	11
3.2 Process of preparing for accreditation and experiences regarding the EAPAA guidelines .....	12
3.3 Experiences regarding the site visit and its outputs .....	15
3.4 Recommendations to EAPAA from the programmes.....	17
4 Summary of findings and recommendations to EAPAA.....	19
References.....	20
II. Compatibility of national accreditation systems with EAPAA accreditation: selected CEE countries.....	21
1 Introduction.....	21
2 National accreditation systems and EAPAA accreditation.....	21
2.1 Bulgaria .....	21
2.2 Czech Republic.....	23
2.3 Hungary.....	25
2.4 Romania .....	26
2.5 Slovakia .....	29
2.6 Slovenia.....	33
3 Conclusions.....	35
References.....	36
III. Feasibility study on an acceptance of EAPAA accreditation on national levels.....	37
1 Introduction.....	37
2 Methodology and materials .....	37
3 Main findings.....	38
3.1 Content .....	38
3.2 Procedures.....	39
4 Summarization of implications.....	40

IV. Feasibility study on international accreditation/ evaluation of the PhD programmes in new EU member states .....	41
1 Introduction.....	41
2 Problem statement: Recognizing the importance of external quality assurance/evaluation of PhD programmes.....	41
3 Research Questions and Methodology .....	42
4 Results .....	44
4.1 Incentives/benefits behind applying for international accreditation .....	44
4.2 Barriers for applying for international accreditation .....	46
5 Concluding remarks.....	46
References.....	47
Annex I – Questionnaire used for surveying experiences related to EAPAA criteria and procedures .....	49
Annex II – country reports for the feasibility study on an acceptance of EAPAA accreditation on national levels in selected countries (Part IV of this report) .....	54
Bulgaria.....	54
Czechia.....	58
Hungary .....	62
Romania.....	66
Slovakia.....	71
Slovenia .....	75
Annex III – Research template used for study on the relevance of EAPAA accreditation for PhD programmes and country feasibility studies (Part III of this report).....	78
Bulgaria.....	79
Czech Republic.....	82
Hungary .....	84
Romania.....	89
Slovakia.....	92
Slovenia .....	97

## Introduction to the IO7

This 7th intellectual output (IO7) represents a report prepared within the PAQUALITY project. The PAQUALITY project aims to support changes in the area of public administration (PA) education in conformity with Bologna objectives, mainly:

- Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies, and
- Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programs of study, training and research, which haven't been fully applied in the area of the public administration high education in Slovakia and the new EU states yet.

**The aims** of activities conducted in order to prepare the IO7 were

- to perform an investigation on a compatibility of the EAPAA accreditation with national accreditations in all countries of institutions partnering in the PAQUALITY project and
- to develop a feasibility study on the recognition of the EAPAA accreditation by national accreditation bodies, including recommendations what could be done for an improvement.

Activities on this output started in January 2021. Team from the Masaryk University was leading and coordinating the whole preparation of this intellectual output in cooperation with partners from Corvinus University, Ljubljana University, EAPAA and NISPAcee. All other partners of the PAQUALITY project participated in preparation of this output and developed their input for this report related to their own programmes and countries and this report is based on their valuable contribution also.

**This intellectual output has the following four parts and main authors:**

- I. recommendations for an improvement of EAPAA criteria and procedures (prepared by David Špaček);
- II. compatibility of national accreditation systems with EAPAA accreditation in selected CEE countries (prepared by Juraj Nemec and David Špaček based on inputs prepared by all partners);
- III. feasibility study on an acceptance of EAPAA accreditation on national levels in selected countries (prepared by Primož Pevcin based on inputs prepared by all partners);
- IV. study on the EAPAA accreditation relevance for PhD programmes in selected countries (prepared by Éva Kovács and David Špaček).

# I. Recommendations for improvement of EAPAA criteria and procedures

## 1 Introduction

This text represents the first component of the IO7 prepared within the PAQUALITY project and its activities related to preparation of recommendations for improving EAPAA's criteria and procedures. It was prepared separately to other components of the IO7.

Activities on the IO7 started based on discussions with project partners during the Transnational Project Meeting that was organized within the PAQUALITY project in November 2020. It was agreed that for this output

- a short survey would be prepared and addressed to all programmes that had been evaluated by the EAPAA, and,
- if needed (based on the survey results), interviews with representatives of a selected sample of the programmes (based on the survey results) would be conducted.

Draft research methodology was prepared and distributed to core partners for this activity (i.e., to partners from Corvinus University, University of Ljubljana, EAPAA, and, also, to NISPAcee as the main coordinator) at the beginning of February 2021. Following the feedback received, the draft version of the survey was revised and language-corrected and an online survey was prepared using the MS Forms software. EAPAA was asked to distribute the call for participation in the survey on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Eventually, due to low response rate two rounds of communication with contact persons from the programmes were conducted with a help of EAPAA and the possibility to join the survey was extended and the questionnaire remained open until 9 April.

Finally, 22 completed questionnaires were obtained and this component of the IO7 is based on their analysis.

In the following text we present:

- Research methodology
- Main findings
- Recommendations based on them.

## 2 Survey methodology

### 2.1 Main research questions

The main aim of the survey was to elicit perceptions of representatives of programmes already accredited by EAPAA about their motivations to apply for EAPAA accreditation as well as about the process and results thereof.

The survey was prepared in order to answer the following 4 main **research questions**:

RQ1: What were the reasons for applying for the EAPAA accreditation? Why did the programmes apply for EAPAA accreditation?

RQ2: What were the experiences regarding the EAPAA guidelines and the process of preparing for accreditation, in particular the preparation of the self-assessment report?

RQ3: What were the experiences regarding the site visit and its outputs?

RQ4: What recommendations would the programmes address to the EAPAA in order to make the accreditation procedure more efficient?

The survey combined open-ended and close-ended questions. For the close-ended questions, especially Likert scale questions were used for measuring opinions and attitudes of representatives of the PA programmes. In the survey design we also tried to incorporate our own experiences with the EAPAA accreditation, findings presented in the IO6 of the PAQUALITY project and, also, EAPAA’s guides published; we used especially the EAPAA’s Site Visit Manual from 2013, because the site visit is perceived by the EAPAA as the most critical part of the review and accreditation process.

The final version of the survey that was translated in the online survey is included in the Annex I of this intellectual output. The MS Forms software allowed us to easily import the survey data that were processed in the MS Excel. Due to the relatively low number of completed questionnaires and overall positive survey results it was agreed that no deep statistical analysis of data would be carried out. So only basic descriptive statistics are presented in this document.

## 2.2 Sample

We expected survey respondents to be representatives of PA programmes that have undergone EAPAA accreditation. We wanted to obtain answers especially from respondents who themselves participated/were more involved in the programmes’ EAPAA accreditation (e.g. in preparing the self-evaluation report, organizing the site visit).

With the help of EAPAA, the survey was distributed to contact persons of all the programmes that have been accredited or certified by the EAPAA so far. Their list was available on EAPAA’s web pages (<https://www.eapaa.eu/accredited-programmes>) and contained the following programmes (as of 8. 2. 2021):

**Table 1 – List of programmes (re-)accredited/certified by the EAPAA**

Country	No	Organisation	Programme	Level	(RE-)Accredited) / (RE-)Certified
Belgium	4	Catholic University, Leuven; Faculty of Social Sciences	European Politics and Policies	MA	A 2012 – 2019
			Public Management and Public Policy	MA	Re 2018-2025
		Ghent University; School of Economics and Business Administration	Public Administration and Management	BA	A 2017-2024
			Public Administration and Management	MA	A 2017-2024
Czech Republic	2	Masaryk University; Faculty of Economics and Administration	Public Administration (MFTAP)	MA	CA 2019-2022
			Public Economy and Administration (VES)	MA	RE 2019-2026
Egypt	2	American University Cairo; Department of Public Policy and Administration, School of Global Affairs and Public Policy	Public Administration	MA	A 2017-2024
			Public Policy	MA	A 2017-2024
Estonia	2	University of Technology, Talinn; Faculty of Social Sciences	Public Administration and Governance	BA	RE 2016-2023

Country	No	Organisation	Programme	Level	(RE-)Accredited) / (RE-)Certified	
			Public Administration	MA	RE 2016-2023	
Germany	1	Universität Potsdam; Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Potsdam Centre for Policy and Management	Public Management	EX MA	RE 2019-2026	
Hungary	2	Corvinus University of Budapest; Faculty of Economics, Department of Public Policy and Management	Public Policy and Management	MA	RE 2019-2026	
			Public Policy and Management	MA	A 2019-2026	
Kazakhstan	3	KIMEP University, Almaty; Department of Public Administration, College of Social Sciences	Public Administration	MA	A 2012-2019	
			Nazarbayev University; Graduate School of Public Policy	Public Policy	MA	A 2019-2026
			Public Administration	MA	A 2019-2026	
Netherlands	30	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam; Faculty of Social Sciences	Public Administration and Organization Science	BA	Re 2018-2025	
			Public Administration	MA	Re 2018-2025	
		University of Twente; Enschede, Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences	Public Administration	BA	Re 2018-2025	
			Public Administration	MA	Re 2018-2025	
			European Studies	MA	Re 2018-2025	
			Public Management	EX MA	Re 2013-2020	
		University of Twente, Enschede; Department of Public Administration, Netherlands Institute of Government	Doctorate	PhD	A 2019-2026	
			Leiden University; Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs	Public Administration	BA	Re 2018-2025
		Public Administration		MA	Re 2018-2025	
		Public Sector Management		MA	A 2018-2025	
		Crisis and Security Management		MA	A 2018-2025	
		Radboud University, Nijmegen; Nijmegen School of Management	Public Administration	BA	Re 2018-2025	
			Public Administration	MA	Re 2018-2025	
		Erasmus University Rotterdam; Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences	Public Administration	BA	Re 2018-2025	
			Public Administration	MA	Re 2018-2025	
			International Public Management and Public Policy	MA	A 2018-2025	
			Public Information Management	Post-initial MA	A 2018-2025	
			Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science	Research MA	A 2018-2025	
		The Netherlands School of Public Administration (NSOB), The Hague	Administration in Governance	EX MA	RE 2018-2025	
			Public Administration	EX MA	RE 2017-2024	
			Strategic Urban Studies	EX MA	AC 2013-2020	
		Utrecht University; Faculty of Law, Economics and Governance	City Administration (Metropole)	EX MA	AC 2013-2020	
			Public Administration and Organization Science	BA	RE 2018-2025	
			Public Administration and Organization Science	MA	RE 2018-2025	
			Public Administration and Organization Science	EX MA	A 2018-2025	
		Tilburg University; Tilburg Law School	Public Administration and Organization Science	R MA	A 2018-2025	
			Public Governance	BA	RE 2018-2025	
			Public Governance	MA	RE 2018-2025	
		Maastricht University	Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science	R MA	A 2018-2025	
			Public Policy and Human Development	MA	A 2018-2025	

Country	No	Organisation	Programme	Level	(RE-)Accredited) / (RE-)Certified
Poland	2	Cracow University of Economics; Faculty of Public Economy and Administration	Public Economy and Administration	BA	A 2019-2026
			Public Economy and Administration	MA	A 2019-2026
Portugal	1	Instituto Universitario de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), Lisbon	Public Administration	MA	C A 2017-2020
Romania	4	Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca; Faculty of Political and Administrative Sciences	Public Administration	MA	RE 2014-2021
		National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest; Faculty of Public Administration	Public Administration	BA	RE 2018-2025
			Public Administration 'Public Sector management'	MA	RE 2018-2025
		Bucharest University of Economic Studies; Department of Administration and Public Management, Faculty of Administration and Public Management	Public Administration	BA	A 2019-2026
Russia	4	National Research University; Higher School of Economics, Faculty of Social Sciences, School of Public Administration	Public Administration	BA	A 2017-2024
			Public Administration	MA	A 2017-2024
		Institute of Public Administration and Civil Service (IPACS); Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA)	Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA)	EX MA	A 2020-2027
		Tyumen State University; Institute of State and Law	Public Administration	BA	C C 2018-2021
Slovak Republic	2	Matej Bel University; Faculty of Economics and Regional Development	Territorial Studies	BA	C C 2018-2021
			Territorial Studies	MA	C C 2018-2021
Slovenia	2	University of Ljubljana; Faculty of Administration	Public Administration	MA	A 2015-2022
			Public Sector Governance	A SP	RE 2018-2025
Sweden	2	Gothenburg University, School of Public Administration	Public Administration	BA	A 2012-2019
			Public Administration	MA	A 2012-2019
Switzerland	2	University of Bern; Center of Competence for Public Management	Public Administration	EX MA	Re 2016-2023
		Inst. de hautes études en administration publique, Chavannes-près-Rennes	Public Administration	EX MA	Re 2013-2020
Turkey	2	Public Administration Institute for Turkey and the Middle East (TODAIE), Ankara	Public Administration	MA	Re 2016-2023
		Middle East Technical University, Ankara	Political Science and Public Administration	BA	A 2018-2025

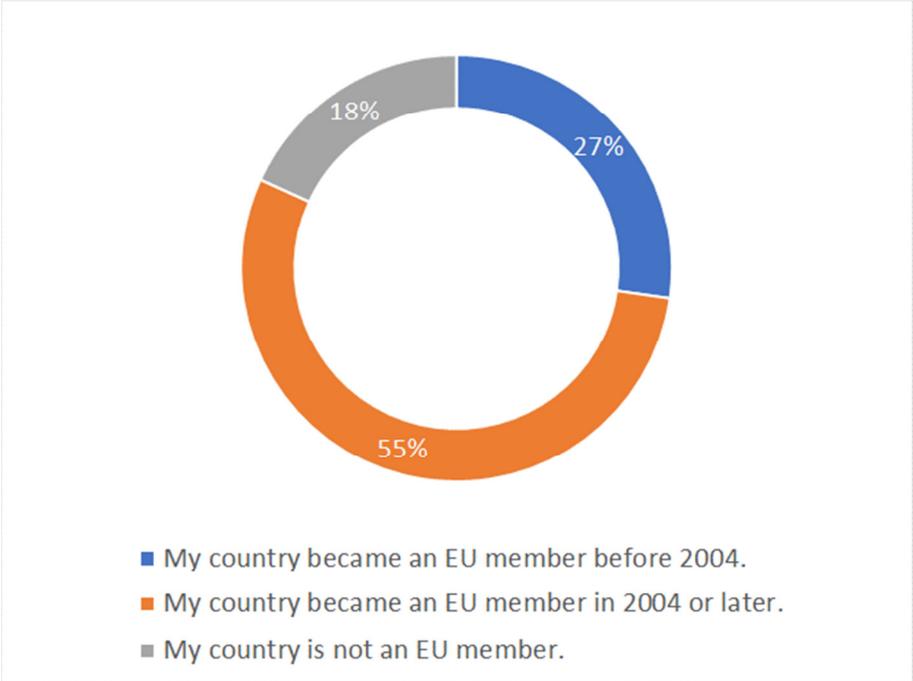
Source: Author based on information on EAPAA accredited programmes.

### 2.3 Survey respondents

As noted, we obtained 22 completed questionnaires. Because we wanted to gather as many answers from the programmes as possible we did not to ask respondents about the name of their programme or higher education institution, neither we asked about their country. Therefore, it was possible that more persons from one programme participated in the survey and we cannot assess overall response rate. We also promised the respondents that their replies will be treated as strictly confidential and will in no way be revealed publicly. Still, we differentiated location of programmes by inclusion of a question about year of entrance of a country to the EU in order to be able to separate answers from programmes situated in old EU member states, new EU member states and also from programmes in countries that are outside the EU.

As indicated in Figure 1, majority of questionnaires (12 out of the total 22, i.e. 55 %) were completed by respondents from countries that became EU members in 2004 or later, i.e. from countries we consider as new EU member states in the PAQUALITY project; 6 respondents (27 %) stated that their country became an EU member before 2004 and 4 (18 %) indicated that their country was not an EU member.

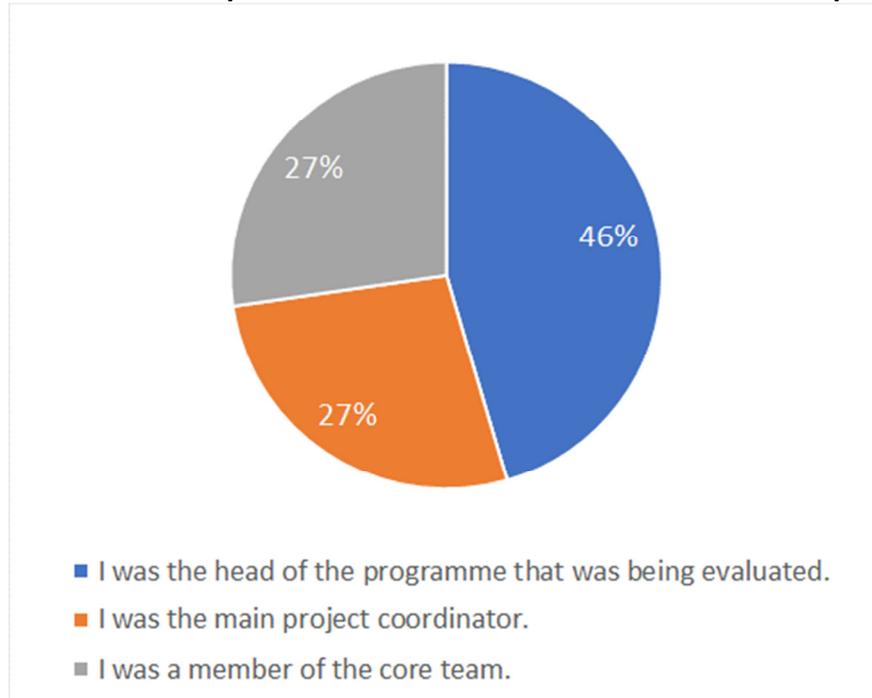
**Figure 1 – Country of respondents**



Source: Author.

Figure 2 informs about roles that, according to respondents, best suited their activities during the EAPAA accreditation of their programmes. Most of the respondents were heads of the programme that was being evaluated by the EAPAA (indicated by 10 out of 22, i.e. by 45 %).

**Figure 2 – Involvement of respondents in the EAPAA accreditation of their programmes**



Source: Author.

One respondent who was a head of the programme indicated that he/she was the core team member too. Another one stated his/her additional role as a lecturer, another one indicated that he/she had been the main project coordinator as well. One respondent who selected primarily the main project coordinator role added that he/she had been the core team member too.

### 3 Main findings

In the following text we present main findings. The text is organized around the main research questions enumerated in the above sub-point 2.1.

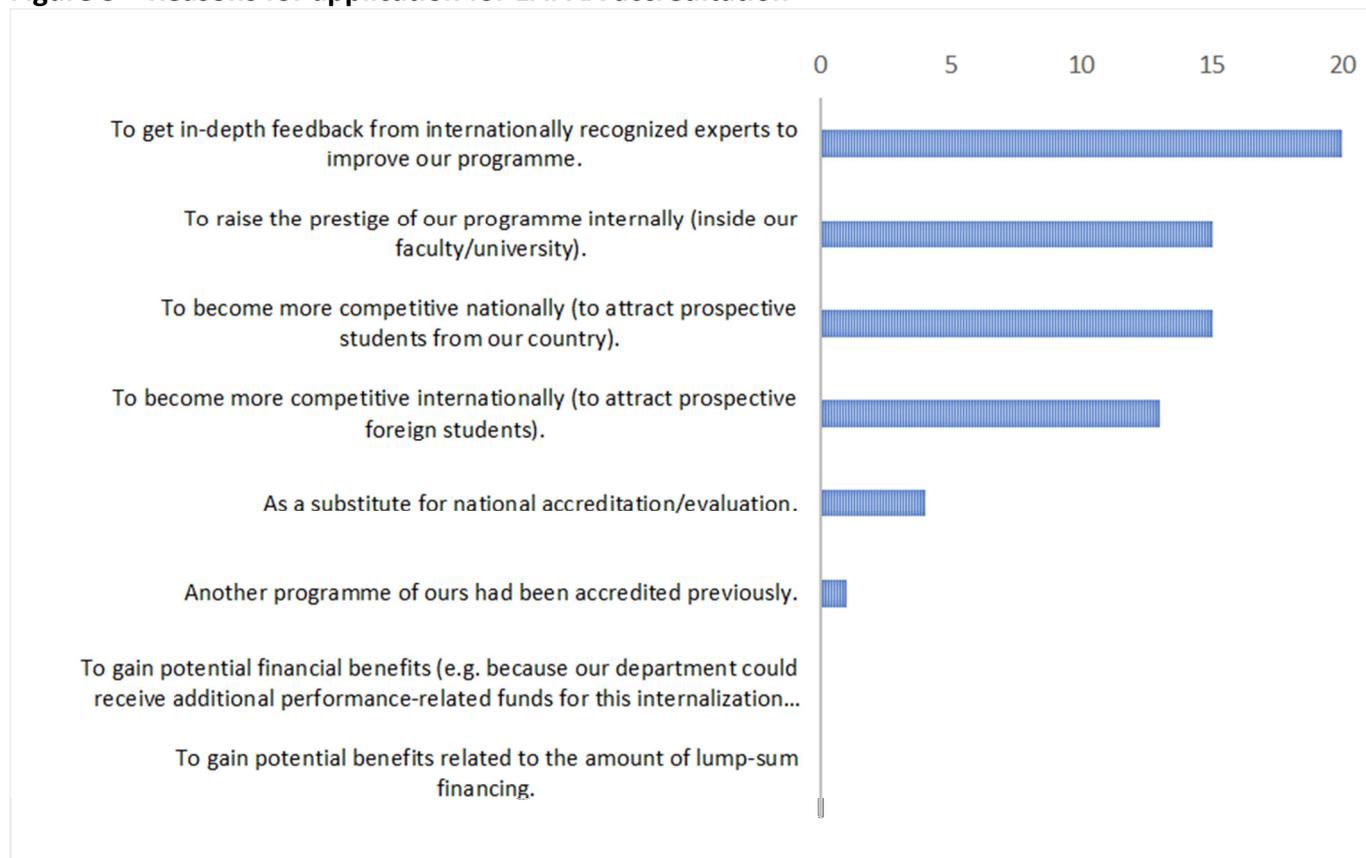
#### 3.1 Reasons for applying for the EAPAA accreditation

In the survey, representatives of programmes were asked to order several reasons for application for the EAPAA accreditation according to their importance. The data suggests that particularly the following reasons were the most important for the programmes to apply for the EAPAA accreditation:

- To get in-depth feedback from internationally recognized experts to improve our programme.
- To raise the prestige of our programme internally (inside our faculty/university).
- To become more competitive nationally (to attract prospective students from our country).
- To become more competitive internationally (to attract prospective foreign students).

This is indicated in the below Figure 3 that informs about the most important reasons as stated (ordered) by respondents on the first three positions.

**Figure 3 – Reasons for application for EAPAA accreditation**



Source: Author.

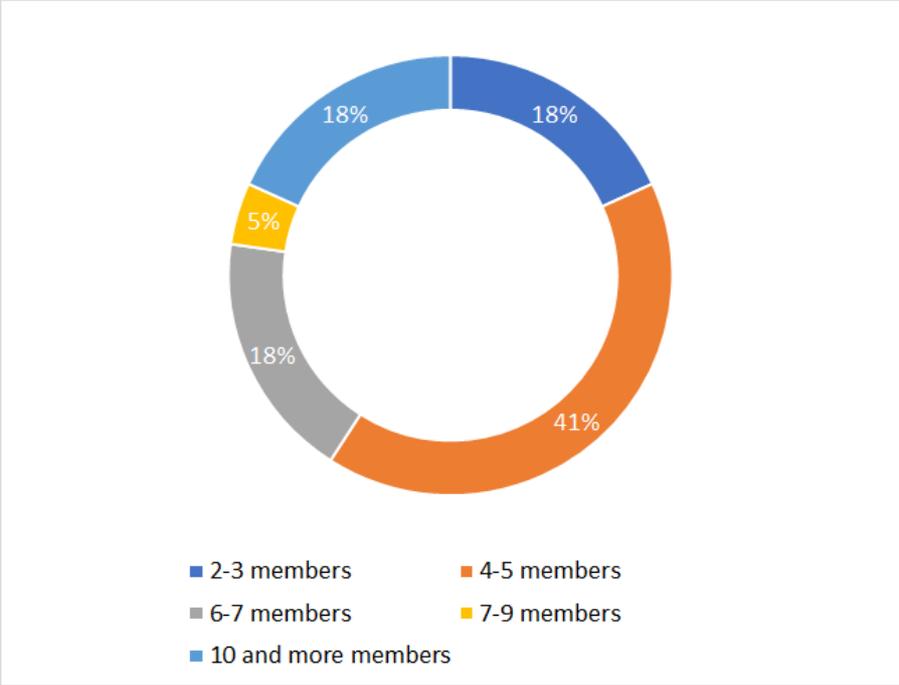
Only 4 respondents stated or commented additional reasons. Their comments were as follows:

- *“To support EGPA and EAPAA.”*
- *“And prestige in the national context. For us, “substitute of national accreditation” can be read as “addition to national accreditation.””*
- *“In case of the first round of the EAPAA accreditation we also wanted to be the first in our country.”*
- *“To improve the attractiveness and prestige of our programme vis-a-vis international peers (other programmes etc).”*

### 3.2 Process of preparing for accreditation and experiences regarding the EAPAA guidelines

The data suggest that core teams that were established at universities/faculties for the EAPAA accreditation had from 2 to 10, and, in some cases, even more core members. Replies are summarized in Figure 4. It indicates that in average the core teams had 5 members.

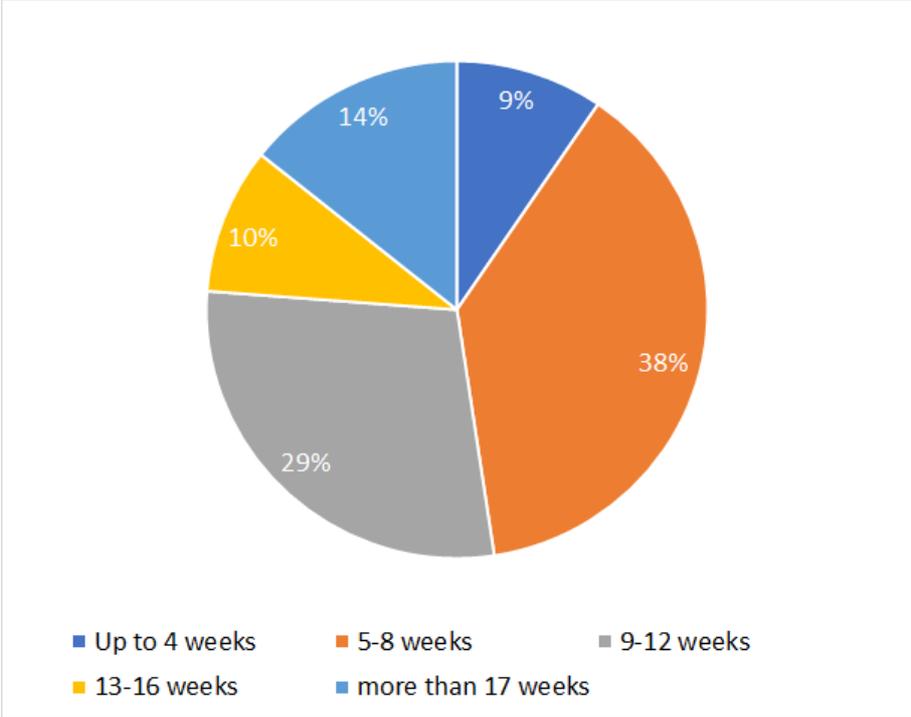
**Figure 4 - Size of core teams established for EAPAA accreditation**



Source: Author.

Time spent on preparation of self-evaluation reports also varied according to the survey data. They indicate that the teams spent from 2 to even more than 20 weeks (two respondents estimated that they had spent 26 weeks on preparation of self-evaluation report). Responses are summarized in Figure 5.

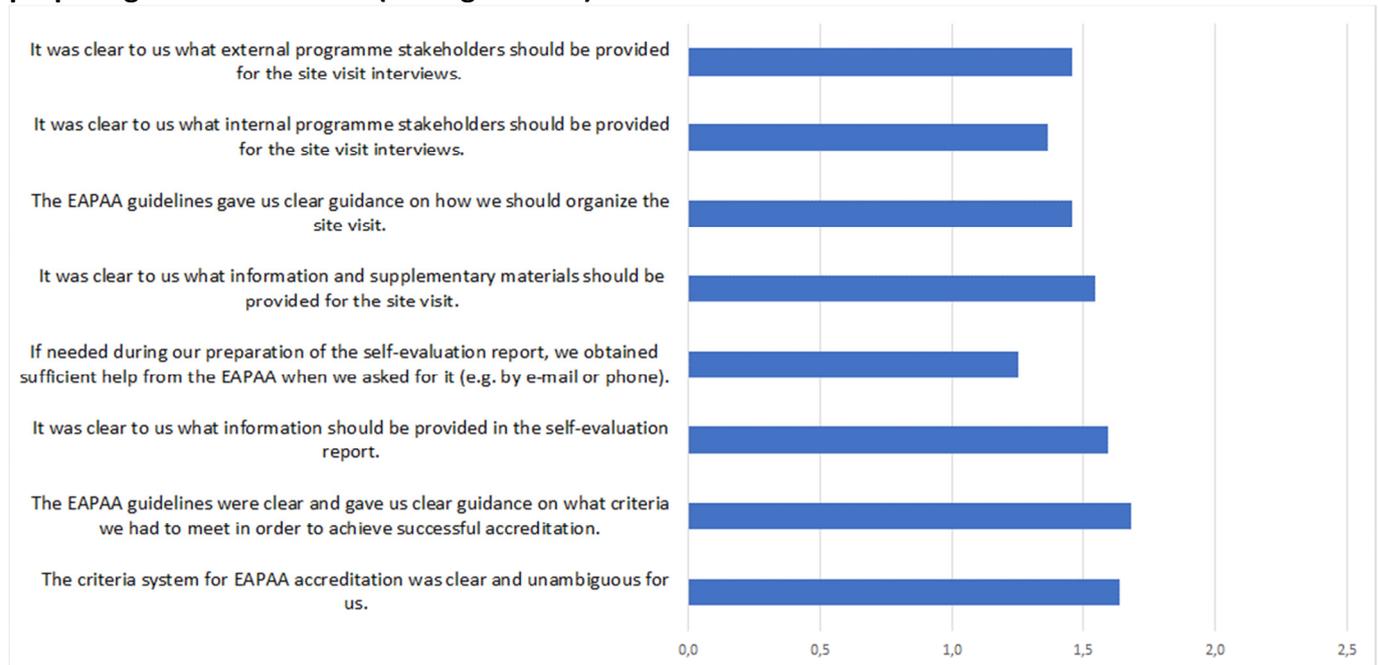
**Figure 5 – Time spent on preparation of self-evaluation reports**



Source: Author.

Respondents were rather positive about their experiences regarding the EAPAA guidelines and the process of preparation for accreditation. In the survey, we asked them to share their personal experiences concerning several statements we used in closed questions together with scales. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement - we used the scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree). The findings are summarized in Figure 6 that informs about averages (strongly agree = 1, strongly disagree = 4; “Do not know” replies are excluded).

**Figure 6 – Evaluation of statements concerning EAPAA guidelines and the process of preparing for accreditation (average scores)**



Source: Author.

No respondent chose “Strongly disagree” option in case of any of the statement. Most of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statements related to guidelines and preparation for accreditation. Only two respondents disagreed with some statements; they mostly commented their answers in their reply to the following open-ended question. Their responses were as follows:

- *“I think the guidelines in regard to criteria are too detailed and complex. Sometimes there is some overlap.”* (stated by a respondent from non-EU member country)
- *“We had some difficulty in interpreting such questions as “prerequisites for entrance to the programme” comparing to “5.5.1.4 Intake” and to “5.10 Admission of Students”. Finally, it seems we overcame this.”* (stated by another respondent from non-EU member country)
- *“The specific criteria to select the external members for the Site Visit Team were too unspecific. Also the threshold to find three potential experts as well as three potential students is quite high.”* (stated by a respondent from a country that became the EU member before 2004).

One respondent (from a country that entered the EU in 2004 or later) compared experiences with the first and the second preparation for accreditation as follows:

- *“In case of the first accreditation, we struggled a bit with some criteria and the report was not so focused. We saw this clearly when we were preparing the self-evaluation report for the second round of accreditation. In case of the second accreditation we first thought that we are expected to provide the EAPAA with only one practitioner and one student (outside our programme) for the SVT, but two CVs were required and the EAPAA chose the most appropriate candidate. This is understandable, but should be clearly outlined in the site visit guide or the summary of the accreditation procedure.”*

### 3.3 Experiences regarding the site visit and its outputs

Respondents were also rather positive about their experiences with the site visit and its outputs. The findings are summarized in Figure 7 that informs about average scores. Again, we used the scale from strongly agree (= 1) to strongly disagree (= 4), in this case there was no “I do not know” option included in the scale.

Respondents mostly strongly agreed or agreed with positive statements and considered members of the site visit team as well prepared for the site visits and highly experienced evaluators. Also they were mostly of the opinion that they had sufficient opportunities to talk with the site visit team and they did not feel the site visit as overly focused on making judgments of their programme’s adequacy. The site visit was mostly perceived as an important tool for constructive suggestions and for obtaining relevant feedback. No issues were expressed with regards to content of site visit reports (they were perceived as in compliance with what was said during the site visit).

On the other hand, four respondents (18 % out of the total 22) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I felt the site visit was overly focused on making judgments of our programme’s adequacy rather than on understanding it and providing constructive suggestions.” It was the case of programmes situated in countries that became EU members in 2004 or later (in 3 cases) and in a country outside the EU (in 1 case). Two of these respondents also agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I felt that the draft site visit report did not fully take into account comments we made during the site visit (in order to clarify something to the site visit team).” In case of this statement in total three respondents were more critical – except for the two, the last more critical respondent was from the programme situated in the country that entered the EU before 2004.

Two of the 4 more critical respondents provided us with their comments related to reasons why they experienced some inadequacy concerning the on-the-spot evaluation during the site visit:

- *“There were misunderstandings resulting from difficulties of the SVT to understand the background in which the programme operates (legislative, cultural, political, university).”*
- *“I know that the first round taught us a lot, but I felt that the discussions were rather strict. I was involved in preparation of the self-evaluation report and participated in the meetings with the staff, but the atmosphere was quite intense. The second round (re-accreditation of one and accreditation of another programme) was completely different, it was more about what I would call the peer-evaluation.”*

**Figure 7 – Evaluation of statements concerning the site visit and its outputs (average scores)**



Source: Author.

Overall positive perceptions regarding the EAPAA evaluation may be determined by the fact that the majority of the programmes have been already re-accredited by EAPAA (this was stated by 12 respondents) or that, according to representatives of the programmes, it was intended to apply for re-accreditation (stated by 10 respondents).

Respondents mostly did not report any differences in experiences between the first accreditation and the re-accreditation. We obtained the following 10 comments from the 12 respondents that stated that their programme had been already reaccredited (some difference was indicated only in 3 answers emphasizing that programmes had more realistic expectations and/or more experiences thanks to the first round of the EAPAA accreditation) (in one additional case it was indicated that the respondent did not participate in the first round):

- *"No, that was fine."*
- *"I remember that we had once a change in our programme and reported that to EAPAA in order to let them decide if a in-between review was necessary. However, we never got an answer (or not for a long time and had to ask again). However, that was not a big issue."*

- *“Not really. Very similar, mostly positive experience.”*
- *“Yes, since we know what to expect and we had some background already for self-evaluation report.”*
- *“No, more or less the same.”*
- *“Expectations were more realistic - we were able to understand what can and what can not be seen by external referees (i.e. SVT). “*
- *“As I noted, the atmosphere during the site visit was very different in my opinion. The second round was more about constructive discussion. We also learned quite a lot from the first round and the self-evaluation reports for the second round were much better (more focused, more clear, shorter also). This was commented also by one site visit team member who participated in the first site visit.”*
- *“Our expectations were similar and the experience of the re-accreditation was satisfactory: the site visit team was prepared and accommodated all our comments.”*
- *“Good experiences both times”*
- *“No major difference.”*

### 3.4 Recommendations to EAPAA from the programmes

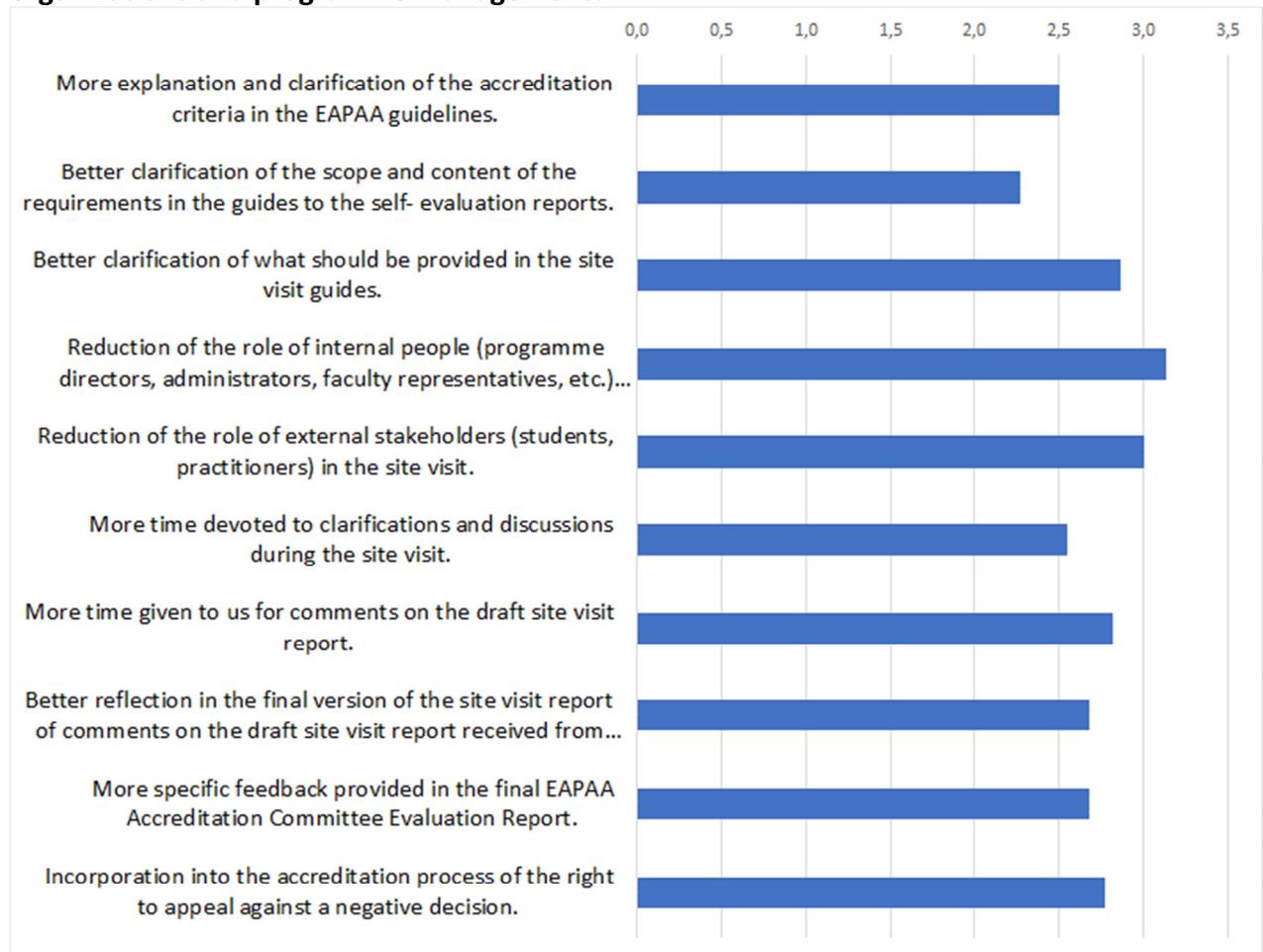
In the survey, representatives of the programmes were also asked what would have made the EAPAA accreditation procedure more efficient for their organization and programme management. Their answers are summarized in Figure 8 (the scale was similar to previous questions; strongly agree = 1, strongly disagree = 4). Again, some statements were put forward in the survey and respondents were able to insert their additional comments too.

The data suggest that according to representatives of programmes particularly the following would make the EAPAA accreditation procedure more efficient for them:

- Better clarification of the scope and content of the requirements in the guides to the self-evaluation reports. (14 respondents – i.e. 64 % - strongly agreed or agreed)
- More explanation and clarification of the accreditation criteria in the EAPAA guidelines. (12 respondents – i.e. 55 % strongly agreed or agreed)
- More time devoted to clarifications and discussions during the site visit. (9 respondents – i.e. 41 % strongly agreed or agreed).
- Better reflection in the final version of the site visit report of comments on the draft site visit report received from our programme. (7 respondents – i.e. 32 % strongly agreed or agreed)
- More specific feedback provided in the final EAPAA Accreditation Committee Evaluation Report. (7 respondents – i.e. 32 % strongly agreed or agreed)

Only 6 respondents (i.e. 27 %) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that incorporation of the right to appeal against a negative decision would make the evaluation process easier. This may be determined by perceptions that the programme was accredited based on relevant feedback (this is in compliance with findings presented earlier in this text).

**Figure 8 – What would have made the EAPAA accreditation procedure easier for organizations and programme management?**



Source: Author.

In the survey, representatives of the programmes could also provide us with additional comments on changes in EAPAA requirements/criteria that would, according to them, significantly help them to make the accreditation process easier (but still relevant) or with any other recommendation to the EAPAA. We obtained only 6 following comments (this may mean that the survey was perceived as complex or respondents simply did not want to answer):

- *“A more coherent and stringent guidance on the criteria and a bit lowered expectations in regard to the volume of the SVR (clear amount of signs for specific answers).”*
- *“I myself have been involved with many international evaluation processes: EAPAA guidelines are much clearer than any of the processes I was involved with.”*
- *“Not for us, but in most countries the EAPAA accreditation is the only one. In the Netherlands we have a Mid Term Review in between two accreditations. This MTR can be done in a less formalized way, in which institutions can discuss the issues they see as important themselves. This might be an idea for a re-accreditation. But I do think that it is important to have all the necessary information in order, also because the accreditation is done in a wide variety of countries, with different systems.”*
- *“Communication from the EAPAA on the timeline of each step of the process could have been clearer.”*

- *“benchmark with other accredited programs in the region”*
- *"I think that the criteria are fine, but sometimes the description of what is required may be clearer. Sometimes we struggled with the content and there were duplicities in the self-evaluation reports due to information required in the self-evaluation report guidelines or because we thought that similar information is required. I also think that some response of the programme to the site visit report may be incorporated in the accreditation procedure before the final decision of the EAPAA Accreditation Committee is made (also because there is no right to appeal)."*

## 4 Summary of findings and recommendations to EAPAA

The findings clearly indicate that people from programmes were rather positive about the EAPAA accreditation and certification. Still, at least based on 22 completed questionnaires, we can suggest recommendations for improvement of

- guidelines for preparation of self-assessment report and
- guidelines for site visits.

### **Recommendations for improvement of guidelines on preparation of the self-evaluation report and organization of the site visit**

Based on the survey we can put forward the following recommendations for improving the guidelines:

1. Clarify more the scope and content of the requirements in the guides to the self-evaluation reports.
2. Reduce overlaps in content required in the self-evaluation report.
3. Be more specific and clearer about criteria for selection of external members for the Site Visit Team.

It is apparent, that some of these suggestions were already considered by EAPAA in its revision of guidelines for self-evaluation reports (related guidelines were updated already in October 2019). These guidelines seem to be more instructive now compared to their previous version. Also, limits on maximum number of words are now included in the guidelines which may make self-evaluation reports more focused.

### **Recommendations for improvement of guidelines for site visits**

Four respondents (3 from new EU member countries and 1 from a country outside the EU) felt that the site visit was overly focused on making judgments of our programme's adequacy rather than on understanding it and providing constructive suggestions." It was the case of PA programmes from countries that entered the EU in 2004 or later (in 3 cases) or a country outside the EU (in 1 case).

4. In order to avoid /reduce this, members of site visits may be instructed accordingly in the Site Visit Manual. Recently (in March 2021), a new version of this manual has been published on EAPAA web pages. Similarly to its previous version, the site visit manual emphasizes that great care should be taken by site visit team members to avoid statements of "how it should be done" or "how we do it at our institution" (p. 3). This may be highlighted more by the leader of the site visit team prior to the site visit.

5. More time can be devoted to clarifications and discussions during the site visit.
6. Comments on the draft site visit report received from programme may be better reflected or indicated in the final versions of site visit reports (for the EAPAA's Accreditation Committee). Some list of comments received from the programme can be included in the Annex to the final version of the site visit team also.
7. The final EAPAA Accreditation Committee Evaluation report can provide PA programmes with more specific feedback in order to back the final decision.

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## **II. Compatibility of national accreditation systems with EAPAA accreditation: selected CEE countries**

### **1 Introduction**

EAPAA is the only quality assurance authority in Public Administration which is active in Europe. It has accredited more than 70 programmes across the continent, including most leading programmes in the field. Its procedures and criteria are in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. While maintaining general quality standards, evaluators always take the programme's unique position and choices into account: because the evaluation is based on standards to fixed criteria, EAPAA leaves room for programmes to develop their own specific profiles.

In certain cases, it may be possible to integrate EAPAA evaluation into another accreditation processes, such as national accreditation or evaluation by another international agency. This integration can be realised in various ways. The most far-reaching approach is that there is one self-evaluation report produced for both agencies, which is used as the basis for a joint site visit by an integrated committee from both organisations. However, various hybrid forms are also possible, as long EAPAA can make an independent assessment of the programme in question.

The following text tries to assess if such joint accreditation or other models of incorporation of EAPAA evaluation into national evaluation/accreditation schemes are possible, or if, at least, the national accreditation process is to some extent compatible with the EAPAA accreditation/certification process. This is outlined with regards to countries of which the partners are involved in the PAQUALITY project (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia). The text is based on input obtained in country reports prepared for the Intellectual Output 1 of the PAQUALITY project, especially it uses their parts dedicated to evaluation and accreditation systems (see the references).

The text is structured as follows: First, national accreditation systems in selected CEE countries and the EAPAA accreditation are outlined. This is followed by conclusions and additional analysis that is presented together with more recommendations in the following component of this intellectual output (IO7).

### **2 National accreditation systems and EAPAA accreditation**

#### **2.1 Bulgaria**

In Bulgaria the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) is a statutory body for evaluation, accreditation and monitoring of the quality in higher education institutions and scientific organizations aiming at the enhancement of their teaching and research, as well as of their development as scientific, cultural, and innovative organizations. The Agency monitors the ability of institutions, their main units and branches to provide good quality of education and scientific research through an internal quality assurance system.

According to article 76 of the Higher Education (HE) Act of the Republic of Bulgaria, the accreditation is institutional and the accreditation of programmes. Programme accreditation may be requested by the higher education institution upon receipt of institutional

accreditation. It should be taken into consideration that programmes are placed under professional fields and professional fields are placed under scientific areas.

Programme accreditation is based on the evaluation of the quality of the offered education in a particular professional field. The following is evaluated during the programme accreditation:

1. the structure, organization and content of curricula and programmes;
2. the profile and qualification of the teaching staff;
3. the material and technical provision of the training;
4. methods of teaching and assessing students' achievements;
5. quality management of education;
6. the research and artistic and creative activity of the academic staff and the participation of students and postgraduates in the academic staff.

The evaluation is carried out on a 10-point system, including the assessments from 0 to 10.00. The evaluation for each of the evaluation criterion is formed as the arithmetic mean of the estimates obtained on all its indicators according to their coefficient. For each criterion for institutional and programme accreditation, the Accreditation Council of the National Agency for Assessment and Accreditation validates indicators with weight coefficients. The "scientific activity" criterion has the greatest relative weight. If a score of 0 to 3.99 is obtained, a refusal to accredit is made. A negative evaluation in programme accreditation will also receive a programme with an evaluation of less than 4.00 per one or several of the following criteria:

1. educational documentation and educational process of the professional field or specialty of the regulated professions;
2. profile and qualification of the academic staff of the professional field or specialty of the regulated professions;
3. material and technical facilities, specialized for training in the professional field or specialty of the regulated professions.

The period of validity of the accreditation is various and reflects the score obtained during the evaluation:

1. six years - when the score received is from 9.00 to 10.00;
2. five years - when the score obtained is from 7.00 to 8.99;
3. four years - when the score obtained is from 5.00 to 6.99;
4. three years - when the score received is from 4.00 to 4.99.

HEIs with a programme accreditation rating of 4.00 to 4.99 have the right to teach only a bachelor's degree in the respective professional field or specialty of the regulated professions. Upon evaluation from the programme accreditation from 5.00 to 10.00, HEIs have the right to acquire the bachelor's and master's degrees and to acquire the educational and scientific degree "doctor" under predefined by the law conditions.

Public Administration programmes (no matter if they are addressing bachelor, master or PhD students) are placed within the professional field of Administration and Management and therefore are evaluated by the Standing Committee (SC) on Economic Sciences and Management. The SC on Economic Sciences and Management in charge of area of higher education: 3. Social, Economic and Law Sciences. In accordance with the National

Classification of Fields of Study in Higher Education this area includes all majors of the following professional fields:

- Administration and Management
- Economics
- Tourism

The procedure for programme accreditation in the Republic of Bulgaria has 4 stages. The process is initiated by the HEI, which is responsible for the delivery of the education in the programme, which underlies accreditation. The accreditation stages are as follows:

1. Self-evaluation and submission of a request for accreditation
2. Considering a request to start a procedure
3. Site visit to the institution under evaluation
4. Expert group report and decision

Bulgarian accreditation process has similar executive stages as the accreditation process of EAPAA. But it is based on a very rigid form of evaluation, which cannot be compatible with much more flexible EAPAA's evaluation framework. Marking programmes by decimal figures cannot represent effective accreditation approach, because it is impossible to avoid subjectivism.

There is also another obstacle to work with the EAPAA accreditation in the country. Only NEAA is allowed to do programme accreditation in the Republic of Bulgaria. Even if a programme (no matter if PA or other) was accredited by organization different from NEAA, the education (and the diploma at the end) is not accepted as legitimate (and does not receive EU recognition respectively). The programme needs to be accredited by NEAA in order to be recognized. Also, the diplomas of foreign universities delivering programmes in Bulgaria are not recognized as legitimate, if not accredited by NEAA.

## 2.2 Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic the amendments to the Act on higher education institutions made by the Act 137/2016 that came into force since September 2016, established a new framework of quality assurance. The previous responsibility of the State was partly transferred to higher education institution themselves (demonstrating a growing emphasize on their internal quality assurance systems and continuous quality evaluation).

Based on new legislation, public (not private) universities can now apply to the National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education (NAU, [www.nauvs.cz](http://www.nauvs.cz)) for the called 'institutional accreditation'. The institutional accreditation enables a university to create, to accredit and to realize certain types of studying programmes in designated area(s) of education autonomously, i.e. to accredit its study programmes internally by its own bodies. Institutional accreditation can be obtained only for some (not all the) areas enumerated in the List of areas of education. This list forms an Annex to the Act on higher education institutions and in other areas NAU is the main accreditation body. The List does not explicitly work with "Public Administration" as a distinguished area of education for which an institutional accreditation can be obtained. It works with 34 areas and differentiates, for instance, Economic branches, Political sciences, Law, Security branches, or Social work.

NAU is an independent authority established by the Act that decides on accreditations of studying programmes, institutional accreditations and accreditations of habilitation

procedures (for appointing associate professors, “docent” in Czech) and procedures for appointing professors. It is also responsible for controlling the compliance with law in activities accredited and for external evaluation of educational activities, research, development, innovation, artistic or other creative activities of higher education institutions. This means that NAU is not considered as an advisory body of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports as was the case of the former Accreditation Commission, but as a decisive agency. However, this is the truth only partially – NAU decides on applications for accreditation of studying programmes (applications for institutional accreditations and applications for accreditations of studying programmes) an accreditation of habilitation procedures for appointing associate professors and professors. In the case of the State approval for private HEIs, NAU issues only a statement and the Ministry is the decisive body. It is also required in the Act on higher education institutions as well as in the statutory document that in its areas of responsibilities, NAU cooperates with the Ministry, the Council for Research, Development and Innovation (RVVI , [www.vyzkum.cz](http://www.vyzkum.cz)). It is also stated in the Act that the Government specifies standards for institutional accreditation, standards for accreditation of studying programmes and standards for accreditation of habilitation procedures by its resolution. The Act also says that the NAU is in material, administrative and financial terms ensured by the Ministry and the NAU does not decide on its budget, neither it has a separated chapter in the State budget. NAU has become an associated member of the ENQA and a member of CEENQA.

The general criteria for external accreditation of studying programmes are specified in standards for accreditations in higher education as follows:

- A. Requirements on the institutional context (responsibilities of bodies of a higher educational institution, management and economy, mission and strategy, activities related to educational activities, creative activity, internal quality assurance system and processes related to studying programmes quality improvement, supporting instruments and administration);
- B. Requirements on the area of education (content and structure of educational activity, ensuring of conditions for realization of education, inc. internationalization activities and cooperation with practice).
- C. The Standards also specify requirements on guarantors. An academician can guarantee only one studying programme, this means that he/she can guarantee bachelor study programme and closely related master programme, or master programme and closely related doctoral programme. The guarantor has to be an academician of the particular higher education institution with a full employment contract (i.e. 40 hours per week). Another employment at another institution could not exceed a half-time workload (i.e. 20 hours per week). Bachelor programmes can be guaranteed by academicians with the following degrees: professor, associate professor, candidate of sciences (CSc.), or PhD Master and doctoral programmes can be guaranteed only by professor or associate professor who has actively research in areas relevant for the studying programme in the last 5 years.

If a public university obtains the institutional accreditation, it can create, accredit and realize certain types of studying programmes in designated area(s) of education autonomously. A combined form of the studying programme can be delivered by the university only in the case when the university has the institutional accreditation for all the areas of education in

which the (combined) studying programme belongs. Public universities that obtained the institutional accreditation can award accreditations to their studying programmes and additional external accreditation of these studying programmes is not required. This accreditation can be awarded for 10 years.

The information above indicates that standards used by EAPAA and in the Czech accreditation system are rather similar. In case the institutional accreditation is awarded to a public university, its bodies decide on accreditation of its studying programmes. This allows for some flexibility, although the evaluation should consider standards specified by legislation. In other cases, the accreditation is awarded by NAU. Moreover, new legislation also anticipates a possibility that a university can opt for the external evaluation by “the generally recognized evaluation agency”. Available information indicates that such possibility has not been used by any higher education institution so far. This has not been specified anyhow by NAU or supplementary legislation/regulation either. Still, it may establish a space where the EAPAA accreditation/certification may be relevant.

### 2.3 Hungary

In Hungary, in order to receive state recognition and to issue degrees, all HEIs, including foreign and private ones, must undergo the same evaluation process conducted by the national central accreditation agency called Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC). Consequently, formally the same national accreditation rules and process apply to every PA programme as to the other HE programmes. However, it's worth to note that in 2013 the Parliament enacted an amendment that quasi enabled another organization besides the HAC, namely the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (EAQA) to make a program evaluation for accreditation.

The HAC defines the standards for HE programmes and assures the accomplishment with these quality norms. The HAC was established with the education law of 1993. The Act of National Higher Education from 2011 describes the general role of HAC as a national body of experts facilitating the control, assurance and evaluation of the scientific quality of education, scientific research and artistic activity at higher education institutions.

The HAC issues expert opinions for granting operating licenses of HEIs and in procedures to review such operating licenses – institutional accreditation. In the course of preparing its expert opinion, the HAC assesses education, scientific research and artistic activities against standards set down in legislation and the HAC's assessment criteria. In addition, it assesses for which field of study and/or discipline and educational level the institution meets the necessary requirements. According to the types of decisions made by the HAC Board the HEI might get positive result that leads accreditation of HEI for five years, the accreditation might be conditional, that means intermediate monitor procedures are required in the following 5 years or in case of negative decision the accreditation can be withdrawn.

The accreditation process is based on the following standards, which are to a large extent compatible with the approach of EAPAA:

- Quality assurance policy
- Design, approval, on-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes
- Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
- Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

- Teaching staff
- Learning resources and student support
- Information management
- Public information
- Periodic external quality assurance

The quality assessment process of HE programmes and HEIs is conducted either by the Hungarian Accreditation Committee or the HEI can decide to request a quality assessment from the external evaluator (the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education). The possibility for international accreditation, as opened by the valid legislation and the close relations between EAPAA and HAC standards may provide opportunities for EAPAA in the country. However, because HAC focus is institutional accreditation and EAPAA focus is programme accreditation, these two paths must not meet automatically.

## 2.4 Romania

The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) is the main institutional actor responsible for the accreditation process of Romanian HEIs and their study programmes. ARACIS is a member of various international networks of quality assurance - The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), The Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEE Network), The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) - full member, Listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAE), European Quality Assurance Network for Informatics Education (EQANIE).

ARACIS was established in 2005 based on the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 75/2005 approved with modifications by Law no. 87/2006. Although, according to the law, ARACIS took the patrimony and all rights and obligations, logistic infrastructure, technical staff and database of the National Council for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation, the new institution's mission and ways of operation are defined in compliance with the European trends, and not simply a successor of the previous system. ARACIS is an autonomous public institution, of national interest, having a legal personality and its own income and expenditure budget. It shall not be submitted to political or any other types of interference, although it should perform its activities in close collaboration with the Ministry of National Education.

The accreditation process itself (which is the same for both undergraduate programmes and master's programmes) has two stages: (1) a provisional temporary operating authorization which offers the higher education services providers (Universities) to start a new programme and secondly (2) final or permanent accreditation which offers the possibility to issue the educational diploma which is recognized by the Ministry of National Education and assures specific qualification of the students.

ARACIS is doing the external evaluation procedure by looking at three major dimensions: institutional capacity, educational effectiveness and quality management (see Table 1 below). According to the ARACIS methodology, the standards and criteria for quality represent the minimum level the educational service providers (Universities or other HEI) need to satisfy in order to run a bachelor or master's programme. In the first phase, if the service provider meets the minimum standards, ARACIS will release a temporary operating

authorization enables the service provider to run the programme. In order to offer diplomas at the end of the education cycle, service providers need to get a full accreditation from ARACIS, which gives them this right and they are integrated in the national network of higher education providers, while the diplomas are recognized by the Ministry of National Education. The final accreditation is done by ARACIS while the decision is passed through law by the Ministry of National Education. The ARACIS accreditation criteria/standards are very close to the EAPAA criteria as shown by the Table 1.

**Table 1 – The ARACIS and EAPAA accreditation**

Dimension	Sub dimensions	EAPPA criteria
1. <i>Institutional capacity</i>	1.1 Mission, objectives, academic integrity 1.2 Institutional leadership and management 1.3 Material and technical basis (infrastructure) - property, equipment, financial resources allocated	<b>Mission and overall policies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission of the institution</li> <li>• Mission of the programme</li> </ul>
2. <i>Educational effectiveness</i>	2.1 Academic content/curriculum – admission procedures, structure of programme, qualifications in the field 2.2 Results of academic process 2.3 Research activities and results 2.4 Financial activities	<b>Curriculum</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic level consistent with degree level</li> <li>• Domain: Public Administration (see remarks below on core components)</li> <li>• Multidisciplinary Relation to practice (including internships)</li> <li>• Mission-based curriculum content</li> <li>• Consistent and coherent curriculum</li> <li>• Mission-based didactics</li> </ul> <b>Other</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admission of students (mission-based; gender &amp; minorities)</li> </ul>

Dimension	Sub dimensions	EAPPA criteria
3. <i>Quality assurance and management</i>	3.1 Quality strategies and procedures 3.2 Periodical evaluation and revision of study programmes 3.3 Transparent evaluation procedures for educational results 3.4 Procedures for evaluating teaching staff activity 3.5 Access to learning resources 3.6 Continuous update of informational basis 3.7 Transparency and public information 3.8 Internal quality assurance structures	<b>Quality system</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality assessment of courses and curriculum</li> <li>• Continuous quality improvement</li> <li>• Quality assurance</li> <li>• Continuous innovation</li> <li>• With participation of the field/employers, graduates and students</li> </ul> <b>Faculty (teaching staff)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty quantity (core faculty)</li> <li>• Faculty quality (didactical, research, degrees)</li> </ul> <b>Other</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student assessment in line with objectives and didactics</li> <li>• Support services and facilities (budget, library, classrooms, support staff, offices, ICT)</li> <li>• Student services (registration, advice, guidance)</li> <li>• Public relations</li> </ul>

All new programmes have to be initially evaluated in order to receive accreditation, otherwise the diploma is not recognized. Older/existing programmes are evaluated every five years in order to maintain their accreditation. State and private universities have to be evaluated and accredited both initially and after a number of five years, but there is a simplified procedure for the initial accreditation / authorization if a new MA programme is accredited by a Department/Faculty in an academic domain which has received previous accreditation.

The ARACIS's criteria are very similar to the approach of EAPAA, but the specific interesting aspect is the fact that according to valid legislation external quality assurance evaluation can be provided by ARACIS or any other organization registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education. This option was not practiced yet, but may provide important opportunity for EAPAA.

The accreditation processes in Romania are also very similar to those of the EAPAA - evaluators are academic peers from other universities than that which requests the evaluation (for provisional authorization, accreditation or re-accreditation). Evaluators have to be registered with ARACIS, satisfy certain professional and educational requirements and pass an examination in order to be certified. The evaluation process includes four components:

- (i) A self-evaluation report: The self-evaluation report comprises an analytical component which identifies the strengths and weaknesses, successes, threats, uncertainties of quality assurance, and future improvement measures. The report also includes supporting documents and data to provide evidence for the report's assertions. According to the law, the quality dimensions to be taken into account are institutional capacity, educational effectiveness, and quality management;

- (ii) An external evaluation: the evaluation is conducted by a panel of independent experts selected from ARACIS' register of external evaluators. Site-visits are mandatory, and help evaluators to verify compliance with the criteria and quality standards. An external evaluation report is prepared by the evaluators;
- (iii) Preparation and publication of the report, including follow-up procedure. The report includes decisions, conclusions, and recommendations. For example, in the case of temporary authorization and accreditation, the main decision is whether to grant the status/accreditation/authorization. If the recommendations advice for a supplemental improvement period, an implementation plan should be prepared, which should include specific provisions and deadlines. In evaluations where the highest degree of confidence is awarded to a study programme or HEI, the follow-up procedure requires a short site-visit after three years.
- (iv) Appeal procedure. After the publication of the evaluation report, HEIs have the right to submit a written appeal within two weeks. In this case, ARACIS' Executive Board reviews the report and invites university representatives to a 'clarification' discussion.

On the other hand, the accreditation itself has to be provided by the Ministry of National Education.

## 2.5 Slovakia

In Slovakia, the Accreditation Commission was the main accreditation body operating until 31 December 2019. Starting from 1 January 2020 the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (<https://saavs.sk/>) began its work in the field of evaluation and accreditation of study programmes in the Slovak Republic. This formal change is connected also with procedural changes related to the accreditation process – the switch from accreditation criteria to accreditation standards.

The task of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education is to perform external quality assurance activities in higher education in the Slovak Republic. It was established by Act no. 269/2018 Coll. (the Quality Act) as a legal entity based in Bratislava. The mission of the Agency is to contribute to improving the quality of higher education through modern tools following the European Standards for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG 2015). The Agency is intended to provide a mirror of quality to higher education institutions and to decide on the granting of appropriate accreditations following the law. The Agency replaces the activities of the current Accreditation Commission, an advisory body of the Government of the Slovak Republic in assessing applications of higher education institutions, and – which is really important – it also takes over the decision-making authority of the Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic.

The Standards for Study Programmes (the "Standards") represent a set of requirements of which the fulfilment is a condition for obtaining the accreditation of a study programme and for the Agency's decision to authorise a higher education institution to design, deliver and modify study programmes in a given field and level of study. The Standards also serve to evaluate the compliance of an institution's internal system with the Standards for the Higher Education Internal Quality Assurance System. Following core standards are used:

- A study programme is elaborated in compliance with the institution's mission and strategic goals, which are determined in the institution's long-term plan.
- Designated persons are responsible for the delivery, development and quality assurance of the study programme.
- Students, employers and other stakeholders are involved in the preparation of the study programme.
- Study programme is assigned to a field of study and the extent of consistency of its content with the given field of study is justified.
- The study programme clearly defines and communicates the level of qualification that students will acquire upon their successful completion of the programme. The qualification corresponds to the appropriate level of education under the qualifications framework.
- The study programme clearly defines a graduate's profile. Within its framework, the descriptors define learning outcomes that are verifiable and appropriate to the institution's mission, the given level of the qualifications framework and the subject field according to the relevant field of study or a combination of fields of study in which graduates obtain their higher education degree.
- The learning outcomes and qualifications obtained by completing the study programme meet the sector-specific professional expectations for the pursuit of the profession. The study programme indicates the professions for which the acquired qualification is necessary. This is confirmed by the statements of relevant external stakeholders or by the agreement of the legal entity indicated in the description of the relevant field of study, if required by the description, or by a favourable opinion of the relevant ministry for the delivery of the study programme, in the case of a state higher education institution or in the case of a qualification for the performance of regulated professions.
- The professional content, structure and sequence of the profile courses and other educational activities of the study programme and the conditions for successful completion of study enable the learning outcomes specified in the graduate profile to be achieved and guarantee access to the latest knowledge, skills and competencies, including transferable skills.
- The fields of study in which higher education institutions in the Slovak Republic can provide higher education and their descriptions are stipulated in Decree No. 244/2019 Coll. of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic on the system of study branches in the Slovak Republic.
- A study programme must include a standard length of study, a specified workload for each course expressed in ECTS credits and the number of face-to-face teaching hours, except where the nature of the educational activity does not require it. The standard length of study, workload and number of face-to-face teaching hours allow learning outcomes to be achieved while corresponding to the form of the study programme.
- The practice is designed to develop practical professional skills and enables students to undertake activities through which they acquire work procedures typical for the relevant level of qualification and field of study. It allows students to participate in professional processes and projects, and by engaging in specific tasks they acquire relevant knowledge, skills and competencies. The professional practice may be carried out in one longer period or divided into several shorter periods, depending on the needs of the study programme and the conditions of the cooperating organization in which the professional practice takes place. In case of professionally oriented bachelor study

programmes, the curriculum includes compulsory professional training in a cooperating organization in the total scope of at least one semester.

- The study programme has a clearly defined level and nature of research, artistic and other activities required for successful completion, especially concerning the final thesis.
- The rules, forms and methods of teaching, learning and student assessment within a study programme enable the achievement of learning outcomes while respecting the diversity of the students and their needs.
- A study programme is delivered according to pre-defined and easily accessible rules of study at all stages of the study cycle, e.g. student admission, progression and assessment, recognition of education, certification, awarding of academic degrees, diplomas and any other evidence of formal qualifications. The specificities of special needs of students are taken into consideration.
- The institution has a sufficient number of teaching staff with the required qualifications, workload allocation, research, artistic and other activities, practical skills, teaching skills and transferable skills that enable them to achieve learning outcomes, and whose language competencies correspond to the language requirements of the study programme.
- Teachers providing profile courses within a study programme demonstrate the outputs of their research, artistic and other activities in the relevant field(s) of study in which the study programme is delivered at the required level, depending on the given level of study:
  - a) at least at an internationally significant level in the case of a third-level study programme;
  - b) at least at an internationally recognized level in the case of a second-level study programme
  - c) at least at a nationally recognized level in the case of a first-level study programme.
- The professional qualification of teachers providing the study programme is at least a degree higher than the qualification achieved. This requirement may be waived in justified cases, such as, in particular, language teachers, practitioners, PhD students, etc.
- There has to be a designated person who has the relevant competencies and takes the main responsibility for the implementation, development and quality assurance of the study programme. This person works as a professor in the relevant field of study for a fixed weekly working-time; in case of a bachelor's study programme, as a professor or as an associate professor in the relevant field of study for an established weekly working time. At the same time, this person does not take the main responsibility for the implementation, development and quality assurance of the study programme at another university in the Slovak Republic. One and the same person may have the main responsibility for the implementation, development and quality assurance of a maximum of three study programmes.
- The institution has sufficient spatial, material, technical and information resources for a study programme to ensure the achievement of learning objectives and learning outcomes.
- The institution collects, analyses and makes use of relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.
- Institutions provide accessible and clearly structured information about a study programme, mainly about intended learning objectives and learning outcomes, requirements for applicants, selection criteria, recommended personality

requirements, the level of the national qualifications framework, the field of study, the qualifications they award, teaching and learning rules, the programme's completion conditions, assessment procedures and criteria, programme resources, pass rates, learning opportunities available to students, and information about available jobs for successful graduates and their employability.

- The institution regularly monitors, reviews and appropriately modifies a study programme.

The study programme is approved in accordance with the formalized processes of the internal system and there has to be guaranteed independent, impartial, objective, professionally based, transparent and fair assessment of the proposal and approval of the study programme involving students, employers and other stakeholders.

The methods used for evaluation of study programmes, within the scope of legislative changes according to the Act on Ensuring the Quality of Higher Education, are based on interaction of internal quality system of every university and of the activities of the newly established Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (e.g. Methodology for Evaluating Standards). According to the Act on Ensuring the Quality of Higher Education (§3), the internal quality system of each university should fulfil the mission of a university through a strategy for ensuring the quality of higher education and quality of research, development, art activities or other creative activities; processes of ensuring quality of higher education and quality of creative activities; interconnection of creative activities and higher education in a particular study field. The university is obliged to ask the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education to evaluate its internal quality system, at least once every six years. The Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education also performs an ongoing evaluation at least once every two years.

It was expected that the first study programmes intended for evaluation by Slovak Accreditation Agency would be submitted till 13. 3. 2021. We can just estimate that if the study programmes are positively evaluated, they start being offered in academic year 2021/2022. All study programmes that should continue also in new accreditation period (after 1. 9. 2022), must be harmonized with the accreditation standards.

The recent change of the accreditation process in Slovakia put the national accreditation system and the EAPAA accreditation process close together – most criteria overlap. However, the chance for joint accreditation or substitution of the national accreditation by an existing international accreditation (EAPAA accreditation in this regard) at this stage is very limited, because the relevant legislation does not allow it explicitly. However, the existence of an international accreditation of a study programme could be seen positively by the working committee, who will evaluate a concrete study programme in terms of its compliance with the national accreditation standards. One critical limit may remain however – the requirement “Study programme is assigned to a field of study and the extent of consistency of its content with the given field of study is justified”. PA programmes can be delivered in in the following two specified fields of studies:

#### a/ Economics and Management

In this field of study the contents is defined as follows - Economics courses covering topics like micro, macroeconomics, international economics, economic policy, law for economics, research methods and Management courses covering topics like strategic management, general management issues, solving managerial problems, organisational sciences.

## b/ Political Science

In this field of study the contents is defined as follows - „traditional“ political science courses aimed at political theory, political systems, elections and electoral systems, political ideologies and „traditional“ International relations courses aimed at international relations and their development, security studies, geopolitics, European integration and courses aimed at public policy and public administration.

Only the future practice would show if this frame may create problems, from the point of multidisciplinary, required by EAPAA, especially for programmes delivered in “Economics and Management”.

## 2.6 Slovenia

The Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (SQAA, <http://test.nakvis.si/>) was founded (only) in 2010, following the Higher Education Act amendments and governmental act on SQAA establishment, adopted in 2009. The SQAA accreditation key document are Criteria for the accreditation and external evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes, the last version adopted in 2017.

The national accreditation by SQAA is a legal condition for an establishment of accredited HE institution (institutional accreditation, Art. 14 of HEA), that needs to be prolonged every five years. Further, programme accreditations ensure that graduates receive publicly recognised education and title, which is most often required also in labour market by employers, especially all parts of public administration/sector. Second, the respective accreditation is a formal prerequisite to run for public funds and gain concessions, enabling among others enrolment of students without or only partially paying the fees. The Criteria, pursuant to HEA, apply to all public or state and private universities and other HE institutions as well as any study programme that is publicly recognised. So the factor is not public or private status of HE institution but whether programmes graduates will hold a publicly recognised degree. Hence, re-accreditations are performed on the institutional level only, while regarding the programmes solely external extra-ordinary (re)evaluations and accreditations in a case of major changes of the programmes are envisaged.

Programme accreditation is pursuant to Art. 32 of HEA in the jurisdiction of university senate, but has to be accredited before that by SQAA. The programme accreditation is valid without time limitation, while before 2017 the law required that accreditation is granted every seven years or even after three years if partially granted. Officially recognised programmes include those accredited in EU MS and implemented by an international association of universities as referred to in paragraph two of Article 10.a of HEA if their diplomas are considered public documents in the country of accreditation, if they grant an officially recognised level of educational qualification and an officially recognised title in this country, and if they are provided by accredited organisations in the country of accreditation and notified to SQAA. However, when a holder wishes to (significantly) change accredited programme, a special (simplified) procedure is required.

The procedure is prescribed pursuant to Art. 51.p/ff, the Criteria and subsidiary use of GAPA, ensuring transparent and objective evaluation, e.g. obligatory via expert team and site-visit evaluation. The procedure is conducted as an administrative one, with inclusion of expert commission. If a decision is not granted as requested, the applicant HE institution can file an

appeal, resolved by a special SQAA appeal commission. This decision can be challenged in front of Administrative Court.

The evaluation as a professional part of administrative accreditation procedure is pursuant to HEA and SQAA acts conducted by group of experts. Bureaucrats of the SQAA take care of formal parts of the procedures only. Groups of experts are nominated by Council of the SQAA in one month after application is lodged. Expert groups shall mean groups of experts for accreditation and groups of experts for external evaluation. Experts from the register of experts kept by the Agency shall be appointed to expert groups. They shall consist of at least three members, of whom at least one is a foreign expert and one a student (Art. 51.u of HEA). All experts are registered at the SQAA and are obliged to attend regular trainings, while foreign experts are evaluators of foreign agencies, in principle registered at the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education. Expert groups are independent (also from the Agency) but need to evaluate the HE institution and/or the programme in compliance with the HEA and Agency's Criteria. After the first report written mainly on the basis of all documentation, publicly accessed data and a site visit, the applicant HE institution can submit remarks and after that a final report is prepared and the Agency's decision is issued.

The Criteria in Art. 17 and 18 specify that there are five standards that apply when accrediting study programmes:

*A: Composition and content of a study programme:*

1. standard: The study programme in its composition and content shall offer the students comprehensive knowledge and shall help them achieve the objectives set, and the planned competences or learning outcomes; assessed shall be the following: a) consistency and the substantial cohesion of individual courses and study plans and the study programme as a whole; b) connectedness (compliance) of objectives, competences or learning outcomes, determined in the study plans, with the objectives and competences of a study programme and its content regarding the type and cycle of the study; c) the programme integrates scientific, professional, research or artistic content; č) the order of subjects or the distribution of subjects to individual semesters and years (horizontal and vertical connectedness) and their credit evaluation;
2. standard: The study programme shall be placed to the anticipated field and discipline in accordance with its name, purpose and content; assessed shall be the connectedness of the study programme content, its relation to the applied or basic knowledge from that field and discipline as well as the conceptual selection of contents, clearly defined and reasonably connected with the current situation and development trends in science, the profession or art.
3. standard: The study programme shall relate with the environment in which the higher education institution operates; assessed shall be the following: a) analyses or research of the needs of the employment environment, job market and the employability of graduates or the needs for knowledge and objectives of the society; b) conditions for the practical training of students. Meeting this standard is not obligatory for third-instance study programmes.

*B: Concept of the study programme implementation:*

4. standard: The concept of the study programme implementation shall correspond to its content, composition, type, cycle and purpose (objectives), so that study content,

implementation practices and resources (human and material resources) shall be adapted and provided with quality. Assessed shall be the following: a) anticipated ways, forms and course of education; b) appropriateness of human resources in accordance with Article 13 of the Criteria and:  thematic appropriateness of appointments to titles of higher education teachers and staff;  meeting the conditions for mentorship to doctoral students and the appropriateness of mentors; c) material conditions, connected with the implementation of the study programme, in accordance with Article 15 of the Criteria.

5. standard: The conditions for the study and obligatory elements of a study programme are determined, clear and understandable. They enable the exercising of rights and meeting the obligations of all stakeholders in the study process. Assessed shall be the following: a) conditions for enrolment to a study programme and the advancement of students; b) criteria for the acknowledgement of knowledge and skills acquired before enrolling to the study programme; c) methods of evaluation; č) conditions for the completion of studies; d) conditions for the completion of individual parts of the programme if the programme entails them; e) professional or scientific title; f) conditions for the transition between study programmes.

All criteria are determined in detail with further standards and procedural requirements. However, these criteria are compliant to the (general) international ones, since the SQAA is a member of ENQA, EQAR and ECA. On the other hand, there are no specifics valid for PA field in particular, albeit it might be required so according to PA interdisciplinary character and EAPAA (or Tuning) standards and rules.

Only SQAA is competent to carry on accreditations for any Slovenian HE institutions and programme. However, there are some recognitions allowed, like those accredited in EU MS and implemented by an international association of universities. The fact that SQAA standards are similar to EAPAA standards is positive from the point of possible EAPAA involvement in the country. However, the fact that SQAA does not require re-accreditation of existing programmes limits this chance significantly. EAPAA accredits only established programmes, SQAA only new programmes. This would mean that EAPAA can only provide opinion on newly established programme and any request for EAPAA accreditation for established programme is purely HIEs own initiative.

### 3 Conclusions

The analysis documents a high level of compatibility of national accreditation systems with EAPAA accreditation in almost all included countries. This reason for this may be the fact that national accreditation bodies try to follow good international practice.

Bulgaria may be an exception, because its national accreditation system is based on very rigid calculations.

Slovakia represents a specific case – formally the system follows international rules (evaluation by commonly accepted set of standards), but the continuing existence of the national curricula, which contents is rather problematic for PA programmes, may create critical limits.

However, it must be noted that there is no national accreditation system in CEE directly encouraging existing PA programmes applying for EAPAA accreditations. The barriers are various – may be the most important one is the fact that in more countries the focus of their national accreditation systems is on institutional accreditation (this is especially the case of

Slovenia, Hungary and the Czech Republic) and the fact that in more countries re-accreditation of an existing programme is not required. As EAPAA focuses on already existing programmes, its potential role in pre-start accreditation is consequently limited.

The last important fact is that in Hungary and in Romania national accreditation systems explicitly allow international accreditation. In Romania, according to valid legislation, external quality assurance evaluation can be provided by ARACIS or any other organization registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education and similar paragraphs are also in Hungarian legislation. However, this option was not practiced for PA programmes yet, and in Romania, according to the legislation, the accreditation itself has to be provided by the Ministry of National Education.

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### **III. Feasibility study on an acceptance of EAPAA accreditation on national levels**

#### **1 Introduction**

This part of the intellectual output is a feasibility study that would like to reveal current status and steps needed to achieve acceptance of EAPAA accreditation at national level. It is a follow-up to the previous part II. In this part we focus especially on further studying legal, operational and time components of feasibility in selected countries (again, countries of partners of the PAQUALITY project are covered).

#### **2 Methodology and materials**

For this feasibility study a joint template was prepared that was sent to all partners together with model template prepared for Slovenia. The following steps of activities were required:

1. The first step aimed at investigating the compatibility of accreditations. Methodology consisted of the comparison of EAPAA standards with national accreditation standards. It was expected that project partners will prepare a comparison that would portray major differences between the standards of the two, including the content of the standards as well as the procedures of the accreditations, the second including also variations in time dimension. If national accreditation involved both institutional as well as programme accreditations, the partners were required to incorporate both meaningfully in their reports. They were asked to consider legal, operational, time components, but also other relevant components of variations accreditation standards and procedures.
2. The second step built on the previous one. During this step partners were required to perform ranking following the template. This ranking started with identifying the differences and partners were required to start with those differences that were of minor or modest nature, and thus compatibility could be potentially easy to achieve.
3. Third step built on the solutions' development, and represented a core of individual feasibility studies. Thus, it was required that the output here reflected the potential to streamline the two accreditations, and the perspective here was the national one. Partners were instructed to discuss the evidence from the step 2 with representatives of their national agency (potentially also university). They were also required to ask them how they perceive the fit for potential recognition, also taking in the consideration potential evaluations (e.g., irregular, sample evaluations etc.). Alternatively, they could use focus groups based discussions with vice-rectors/vice-deans, programme directors and agency representatives on the issue. The partners were also instructed that the output was supposed to focus on measures that both national level as well as EAPAA should take to bridge the gaps/differences.

Individual country reports are included in the Annex II of the IO7.

## 3 Main findings

The country reports indicate that we have differences in the focus, content and procedures of national accreditations versus EAPAA accreditation.

### 3.1 Content

In some countries, accreditations are mainly or solely institutionally focused. This is especially the case of Bulgaria and Slovenia. In Slovenia, there is a clear focus of the national accreditation framework on institutional accreditation and the programme focus is only at the initial accreditation when programme is established (i.e. programme focus is applied only in case of new programmes). In Bulgaria, institutional and also the field focus is applied and public administration programmes are accredited within the sub 3.7 Administration and Management of the Field 3 Social, Economic and Legal Sciences.

Other countries are applying mixed systems which is something that deviates from the solely programme-focus of EAPAA accreditation. This is, for instance, the case of Slovakia, Romania, Hungary and Czechia. In these countries, HEIs that obtain institutional accreditation from the central body may accredit their studying programmes themselves. The agency may also review the accreditation and evaluate HEIs on ad hoc basis (in case of issues reported in media etc.). In these countries, the field focus can be applied also. For instance in Slovakia, study programmes in the field of PA can be currently offered within two existing study fields, Political Science and Economics and Management. In Czechia, PA-related programmes are usually accredited within 2 areas of education – economics or law and this and due to this some programmes may be too oriented on economic courses or the law courses and may lack interdisciplinary required by the EAPAA accreditation criteria.

Similar to the approach of EAPAA, national accreditation frameworks are working with various criteria which usually combine requirements on institutions and requirements on studying programmes. This approach can be clearly found in all the countries. The country reports indicate that they differ in the level of specification and formalization/rigidity. Two special approaches can be differentiated in the group of countries – those in Bulgaria and Hungary:

- In Bulgaria, a specific set of criteria for institutional and programme accreditation is used. The evaluation for institutional and programme accreditation is carried out on a 10-point system, including the assessments from 0 to 10.00. The evaluation for each evaluation criterion is formed as the arithmetic mean of the estimates obtained on all its indicators according to their coefficient. For each criterion for institutional and programme accreditation, the Accreditation Council of the National Agency for Assessment and Accreditation validates indicators with weight coefficients. The "scientific activity" criterion has the greatest relative weight. If a score of 0 to 3.99 is obtained, a refusal to accredit is made. Refusal of accreditation is also made if scores of 0 to 3.99 are obtained per one or more of particular criteria of institutional and programme accreditation. Higher schools with a programme accreditation rating of 4.00 to 4.99 have the right to teach only a bachelor's degree in the respective professional field or specialty of the regulated professions.

- The evaluation criteria of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) are very formalized and rigid, does not provide much flexibility in judgment and mainly focusing on formal, quantifiable (rather than qualitative), specific requirement regarding (1) the content of the curricula (proportion of practical oriented or theoretical subjects, percentage of subjects linked to specific disciplines. (2) Professional data of the academic staff, sufficient professional or academic experience directly relevant to their assigned responsibilities based on their academic titles/ qualifications. (3) Infrastructural requirement and facilities especially classrooms, laboratories, department rooms, library suits to the programme activities. (4) inquire on the capacity of the institution whether it is able to provide adequate personal and material conditions for the planned number of students and forms of training.

### 3.2 Procedures

The country reports indicate similarities and, also, differences in accreditation procedures.

In all the countries some **periodical monitoring** is applied, i.e. there is usually some expiration period for the national accreditation. Countries may differ in the length of this period and in requirements imposed on HEIs in terms of frequency of their internal accreditation/evaluation. In Czechia, for instance, continuous internal monitoring is required and it is expected that internal assessment will be conducted regularly at least once per 5 years. In Slovakia, national accreditations are valid for 6 years based on the new framework and regular monitoring is required at least every 2 years.

Some specifics can be found in Romania where the accreditation process itself (which is the same for both undergraduate programmes and master's programmes) has two stages: (1) a provisional temporary operating authorization which offers the higher education services providers (Universities) to start a new programme and secondly (2) final or permanent accreditation which offers the possibility to issue the educational diploma which is recognized by the Ministry of National Education and assures specific qualification of the students; 5 years later, this initial temporary authorization may be followed by accreditation and periodical evaluation every 5 years. The periodical evaluation of MA programmes is made at domain level (there can be multiple MA programmes in the same domain of a university, in the same faculty or different faculties), not for each individual programme.

In Slovenia, institutional accreditation is valid for 5 years and programme holds permanent accreditation once granted, unless revoked through irregular national evaluation procedure.

In Bulgaria, the period depends also on the score the studying programme received during the evaluation (and the accreditation may be valid for three or even six years – three years are applied to programmes that received the least points.

In most of the countries accreditation is subjected to administrative procedure law with a possibility of appeal. In Romania, there is a simplified procedure for the initial accreditation / authorization if a new MA programme is accredited by a Department/Faculty in an academic domain which has received previous accreditation.

If we compare accreditation procedures applied in countries with those used by EAPAA, similarities can be observed regarding the entire process in many of the countries - initial self-evaluation report, followed by expert site visit and formal report. On the other hand, it may be concluded that the role of external international accreditation of programmes is actually only additional/supplementary to the national accreditation process, sometimes not even recognized in legislation and in internal quality frameworks of HEIs.

## 4 Summarization of implications

Based on the country reports, we can conclude that we have differences in the focus, content and procedures of national accreditations versus EAPAA accreditation. In some countries, accreditations are mainly or solely institutionally focused (e.g., Bulgaria, Slovenia), other countries are applying mixed systems (Romania, Hungary, Czechia, Slovakia), which is something that deviates from the solely programme-focus of EAPAA accreditation. There are also situations where differences are enormous also in the contents and procedures of accreditations.

As the systems are very diverse, there is a handful of activities to be performed both at the national as well as at the EAPAA level to start bridging the gaps. Two core issues can be identified:

- One issue relates to the willingness and motivation of national accreditation bodies to start accommodating to and even considering the existence of international accreditation bodies, and to make some efforts to streamline, at least partially, the two approaches.
- Next, the national accreditation bodies should be encouraged also to implement more extensively also qualitative assessments of programmes, where not just contents, but also missions are considered, which represents a core of EAPAA accreditation. Thus, there should be impetus for merging both screening and signalling dimensions of accreditations.

Still, the proactive role of EAPAA should also be considered, a suggestion being that EAPAA might become more sensitive to national specifics in performing their accreditation and evaluation processes. This delivers from the iterations that EAPAA has with different programmes in different countries, which are subjected to apply also obligatory national accreditation procedures, but all these programmes then come in the correspondence with EAPAA and its rules. This involves in particular issues related to procedures, but also the accreditation focus should be considered. A recommendation might be for the EAPAA that it becomes more involved also in lobbying activities with national agencies, as well as with exchanging relevant information and expertise with them.

Also, in case of countries where institutional accreditation is awarded to HEIs and they themselves can then accredit their programmes, the awareness about potential of international accreditation should be built and discussed.

## **IV. Feasibility study on international accreditation/ evaluation of the PhD programmes in new EU member states**

### **1 Introduction**

In the frame of the PAQUALITY project one of the main objectives of IO7 to develop a study that aims to clarify:

- If there is potential demand from PhD programmes in the field of Public Administration for applying for EAPAA accreditation or other international evaluation in new member states (NMS)?
- What would motivate or discourage the PhD programmes management to engage in international accreditation process?
- What benefits would the programme management expect from undergoing EAPAA/international accreditation/evaluation? What barriers can exist according to management of the programmes?

This report aims to provide an overview on the results of a field research conducted in the CEE countries participating in the PAQUALITY project, namely in

- Bulgaria 1 PhD programme
- Czech Republic 1 PhD programme
- Hungary 2 PhD programmes
- Romania 2 PhD programmes
- Slovakia, 4 PhD programmes
- Slovenia 2 PhD programmes

were investigated in order to find out whether international accreditation is demanded and on what conditions.

### **2 Problem statement: Recognizing the importance of external quality assurance/evaluation of PhD programmes**

The three-cycle system of higher education (Bachelor-Master-PhD) has been introduced in all European countries (OECD, 2020). The importance of internationalization of studying as well as of research has been constantly growing and it has an impact on the relevance of external quality assurance. External quality assurance provides an objective bases for comparability of programmes which is crucial for potential PhD students want to make well - established decision based on the quality of similar programmes. Secondly governments might also want to know more about the quality of programmes which are subject of funding from public budgets (Reichard). The quality assurance of PhD education has become important also in the field of public administration and related studies such as public management. (Reichard and Kickert, 2008).

Nonetheless, there is no widespread practice of accreditation of PhD programmes by EAPAA. EAPAA as an external accreditation agency has provided accreditation for only one PhD Programme so far (Department of Public Administration, Netherlands Institute of

Government in 2019). Also, little is known about current state of international evaluation of existing PA PhD programmes.

Hence, in the frame of PAQ project partners aimed to explore the willingness / motivation and feasibility of PhD programmes in the field of PA studies in the New Member States for applying and earning EAPAA or other international accreditation/evaluation. Based on the updated list of PA-related PhD programmes it was researched and discussed in cooperation with PAQUALITY project partners what PhD programmes in their countries may potentially aim for the international accreditation/evaluation and what conclusions can be made about potential demand and its determinants in the countries, thus about feasibility of international accreditation/evaluation of existing PhD PA programmes.

For instance, earning an international programme accreditation by EAPAA has proven to be an interesting option for Public Administration programmes. Apart from offering a quality assurance of European academic level public administration programmes by developing appropriate accreditation standards, our survey suggest that programmes accredited by the EAPAA applied for the accreditation mainly from the following reasons (regardless of their location – e.g. there was no significant difference between programmes from the CEE region and programmes from old EU member countries):

- To get in-depth feedback from internationally recognized experts to improve our programme.
- To raise the prestige of our programme internally (inside our faculty/university).
- To become more competitive nationally (to attract prospective students from our country).
- To become more competitive internationally (to attract prospective foreign students).

### 3 Research Questions and Methodology

Each short feasibility study conducted in every country followed the same methodology and investigated three aspects of doctoral programmes that, we believe, are the most important for feasibility of their international evaluation/accreditation:

1. Identification of potential candidates, i.e. doctoral programmes for which it would be relevant to research motivation to be evaluated/accredited by recognized international association/agency;
2. Investigating motivations and expectations of these candidates toward international accreditation. Identifying the 'push factors' towards EAPAA accreditation.
3. Investigating motivations and expectations of programmes that already undergone international accreditation/evaluation

Together with main research questions, these three aspects relevant for the feasibility study are presented in more detail below.

The research started with the identification of potential candidates (doctoral programmes focusing on PA) in the partner countries with the creation of a short list of relevant targeted programmes.

**In step 1**, a list of potential doctoral programmes that may be willing to apply for the EAPAA accreditation and relevant for this feasibility study was prepared by experts from the CORVINUS in cooperation with Masaryk University, Ljubljana University and NISPAcee, taking

into account updated list of PhD programmes existing in partner countries. It is partly based on information whether lower level programmes (especially MA programmes) of HEIs in the countries have been accredited by EAPAA. We assumed that having a MA programme already accredited by EAPAA is a great advantage for application for accreditation of a PhD programme. Though we did not intend to limit our focus exclusively on the EAPAA accreditation, but extended our investigation to international accreditation in general. Partners from each country were asked to confirm or identify other potential candidates. In line with the above mentioned ambition our first research question focused on the following:

**RQ1: Which PhD programmes focusing on PA seem to be the most appropriate candidates to the EAPAA/other international accreditation according to project partners and why?**

The second ambition aims to investigate the motivations and expectations of the candidates toward international accreditation. Identifying the ‘push and pull back factors’ towards international accreditation we aim to answer the following question:

**RQ2: Do doctoral programmes have adequate incentives to undertake EAPAA/other international accreditation? And if so, what are they? What benefits would the programme management expect from participating in international accreditation? What barriers are perceived by the programme management?**

Data were collected by PAQUALITY partners by approaching programme managers of selected PhD programmes in their countries and filling out a short survey. The surveys were conducted either online or through personal interview over the period from May to June 2021. The list of programmes covered by the survey is presented in the below table. The research template and individual country feasibility studies are included in the Annex III of this IO7.

**Table 1 - PhD programmes selected for further research**

Country	Programme	Organization
Bulgaria	<i>Professional field 3.7. Administration and Management</i> PhD Programme: Organization and Management outside the sphere of material production PhD Programme: Economics and Management in Industry	Varna Free University “Chernorizets Hrabar”
Czechia	<i>Regional Development</i>	Prague University of Economics and Business
Hungary	<i>Political Science Doctoral Programme</i>	Corvinus University of Budapest
	<i>Doctoral School of Public Administration Sciences</i>	National University of Public Service
Romania	<i>Administration and Public Policy</i>	The National University of Political Studies and Public Administration
	<i>Administration and Public Policy</i>	Babeş-Bolyai University
Slovakia	<i>Public Economics and Policy</i>	Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica
	<i>Public Administration</i>	Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice
	<i>Public Policy and Public Administration</i>	University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava

	<i>Public Administration and Regional Development</i>	University of Economics in Bratislava
Slovenia	<i>Governance and Economics in the Public Sector</i>	University of Ljubljana
	<i>Public Administration (3rd cycle)</i>	New University

## 4 Results

As we pointed out in the introductory section international/external accreditation of a programme provides a wide range of benefits and opportunities for studying programmes - for their quality management and assurance, standardization, it also encourages innovation, provides an externally and internally forum for discussion on further development and cooperation and enhancing the competitiveness of the programmes as well in the domestic and international market as well. It is also an interesting marketing opportunity.

Our study presents an analysis on explaining the main motives (incentives/benefit and barriers/challenges) of international accreditation of PA programmes in NMSs. In order to explore the explanatory factors behind what triggers or hinders programme management for applying international accreditation, 12 short and structured interviews with programme managers were analysed. These interview manuscripts were systematically coded and analysed with qualitative data analyses in order to precede more systematic and more transparent overview of underlying motives of international accreditation the interview manuscripts were systematically coded and common patterns were identified and classified.

Out of the 12 programmes, 9 would be interested – at least in a longer future – to apply for international accreditation process. The following sub-point 4.1 aim to sum up the main motives and the frequency of occurrence of these drivers behind willingness of programme. The sub-point 4.2 outlines barriers.

### 4.1 Incentives/benefits behind applying for international accreditation

Results on incentives/benefits behind applying for international accreditation can be summarized as follows:

**Table 2 – Incentives/benefits behind applying for international accreditation**

Identified categories of benefits/ incentives	Frequency (the number of programmes where it was mentioned)	Description
<i>Quality assurance / quality improvement</i>	5 programmes	The external accreditation could increase the consciousness on quality management of programme management. It provides input and feedback to improve and fine-tune the curriculum. International Accreditation provides a Quality Assurance thus helps identifying key areas that represent a priority to the institution and helps to improve processes based on international quality standards and students' / market's expectations.
<i>Greater Promotion /</i>	5 programmes	International accreditation might facilitate a

<i>getting competitive advantage on the market</i>		better promotion/ reputation that brings competitive advantages on the market, such as: being more competitive in getting research funds, being more visible on the (domestic/ international) 'educational market' attracting more students from abroad attract more high - ranked researchers and professors.
Greater Internationalization	4 programmes mentioned	Facilitating the programme to meet the International standard to a greater extent. International accreditation also facilitates international /cross- national convertibility of programmes/ curricula and facilitate the cross-country mobilization of academic staff and students as well.
<i>Building / joining to an international community/ educational network</i>	3 programmes	International accreditation facilitates a community building process and accredited programmes can benefit from being a member of a formal/informal educational/academic network. It allows a better access to PhD students and staff to partner institutions' resources and facilitate a mutual beneficial exchange on experience and joint researches.
<i>Strengthening the institution position and reputation internally and externally</i>	2 programmes	Facilitate better recognition of the programme in the national and European academic environment.
<i>Replacing national accreditation process</i>	2 programmes	Although there is not any practice yet on that, but the recognition of international accreditation of the programme by the national agency would be great incentives for institutions.
<i>Positive feedback and motivation for the staff and program management</i>	1 programme	Earning international accreditation provided by external, independent evaluators provides a positive encouragement for the staff themselves and motivates them for continuous improvement. Additionally, accreditation can enhance knowledge sharing between peers and increased job satisfaction.
<i>Benchmarking program to other similar programs</i>	1 programme	International accreditation provides an opportunity for benchmarking/ making comparisons with other institutions' similar programmes and then learning the lessons that those comparisons throw up. Benchmarking also enables a continuous process of measuring the educational services and practices against the 'competitors'.

## 4.2 Barriers for applying for international accreditation

Results on applying for international accreditation can be summarized as follows:

**Table 3 – Barriers for applying for international accreditation**

Identified categories of barriers	Frequency (the number of programmes where it was mentioned)	Description
<i>Resource scarcity</i>	3 programmes	Financial burdens, limited administrative capacity can be identified as a key challenges. The workload related to accreditation is emphasized as an important problem.
<i>Insufficient internationalization</i>	3 programmes	Insufficient internationalization can be resulted from the following characteristics: low motivation of PhD students and lecturers to meet international standards (publication, international research projects, educational mobilization, low participation in joint projects, international conferences and research, insufficient international visibility and delaying broadening the offer of foreign language programmes are also frequent element hindering internationalization.
Insufficient Quality	2 programmes	Insufficient academic quality and curricula of the programme.
Newly established program /Not enough experience	2 programmes	International accreditation includes some component measuring previous academic activities and students results. Some programmes have not enough experience yet to conduct an overarching evaluation.
Drop of students	1 programme	Some programmes suffer from that the new applicants to the programme dropping year by year.
Not clear disciplinary focus	1 programme	Some programme still searching their specific focus on disciplines.
Language barrier	1 programme	Education programme only offered in domestic language (no capacity for English courses)

## 5 Concluding remarks

In total, 13 PhD programmes were identified by the PAQUALITY project partners as potential candidates for international accreditation in countries with partners in the project.

The research indicates high willingness among PhD programmes in all the countries, except for the Czech and one of the Slovenian programmes. The Czech programme was a new one and it was not intended for it to be accredited internationally, because it was delivered only

in Czech language. In the case of the programme of the University of Ljubljana, a challenge was perceived that this is joint international PhD programme, which complicates the procedures of gaining accreditation; besides, the time period of programme delivery is still rather short for the criteria set.

In case of the programmes that were willing to be accredited internationally, this accreditation was perceived as an important opportunity for improving the programmes. Particularly the following may be considered as key incentives behind potential application for international accreditation:

- Quality assurance / quality improvement
- Greater Promotion / getting competitive advantage on the market
- Greater Internationalization
- Building / joining to an international community/ educational network

They are similar to findings on reasons for application for the EAPAA accreditation that are presented in the first part of this Intellectual output (in the results of survey focusing on perceptions on EAPAA criteria and procedures).

But although the research shows that programmes in the countries would be willing to be accredited/evaluated by international agency, at the same time various barriers were pointed out by their programme managers. Particularly the lack of resources and internationalization were emphasized by them.

Even though the quality assurance of PhD education seems to be an important and attractive opportunity for studying programmes in the field of public administration, there is no widespread practice of accreditation of PhD programmes by EAPAA. EAPAA as an external accreditation agency has provided accreditation for only one Phd programme so far (Department of Public Administration, Netherlands Institute of Government in 2019). According to the point of view of the main representative of EAPAA “the accreditation of PhD programmes by EAPAA was officially started in 2019 and piloted at the Netherlands Institute of Government. Since then, the pandemic has stalled the expansion of EAPAA's efforts in this area. It is hoped that, with the situation returning to normal, new applications can be accepted for the year 2022”.

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## Annex I – Questionnaire used for surveying experiences related to EAPAA criteria and procedures

1. **Why did your programme apply for EAPAA accreditation? Please order the following reasons from most important to least important.**

***If you participated in more than one EAPAA accreditation of your programme (e.g. in accreditation and the following re-accreditation), our question refers to your earliest accreditation experience.***

Reason
a) To get in-depth feedback from internationally recognized experts to improve our programme.
b) To raise the prestige of our programme internally (inside our faculty/university).
c) Another programme of ours had been accredited previously.
d) To become more competitive nationally (to attract prospective students from our country).
e) To become more competitive internationally (to attract prospective foreign students).
f) To gain potential financial benefits (e.g. because our department could receive additional performance-related funds for this internalization activity).
g) To gain potential benefits related to the amount of lump-sum financing.
h) As a substitute for national accreditation/evaluation.

2. **If you applied for EAPAA accreditation because of other reasons (that are not included above), please specify them:**

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3. **We would like to ask you to share with us your personal experiences regarding the EAPAA guidelines and the process of preparing for accreditation, in particular the preparation of the self-assessment report. Below is a list of statements. Based on your experiences, please indicate how you feel about each statement by indicating your level of agreement or disagreement.**

***If you participated in more than one EAPAA accreditation of your programme (e.g. in accreditation and the following re-accreditation), our question refers to your earliest accreditation experience.*** \*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know/Not sure.
a) The criteria system for EAPAA accreditation was clear and unambiguous for us.					
b) The EAPAA guidelines were clear and gave us clear guidance on what criteria we had to meet in order to achieve successful accreditation.					
c) It was clear to us what information should be provided in the self-evaluation report.					

d) If needed during our preparation of the self-evaluation report, we obtained sufficient help from the EAPAA when we asked for it (e.g. by e-mail or phone).					
e) It was clear to us what information and supplementary materials should be provided for the site visit.					
f) The EAPAA guidelines gave us clear guidance on how we should organize the site visit.					
g) It was clear to us what internal programme stakeholders should be provided for the site visit interviews.					
h) It was clear to us what external programme stakeholders should be provided for the site visit interviews.					

**4. If you experienced any specific difficulty concerning the EAPAA guidelines or help you needed for the smooth preparation of your self-evaluation report or the site visit, please provide us with details.**

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**5. How much time did you spent on preparing the self-evaluation report? Please estimate the number of weeks your core team devoted to preparing the self-evaluation report.**

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**6. How large was your core team for EAPAA accreditation? Please provide us with the number of employees that were most actively involved (not only in collecting data, but especially in preparing the self-evaluation report, organizing the site visit):**

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**7. Below is a list of statements focused on the site visit and its outputs. Based on your experiences, please indicate how you feel about each statement by indicating your level of agreement or disagreement.**

***If you participated in more than one EAPAA accreditation of your programme (e.g. in accreditation and the following re-accreditation), our question refers to your earliest accreditation experience).***

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know/Not sure.
a) The members of the site visit team came well prepared for the site visit (they knew our self-evaluation report well).					
b) The members of the site visit team were highly experienced evaluators.					
c) I felt the site visit was overly focused on making judgments of our programme's adequacy rather than on understanding it and providing constructive suggestions.					

d) We had sufficient opportunities to talk with the site visit team during the site visit.					
e) We had sufficient opportunities to comment on the draft site visit report.					
f) In the draft site visit report, we obtained relevant feedback from the site visit team.					
g) I felt that the draft site visit report did not fully take into account comments we made during the site visit (in order to clarify something to the site visit team).					
h) The draft site visit report contained critical findings that were not discussed with us during the site visit.					
i) The final decision by the EAPAA was sufficiently backed by the site visit report.					
j) The final decision by the EAPAA contained relevant feedback.					
k) Our expectations regarding EAPAA accreditation were met entirely.					

**8. If you experienced any inadequacy concerning the on-the-spot evaluation during the site visit (in the activities of the site visit team), please provide us with details.**

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**9. If your expectations regarding the EAPAA accreditation were not entirely met, please specify why.**

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**10. Has your programme already been re-accredited by the EAPAA?**

a) Yes.
b) No, but we intend to apply for re-accreditation.
c) No and we do not intend to apply for re-accreditation.

**11. If your programme did not/will not apply for re-accreditation by the EAPAA, why? Please provide us with details.**

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**12. If your programme has already been re-accredited by the EAPAA, were your expectations for and experiences with the re-accreditation different to the first accreditation? Please provide us with details.**

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**13. Based on your experience, what would have made the EAPAA accreditation procedure easier for your organization and programme management?**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) More explanation and clarification of the accreditation criteria in the EAPAA guidelines.				
b) Better clarification of the scope and content of the requirements in the guides to the self- evaluation reports.				
c) Better clarification of what should be provided in the site visit guides.				
d) Reduction of the role of internal people (programme directors, administrators, faculty representatives, etc.) in the site visit.				
e) Reduction of the role of external stakeholders (students, practitioners) in the site visit.				
f) More time devoted to clarifications and discussions during the site visit.				
g) More time given to us for comments on the draft site visit report.				
h) Better reflection in the final version of the site visit report of comments on the draft site visit report received from our programme.				
i) More specific feedback provided in the final EAPAA Accreditation Committee Evaluation Report.				
j) Incorporation into the accreditation process of the right to appeal against a negative decision.				

**14. If you think that changing some requirements/criteria for EAPAA accreditation (other than those listed in the table above) would significantly help to make the accreditation process easier (but still relevant) or would like to add other recommendations to the EAPAA, what would you change/recommend? Please provide us with details.**

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**15. Below you can provide us with any additional comments on EAPAA accreditation.**

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**16. How were you involved in the EAPAA accreditation of your programme?**

*Please choose the roles that best suit your activities during the EAPAA accreditation of your programme. Multiple answers are possible.*

a) I was the head of the programme that was being evaluated.
b) I was the main project coordinator.
c) I was a member of the core team.
d) Other.

**17. If you chose "Other", please specify your role in the EAPAA accreditation of your programme.**

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**18. Do you or did you deliver the EAPAA accredited programme fully in English?**

d) Yes

e) No

**19. Please indicate whether and when your country entered the EU?**

a) My country became an EU member before 2004.

b) My country became an EU member in 2004 or later.

c) My country is not an EU member.

**20. If you would like to receive the results of the survey, please provide us with your e-mail address:**

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**Thank you very much for your help.**

## Annex II – country reports for the feasibility study on an acceptance of EAPAA accreditation on national levels in selected countries (Part IV of this report)

### Bulgaria

**The first step** aims at investigating the compatibility of accreditations. Methodology will consist on the comparison of EAPAA standards with national accreditation standards.

Comparison should portray major differences between the standards of the two, including the content of the standards as well as the procedures of the accreditations, the second including also variations in time dimension.

If national accreditation involves both institutional as well as programme accreditations, the two should be meaningfully incorporated.

Legal, operational, time components, but also other relevant components of variations accreditation standards and procedures should be considered.

Country:	Bulgaria	
Differences in accreditations/ standards	EAPAA	National
content	Programme focus of accreditations	Institutional focus of accreditation and field focus: the professional field 3.7. Administration and Management, which is within the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences.
	5 eligibility criteria; 13 standards ( <i>domain, mission, level, practice, curriculum, quality improvement, student assessment, jurisdiction, faculty, students' admission, supportive services, student services, public relations</i> )	Specific set of criteria for institutional and programme accreditation. The evaluation for institutional and programme accreditation is carried out on a 10-point system, including the assessments from 0 to 10.00. The evaluation for each evaluation criterion is formed as the arithmetic mean of the estimates obtained on all its indicators according to their coefficient. For each criterion for institutional and programme accreditation, the Accreditation Council of the National Agency for Assessment and Accreditation validates indicators with weight coefficients. The "scientific activity" criterion has the greatest relative weight. If a score of 0 to 3.99 is obtained, a refusal to accredit is made. Refusal of accreditation is also made if scores of 0 to 3.99 per one or more of particular criteria of institutional and programme accreditation. Higher schools with a programme accreditation rating of 4.00 to 4.99 have the right to teach only a bachelor's degree in the respective professional field or specialty of the regulated

<b>Country:</b>	<b>Bulgaria</b>	
<b>Differences in accreditations/ standards</b>	<b>EAPAA</b>	<b>National</b>
		professions.
Procedures	Periodical monitoring – every 7 years.	The period of validity of the accreditation is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• six years - when the score received is from 9.00 to 10.00;</li> <li>• five years - when the score obtained is from 7.00 to 8.99;</li> <li>• four years - when the score obtained is from 5.00 to 6.99;</li> <li>• three years - when the score received is from 4.00 to 4.99.</li> </ul>
	Voluntary involvement, non-administrative procedure with no appeal	Obligatory involvement, administrative procedure. Only NEAA is allowed to do programme accreditation in the Republic of Bulgaria. Even if a programme (no matter if PA or other) was accredited by organization or institution different from NEAA, the education (and the diploma at the end) is not accepted as legitimate (and does not receive EU recognition respectively), if the programme is not accredited by NEAA. Also the diplomas of foreign universities giving programmes in the Republic of Bulgaria are not recognized as legitimate, if they do not have accreditation by NEAA.
Similarities (summary)	Major similarities are associated with prescribed standards.	
Main differences (summary) and implications for the EAPAA accreditation feasibility	Institutional focus of accreditation and field focus: the professional field 3.7. Administration and Management, which is within the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences. Specific set of criteria for institutional and programme accreditation with weight coefficients and a 10-point score system. The period of validity of the accreditation is based on the evaluation mark. Obligatory accreditation by NEAA, which is the only, allowed doing institutional and programming accreditation. For now, NEAA does not recognize EAPAA accreditation. Meanwhile NEAA accreditation is recognized on European and even world level and gives full range of possibilities for students, EAPAA accreditation does not.	

**The second step** builds on the previous one, where ranking is performed. This ranking starts with identifying the differences; the elaboration starts with those differences that are of minor or modest nature, and thus compatibility could be potentially easy to achieve. Following, the outline continues with the ones, where the differences between the two are increasing.

<b>Country:</b>	<b>Bulgaria</b>		
<b>Standard ranking</b>	<b>Difference description</b>	<b>Potential solution to difference accommodation</b>	
		<b>EAPAA perspective</b>	<b>National perspective</b>
1	Different period of validity	Shorter period of validity	Prolong the period of validity
2	Programme accreditation of PA/ Programme accreditation of professional fields	To broaden the scope to the professional field.	Programme accreditation addresses: majors from the regulated professions; PhD programmes; Professional fields. Public administration programmes in the Republic of Bulgaria are accredited under the professional field Administration and Management.
3	Descriptive analysis and evaluation/ Score marks	Acquire score marks on which to base a decision about the period of validity etc.	There is a criteria system, developed by NEAA and the HEI/programme should provide evidence to which level it corresponds to those. The correspondence is measured through scores, where the HE Act identifies levels of scores, which do not allow the accreditation to be awarded.
4	Voluntary EAPAA/ Obligatory NEAA Accreditation	Gain European level or even worldwide recognition in order to substitute NEAA accreditation.	To consider it at least as a part of self-evaluation reports. All programmes in the country are subject to accreditation, no matter if they are offered by private or public universities. When a programme accreditation of a professional field is awarded, the department can take its own decisions on how many specialities within the programme will be offered until the next accreditation period. Only NEAA is allowed to do programme accreditation in the Republic of Bulgaria. Even if a programme (no matter if PA or other) was accredited by an organization or institution different from NEAA, the education (and the diploma at the end) is not accepted as legitimate (and does not receive EU recognition respectively), if the programme is not accredited by NEAA. Also, the diplomas of foreign universities giving programmes in the Republic of Bulgaria are not recognized as legitimate, if they do not have accreditation by NEAA.
5	Accreditation focus and validity	Gain European level or even worldwide	NEAA accreditation is recognized on European and even world level and gives a full range of possibilities for students,

<b>Country:</b>	<b>Bulgaria</b>		
<b>Standard ranking</b>	<b>Difference description</b>	<b>Potential solution to difference accommodation</b>	
		<b>EAPAA perspective</b>	<b>National perspective</b>
		recognition.	

**The third step** builds on the solutions' development, and represents a core of the feasibility study. Thus, the output here reflects the potential to streamline the two accreditations, and the perspective here is national one. The evidence from the step 2 should be discussed with the representatives of the agency (potentially also university), and how they perceive the fit for potential recognition, also taking in the consideration potential evaluations (e.g., irregular, sample evaluations etc.). Alternative is to have focus groups based discussions with vice-rectors/vice-deans, programme directors and agency representatives on the issue. The output should focus on measures that both national level as well as EAPAA should take to bridge the gaps/differences.

Recommendations and conclusions are made on the base of focus group workshop. Participants in the focus group are:

- prof. D.Sc. Goshko Petkov – Chairman of The Standing Committee on Social and Legal Sciences, Security and Defence
- assoc. prof. PhD Eleonora Tankova, Dean of the Faculty of International Economics and Administration
- assoc. prof. PhD Mariya Velikova, Head of the Department of Administration, Management and Political Science

<b>Country:</b>	<b>Bulgaria</b>	
<b>Recommendations for bridging the gaps</b>	<b>What EAPAA should do?</b>	<b>What national level should do?</b>
Institutional focus of accreditation and field focus: the professional field 3.7. Administration and Management, which is within the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences.	To broad the scope to the professional field.	Could consider it as step back or to admit PA as crucial field that needs special attention. In Bulgaria programme accreditation addresses: majors from the regulated professions; PhD programmes; Professional fields. Public administration programmes in the Republic of Bulgaria accredited under the professional field Administration and Management.
Fill the gap between descriptive analysis and the score marks evaluation system.	Acquire score marks on which base to take decision about the period of validity etc.	Could help EAPAA to develop specific set of criteria for institutional and programme accreditation with weight coefficients and a 10-point score system. Quantitative evaluation is considered as very important base.
Lack of European level or even worldwide recognition.	Gain European level or even worldwide recognition.	To consider it as equivalent to NEAA accreditation if it gains European level or even worldwide recognition. For now, NEAA does not recognize EAPAA accreditation. Meanwhile NEAA accreditation is recognized on European and even world level and gives full range of

<b>Country:</b>	<b>Bulgaria</b>	
<b>Recommendations for bridging the gaps</b>	<b>What EAPAA should do?</b>	<b>What national level should do?</b>
		possibilities for students, EAPAA accreditation does not. Obligatory accreditation by NEAA, which is the only, allowed doing institutional and programming accreditation.

## Czechia

**The first step** aims at investigating the compatibility of accreditations. Methodology will consist on the comparison of EAPAA standards with national accreditation standards. Comparison should portray major differences between the standards of the two, including the content of the standards as well as the procedures of the accreditations, the second including also variations in time dimension. If national accreditation involves both institutional as well as programme accreditations, the two should be meaningfully incorporated. Legal, operational, time components, but also other relevant components of variations accreditation standards and procedures should be considered.

<b>COUNTRY:</b>	<b>Czech Republic</b>	
<b>Differences in accreditations / standards</b>	<b>EAPAA</b>	<b>National</b>
Content	Programme focus of accreditations	Institutional accreditations is the main form for public universities. Universities that receive the institutional accreditation (meet criteria for internal evaluation mechanisms set by National Accreditation Office - NAO) can accredit their study programmes based on their own internal mechanisms. All "good" universities already have the institutional accreditation. Other universities (i.e. those without the institutional accreditation) must undergo external evaluation by the NAO. Similar is the case of private universities that need the State approval, criteria are similar to those used for public universities without institutional accreditation.
	5 eligibility criteria; 13 standards ( <i>domain, mission, level, practice, curriculum, quality improvement, student assessment, jurisdiction, faculty, students' admission, supportive services, student</i>	According to the Act on HEIs (111/1998) the required standards in case of institutional accreditation are split between the requirements on institutional environment (strategy and management of university, students of the programmes, research, international cooperation, collaboration with practice, academics, system of quality assurance in educational and creative activities) and on study programmes (content focus, graduate profile, graduate competences and knowledge, personal, financial or material security of the programme, equal conditions for all to the university education etc.). In case of accreditation of the study programme the required standards are similar (e.g. graduate profile, content orientation of the programme, quality assurance of the educational or creative activities, etc.), but there is also a set

	<i>services, public relations)</i>	of minimum requirements for the study programme.
	Periodical monitoring – every 7 years.	Continuous monitoring of universities is based on internal self-assessment and external assessment (realized by NAO). According to the Act on HEIs (its par.77a) external assessment can be secured also by generally recognized evaluation agencies at the university's own expense. This means that it may be conducted next to the external evaluation by the NAO. Internal assessment is expected to be conducted at least once per 5 years with annual updates on changes reached in quality and management measures.
	External assessment prevails through site visits and report assessment.	Internal organizational assessment and responsibility for quality assurance prevails. The report about internal assessment must be shared also with the NAO and the Ministry of Education.
Procedures	7 years validity	The Act on HEIs expects 10 years validity for institutional accreditation or for the accreditation of the study programme. There are certain conditions defined in the law under which the term of validity could be shorter than 10 years (e.g. in case of critical findings based on ad hoc external evaluation).
	Voluntary involvement, non-administrative procedure with no appeal	Obligatory involvement, administrative procedure with appeal.
	Main (core) three experts involve foreign scholars.	Any foreign input is not encouraged by the NAO. The NAO is not against involvement of foreign experts in evaluation within international accreditation systems of universities with the institutional accreditation. This is decentralized and relies upon decision of universities with institutional accreditation. This is also not financially supported by the NAO or the Education Ministry. In general, at least foreign experts are involved in evaluation of studying programmes. This was the case of first evaluation of studying programmes after changes of the accreditation framework were implemented. They are also involved in evaluation of new programmes and usually not in the continuous evaluation. Probably they will be involved in reaccreditations, but again this will rely on internal regulation of individual universities with institutional accreditation.
	Regularly re-accreditation procedures only.	External control is realized by the NAO according to the par.84 (Act 111/1998) through the control of compliance with legal regulations in the implementation of accredited activities and the implementation of external evaluation of educational, creative and other activities of universities. The inspection is carried out on the initiative of the Minister or if the NAO finds serious reasons for extraordinary evaluation.

		In the evaluation, the NAO may use the results of the internal evaluation of the quality of educational, creative and related activities of the university and possibly evaluation performed by a generally recognized evaluation agency according to which for the purposes of Act on HEIs means an agency which is included in the EQAR or ENQA. In the case of universities with institutional accreditation, it is expected that they will reaccredit their programmes regularly.
Similarities (summary)	There is no direct overlap between the national accreditation system in case of universities with the institutional accreditation and the EAPAA accreditation. The use of EAPAA (or any other international) accreditation is not explicitly supported by central authorities and its use relies upon decision of individual universities that may incorporate it into their own internal quality management processes.	
Main differences (summary) and implications for the EAPAA accreditation feasibility	On the national level (NAO/Education Ministry) the role of external international accreditation of programmes is actually only additional to the national accreditation process. For now, the NAO and the Ministry are aware of potential of international evaluation of studying programmes, but do not recognize them directly in legislation and supplementary regulation. International accreditation of programmes could play its role especially at the level of best universities (as of today), as the part of their internal accreditations systems. From this point of view and based on the realized interviews with representatives of the NAO and the Masaryk University (Department for quality) the international accreditation (including EAPAA accreditation) can be used as a certain substitute or complementary procedure to the internal evaluation of studying programmes, but this depends on internal recognition of such instruments and their following regulation approved by University bodies.	

**The second step** builds on the previous one, where ranking is performed. This ranking starts with identifying the differences; the elaboration starts with those differences that are of minor or modest nature, and thus compatibility could be potentially easy to achieve. Following, the outline continues with the ones, where the differences between the two are increasing.

There is no overlap between the Czech institutional accreditation and the EAPAA programme accreditation and it is not possible to propose how to deal with differences. The only choice is to encourage universities to use international accreditation experience and incorporate this in their internal quality management processes. Multiplier event and other activities carried out within the PAQUALITY project suggest that universities are usually not willing to undergo international accreditation (as the voluntary addition to national accreditation) and it is not expected that the NAO/Education Ministry will allow some replacement of national evaluation by international accreditation in short or even in medium time perspective.

**The third step** builds on the solutions' development and represents a core of the feasibility study. Thus, the output here reflects the potential to streamline the two accreditations, and the perspective here is national one. The evidence from the step 2 should be discussed with the representatives of the agency (potentially also university), and how they perceive the fit for potential recognition, also taking in the consideration potential evaluations (e.g., irregular, sample evaluations etc.). Alternative is to have focus groups based discussions with vice-rectors/vice-deans, programme directors and agency representatives on the issue. The

output should focus on measures that both national level as well as EAPAA should take to bridge the gaps/differences.

<b>Country:</b>	<b>Czech Republic</b>	
<b>Recommendations for bridging the gaps</b>	<b>What national level should do?</b>	<b>What EAPAA should do?</b>
<p>Critical gap: Recognition of the role of international accreditation in internal quality management processes of universities with institutional accreditation (in the case of internationally recognized / high quality of this international accreditation).</p> <p>More sharing of experiences regarding potential and critical challenges of international accreditation of programmes.</p>	<p>For a short term, at least some discussion about potential of international accreditation of studying programmes should be moderated by responsible central bodies.</p> <p>As it was emphasized in the interviews, not in all fields high quality international associations may exist offering accreditation.</p> <p>For a medium/longer time period, at least high quality HEIs should attempt to incorporate international accreditation into their internal quality management systems.</p>	<p>To be more active in promotion and discussion the potential of the EAPAA accreditation.</p> <p>On the other this depends on the willingness of EAPAA to be prepared for a larger demand for accreditation. This condition may not be fully met according to discussions with the EAPAA representative in the PAQUALITY project.</p> <p>EAPAA also should seek for its own re-accreditation, as this may be pre-condition for its involvement in Czechia.</p>

## Hungary

**The first step** aims at investigating the compatibility of accreditations. Methodology will consist on the comparison of EAPAA standards with national accreditation standards. Comparison should portray major differences between the standards of the two, including the content of the standards as well as the procedures of the accreditations, the second including also variations in time dimension. If national accreditation involves both institutional as well as programme accreditations, the two should be meaningfully incorporated. Legal, operational, time components, but also other relevant components of variations accreditation standards and procedures should be considered.

<b>Country:</b>	<b>Hungary</b>	
<b>Differences in accreditations/ standards</b>	<b>EAPAA</b>	<b>National (Hungarian Accreditation Committee)</b>
Content	Programmes focus of accreditations (exclusively) and only programs with few years of experience can be apply	Not only programmess, but also institutions need to be accredited. Four types of accreditation might be proceeded by HAC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accreditation of Higher Education Institution</li> <li>- establishing new programmes</li> <li>- launching programmes already accredited</li> <li>- Reviewing the accreditation</li> </ul>
	Mission based accreditation: The EAPAA evaluation criteria go beyond the content of the programme such as the courses, subjects and curriculum. The EAPAA examines the qualities of programme at a much higher level of abstraction. It focuses primarily on the one hand whether the programme falls within the domain of public administration and on the other hand whether the content of the programme serves the aim to reach the training goals stated in the mission, the program me activities are suitable to achieve the programme objectives. There are fewer specific expectations regarding content.	Content based accreditation: The evaluation criteria of the HAC (Hungarian Accreditation Committee ) are very formalized and rigid , doesn't provide much flexibility in judgment and mainly focusing on formal, quantifiable (rather than qualitative), specific requirement regarding (1) the content of the curricula (proportion of practical oriented or theoretical subjects, percentage of subjects linked to specific disciplines . (2) Professional data of the academic staff, sufficient professional or academic experience directly relevant to their assigned responsibilities based on their academic titles/ qualifications. (3) Infrastructural requirement and facilities especially classrooms, laboratories, department rooms, library suits to the programme activities. (4) inquire on the capacity of the institution whether it is able to provide adequate personal and material conditions for the planned number of students and forms of training.
	Periodical monitoring – every 7 years.	Ex post evaluation is conducted in 5-year cycles
	Extensive approach on	Rigid approach on the subjects: there are very

	subjects related to PA: The programme to be accredited has Public Administration in the broadest sense of the word as its major subject. The public administration programme is multidisciplinary in character.	specific and compulsory list on the training activities and output requirement that a PA programme needs to meet.
Procedures	Voluntary involvement, non-administrative procedure	Obligatory involvement, administrative procedure
	Periodical monitoring – every 7 years.	Ex post evaluation is conducted in 5-year cycles
	The EAPAA Board and Committee Members are representing research or academic institutions.	Regarding the composition of HAC the number of full members is 20 and encompass members from diverse background. Members represent the interests of the key stakeholders of national HE education system: 9 members are delegated by the Ministry for National Resources (Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma), 3 are delegated by the Hungarian Rectors' Conference, 2 by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2 by the Churches that have their own higher education institutions, 1 by the Hungarian Academy of Arts, 1 by the National Union of Doctoral Students, 1 member by the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 1 member by National Association of Students' Self Government.
Similarities	Methodologically speaking, evaluation is both the EAPAA and the national accreditation process based primarily on written documents produced in the course of institutional 'Self-assessment'. The documents are submitted to the Accreditation Committee by the HEI. The next part involved in the evaluation process is the visit. The Visiting Committee entrusted with the task of examining and evaluating to what extent the programme meets the EAPAA evaluation criteria /national higher education standards and requirements. The initial opinion of the committee is also revised based on student feedback. Meetings are organized between committee members and students, faculty staff. Both as we noted above the evaluation criteria and the level of abstraction of them are highly different (In the national accreditation process the most important and essential criteria are the assessment of teachers' qualification, the qualification of the infrastructure and the assessment of courses and course related teaching materials, while EAPAA provide a much broader perspective.)	

**The second step** builds on the previous one, where ranking is performed. This ranking starts with identifying the differences; the elaboration starts with those differences that are of minor or modest nature, and thus compatibility could be potentially easy to achieve. Following, the outline continues with the ones, where the differences between the two are increasing.

<b>Country:</b>	<b>Hungary</b>	
<b>Standard</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>Potential solution to difference accommodation</b>

ranking	description	EAPAA perspective	National perspective
1.	Team of experts' composition	Practitioners and experts should be also involved to the commission	
2.	Evaluation criteria		Putting more focus on quality instead of quantity. Providing more flexibility in judgment instead of rigid, very formal process. More focus on the mission-based approach.
3.	Compulsory nature of the procedure		National agency should accept EAPAA accreditation as equivalent or at substitute some element of national accreditation

**The third step** builds on the solutions' development and represents a core of the feasibility study. Thus, the output here reflects the potential to streamline the two accreditations, and the perspective here is national one. The evidence from the step 2 should be discussed with the representatives of the agency (potentially also university), and how they perceive the fit for potential recognition, also taking in the consideration potential evaluations (e.g., irregular, sample evaluations etc.). Alternative is to have focus groups based discussions with vice-rectors/vice-deans, programme directors and agency representatives on the issue. The output should focus on measures that both national level as well as EAPAA should take to bridge the gaps/differences.

Country:	Hungary	
Recommendations for bridging the gaps	What national level should do?	What EAPAA should do?
More flexibility	HAC has no room for maneuver to shape the content and processes of accreditation. HAC should be more autonomous and flexible	
Broadening the entitled accreditation agencies to the national process	Extending the range of accreditation bodies: till 2013 the HAC used to have an exclusive and monopolized authority to issue expert reviews and assessment on higher educational programmes as a key element of the accreditation process. In 2013 there was a change in the legal definition of body (bodies) authorized for run the national accreditation process and provide assessment on HE programmes beside the HAC. Since that besides the HAC, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (EAQA) is entitled to make a programme evaluation for accreditation. The list of authorized accreditation bodies should be extended.	

Shifting the focus of the accreditation (content – wise)	Putting more focus on quality instead of quantity. Providing more flexibility in judgment instead of rigid and very formal process. More focus on the mission based approach.	
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## Romania

**The first step** aims at investigating the compatibility of accreditations. Methodology will consist on the comparison of EAPAA standards with national accreditation standards. Comparison should portray major differences between the standards of the two, including the content of the standards as well as the procedures of the accreditations, the second including also variations in time dimension. If national accreditation involves both institutional as well as programme accreditations, the two should be meaningfully incorporated. Legal, operational, time components, but also other relevant components of variations accreditation standards and procedures should be considered.

<b>Country:</b>	<b>Romania</b>	
<b>Differences in accreditations / standards</b>	<b>EAPAA</b>	<b>National</b>
Content	Programme (mission) focus of accreditations	Mixed institutional and programme focus, both regarding the initial authorization and ulterior accreditation and periodical evaluation. The main provider of programme accreditation/evaluation is the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), an autonomous central organization. The actual accreditation of the programme is done by Government ordinance (LAW 1/2011, article 150) following the evaluation.
	5 eligibility criteria; 13 standards (domain, mission, level, practice, curriculum, quality improvement, student assessment, jurisdiction, faculty, students' admission, supportive services, student services, public relations)	Three main dimensions of evaluation: (1) Institutional capacity; (2) Educational effectiveness and (3) Quality assurance and management and a total of 15 specific standards (see footnotes). (1) Institutional capacity includes: 1.1 Mission, objectives, academic integrity; 1.2 Institutional leadership and management and 1.3 Material and technical basis (infrastructure) - property, equipment, financial resources allocated. (2) Educational effectiveness includes: 2.1 Academic content/curriculum –admission procedures, structure of programme, qualifications in the field; 2.2 Results of academic process; 2.3 Research activities and results and 2.4 Financial activities. (3) Quality assurance and management includes: 3.1 Quality strategies and procedures; 3.2 Periodical evaluation and revision of study programmes; 3.3 Transparent evaluation procedures for educational results; 3.4 Procedures for evaluating teaching staff activity; 3.5 Access to learning resources; 3.6 Continuous update of informational basis; 3.7 Transparency and public information and 3.8 Internal quality assurance structures
	Periodical monitoring – every 7 years.	The accreditation process itself (which is the same for both undergraduate programmes and master's programmes) has two stages: (1) a provisional temporary operating authorization which offers the higher education services

		<p>providers (Universities) to start a new programme and secondly (2) final or permanent accreditation which offers the possibility to issue the educational diploma which is recognized by the Ministry of National Education and assures specific qualification of the students.</p> <p>Thus, we have an initial temporary authorization, followed 5 years later by accreditation and periodical evaluation every 5 years. The periodical evaluation of MA programmes is made at domain level (there can be multiple MA programmes in the same domain in an university, in the same faculty or different faculties), not for each individual programme.</p>
	External assessment prevails through site visits and report assessment.	Internal self-evaluation followed by external assessment site visits and follow-up report assessment.
Procedures	7 years validity	5 years period followed by periodical evaluation
	Voluntary involvement, non-administrative procedure with no appeal	<p>Mandatory in order to receive public funding and for the diploma to be valid/recognized in the national education system and at the European level through the Bologna process.</p> <p>There is a simplified procedure for the initial accreditation / authorization if a new MA programme is accredited by a Department/Faculty in an academic domain which has received previous accreditation.</p>
	Main (core) three experts involve foreign scholars.	<p>2 to 4 evaluators (three in most cases), experts in the Master degree field under evaluation. If the programmes is with part-time attendance (FR), one of the evaluators will come from the ID/FR Commission.</p> <p>The evaluators are academic peers from other universities than that which request the evaluation. Evaluators have to be registered with ARACIS, satisfy certain professional and educational requirements and pass an examination.</p>
	Regularly re-accreditation procedures only.	Periodical evaluation every 5 years in order to maintain accreditation and continue the programme.
Main similarities	<p>Major similarities are associated with prescribed standards, which appear to be mostly aligned between EAPAA and the Romanian national accreditation. Although the structure of the initial self-evaluation reports differs and standards are under different headings/name, in a lot of cases/standards the content is the same or at least similar. Similarities can also be observed regarding the entire process: initial self-evaluation report, expert site visit and formal report.</p>	
Main differences (summary) and implications for the EAPAA accreditation feasibility	<p>The national accreditation system presents more emphasis for institutional elements and criteria, while EAPAA can be considered to be more mission and programme focused.</p> <p>According to article 150 of the Romanian National Education Law (1/2011) 'External quality assurance evaluation can be provided by ARACIS or any other organization registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education.'</p>	

**The second step** builds on the previous one, where ranking is performed. This ranking starts with identifying the differences; the elaboration starts with those differences that are of minor or modest nature, and thus compatibility could be potentially easy to achieve. Following, the outline continues with the ones, where the differences between the two are increasing.

<b>Country:</b>	<b>Romania</b>		
<b>Standard ranking</b>	<b>Difference description</b>	<b>Potential solution to difference accommodation</b>	
		<b>EAPAA perspective</b>	<b>National perspective</b>
1	Contents of accreditation standards differs	Balancing of contents and instructions for self-evaluation report writing. More flexible indications/ requirements for SE reports EAPAA might be more flexible in this regard than the national accreditation agency.	Balancing of contents and instructions for self-evaluation report writing. More flexible indications/ requirements for SE reports
2	Team of experts / evaluators	/	More accent on international experts in the field. Moving beyond the expertise available at national level.
3	Re-accreditation recurrence	7 years is a period of time in which a lot can happen with the quality of the programme. An intermediary (mid accreditation), less complex, evaluation can be conducted in order to ensure that the standards are still respected. This mid-term evaluation could focus especially on the recommendations made after the initial accreditation.	/
4	Accreditation focus and validity	Better equilibrium between institutional factors and programme/mission criteria can be achieved.	Better equilibrium between institutional factors and programme/mission criteria can be achieved
5	Encouraging the usage of international evaluation bodies	Could exercise more lobby at the national level, engage in direct interactions with national agencies	There is the legal possibility that 'the external quality assurance evaluation can be provided by ARACIS or any other organization registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education', but more lobby is necessary for this alternative to actually be used.

**The third step** builds on the solutions' development and represents a core of the feasibility study. Thus, the output here reflects the potential to streamline the two accreditations, and the perspective here is national one. The evidence from the step 2 should be discussed with the representatives of the agency (potentially also university), and how they perceive the fit for potential recognition, also taking in the consideration potential evaluations (e.g., irregular, sample evaluations etc.). Alternative is to have focus groups based discussions with vice-rectors/vice-deans, programme directors and agency representatives on the issue. The output should focus on measures that both national level as well as EAPAA should take to bridge the gaps/differences.

These recommendations are based on the interactions developed during the online Multiplier Event conducted on May 28, 2021, with representatives (decision makers and professors) from seven Romanian universities which organize MA, BA and (in some cases) PhD study programmes, representative of hiring/employing organizations and two evaluators from the national accreditation agency.

<b>Country:</b>	<b>Romania</b>	
<b>Recommendations for bridging the gaps</b>	<b>What national level should do?</b>	<b>What EAPAA should do?</b>
Increase institutional direct interaction between the two bodies in order to improve mutual trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accept discussions with foreign evaluating agency</li> <li>- Invite international agencies as observers (maybe online) at different event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Actively initiate direct interactions</li> <li>- Provide expertise from the international level</li> <li>- Invite national agencies as observers (maybe online) at different event</li> </ul>
Improve the legal framework for recognizing external evaluation in the accreditation process, in accordance to article 150 and 155 or the Romanian National Education Law (1/2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reduce their resistance to external evaluations</li> <li>- Not oppose modifications in the legal framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not sure if EAPAA could influence policy makers at the national level, in this issue</li> </ul>
	<p>OBS.: We believe that the Ministry of National Education, The Government and the Parliament are the main actors which could improve legislation and not the national/international agencies. There are, of course, vested interests of the national agency to resist these legislative changes, as each evaluation process represents a source of financial income and „soft power” over universities.</p>	
Unify evaluation and accreditation standards and criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus more on the mission of study programmes and how this mission is implemented by the curricula</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ad some more emphasis on institutions factors, alongside programme mission / focus</li> </ul>
	<p>OBS: We believe that the two sets of standards and criteria, as well as the entire evaluation and accreditation procedures are rather similar between EAPAA and the national system.</p>	

Joined evaluation missions /	Include EAPAA or other international agency experts in their evaluation procedure, alongside national experts/evaluators	Include ARACIS experts in their evaluation procedure, alongside international experts/evaluators
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## Slovakia

**The first step** aims at investigating the compatibility of accreditations. Methodology will consist on the comparison of EAPAA standards with national accreditation standards. Comparison should portray major differences between the standards of the two, including the content of the standards as well as the procedures of the accreditations, the second including also variations in time dimension. If national accreditation involves both institutional as well as programme accreditations, the two should be meaningfully incorporated. Legal, operational, time components, but also other relevant components of variations accreditation standards and procedures should be considered.

<b>Country:</b>	<b>Slovakia</b>	
<b>Differences in accreditations/ standards</b>	<b>EAPAA</b>	<b>National</b>
<b>Content</b>	Programme focus of accreditations	The university applies for the accreditation. If it is successful, for the accreditation of the study programme the approval of the university and faculty board of quality is enough.
	5 eligibility criteria; 13 standards (domain, mission, level, practice, curriculum, quality improvement, student assessment, jurisdiction, faculty, students' admission, supportive services, student services, public relations)	More focus on aims not mission. The internship is obligatory only in professionally oriented study programmes. There are on special prerequisites on students' for entry to the programme in social sciences beside the standard ones. No special focus on didactical concept and teaching methods.
	Precisely defined Public Administration domain (criteria 5.1) and Curriculum (criteria 5.5)	Due to the recent change in the structure of the study fields in the Slovak Republic, PA focused study field is cancelled as an autonomous study field. Study programmes in the field of PA can be currently offered within two existing study fields, Political Science and Economics and Management. Thus, the curriculum of the PA study programmes is affected with this change, in order to fulfil the curriculum related requirements of the specific study field.
	External assessment prevails through site visits and report assessment.	The site visit is linked with the accreditation of the university/faculty, not with the specific study programme. The study programme is evaluated externally by the selected stakeholders (employers, experts from academia, etc.)
	General assessment of the staff involved in the study programme (size, teaching and academic qualification, etc.)	Specific requirements for 5g guarantors of each level of study programme (bachelor – national quality, master – international quality, PhD – excellent international quality presented by the research outputs and publications)

	Focus on internationalization in each study programme	It is not required at the bachelor level of study programmes
	Analysis of the diversity (gender, age, ethnicity) among staff and students	Not special focus on this issue in each programme. Some information is provided at the university/faculty level.
	Quality monitoring systems with stakeholders, external reviewers	Obligatory evaluation of study programmes by stakeholders and external reviewers only in accreditation process. Requirement of only one annual periodical evaluation by students.
<b>Procedures</b>	The self-evaluation report in English	The study programme report in Slovak, eventually Slovak/English, only pure English programme in English
	7 years validity	6 years validity of accreditation of the university, with the monitoring at least each 2 years.
	Voluntary involvement, non-administrative procedure with no appeal	Obligatory involvement, administrative procedure with appeal
	The decisive body is the EAPAA board	The decisive body is a university quality board if the university is successfully accredited
Similarities (summary)	<p>To evaluate the similarities and differences is more theoretical issue in Slovakia, because the new system of accreditation is going to be implemented during next months.</p> <p>By the comparison of the both accreditation processes and their content there is a overlap in some standards (mainly domain, level, student assessment, jurisdiction, faculty, students' admission, supportive services, student services, public relations and evaluation process (mainly involving the same groups of stakeholders).</p>	
Main differences (summary) and implications for the EAPAA accreditation feasibility	<p>The process of the study programme accreditation is different from the EAPAA accreditation – if the university and faculty is accredited as a whole, about the study programme accreditation can be decided at the university level.</p> <p>In Slovakia, there are the main requirements on the guarantors of each level of study programme (bachelor – national quality, master – international quality, PhD – excellent international quality presented by the research outputs and publications), within the EAPAA the general assessment of the staff involved in the study programme (size, teaching and academic qualification, etc.) is done and focus is given to the internationalism (at the bachelor level in not in Slovakia).</p> <p><b>Implications:</b></p> <p>Even there were submitted some remarks to the Slovak Accreditation Agency during 2020 on acceptance of international accreditation, they were not included in the accreditation standards.</p> <p>Maybe in the next years when the system will be tested and formed, there could be a possibility, at the level of universities to accept the internationally accredited study programme as a full equivalent of accredited study programme and this programme does not have to be evaluated by the university quality board.</p> <p>The inspiration for the Slovak Accreditation Agency could be also focus on</p>	

	internationalization in staff issues in each level of study presented by research outputs, international projects, participation at the international conferences etc. Current definition of quality in the standards is quite vague and not specific.
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**The second step** builds on the previous one, where ranking is performed. This ranking starts with identifying the differences; the elaboration starts with those differences that are of minor or modest nature, and thus compatibility could be potentially easy to achieve. Following, the outline continues with the ones, where the differences between the two are increasing.

<b>Country: Slovakia</b>			
<b>Standard ranking</b>	<b>Difference description</b>	<b>Potential solution to difference accommodation</b>	
		<b>EAPAA perspective</b>	<b>National perspective</b>
1.	Programme focus of accreditation		Define the role of international accreditation in the accreditation process. Possible solution at the university level to accept the internationally accredited study programme as a full equivalent of accredited study programme
2.	Requirement on the staff of the study programme	Special requirements on each level of study	More precise definition of various levels of quality asked
3.	Quality monitoring		More focus on periodical quality monitoring with various groups of stakeholders
4.	Evaluation reports in national language (same parts in English)	English	Evaluation reports in Slovak and English obligatory
5.	Focus on didactical concept and methods		Foster the explanation used teaching methods with the self-evaluation report.
6.	Special prerequisites on the students for entry the programme	Be more sensitive to the national rules.	General prerequisites defined by the law, no specific prerequisites in case of social sciences.
7.	Mission and aims of the study programmes		Focus more on the strategical development of the study programme, not only on output - graduate
8.	PA domain and curricula	Be more sensitive to the specifics of the national rules and requirements.	New study fields settled in 2020 and there is no perspective for a change in this matter.

**The third step** builds on the solutions' development and represents a core of the feasibility study. Thus, the output here reflects the potential to streamline the two accreditations, and the perspective here is national one. The evidence from the step 2 should be discussed with the representatives of the agency (potentially also university), and how they perceive the fit for potential recognition, also taking in the consideration potential evaluations (e.g.,

irregular, sample evaluations etc.). Alternative is to have focus groups based discussions with vice-rectors/vice-deans, programme directors and agency representatives on the issue. The output should focus on measures that both national level as well as EAPAA should take to bridge the gaps/differences.

The issues listed under item 1st and 2nd were discussed with representatives of PA programmes and also evaluators of the Slovak Accreditation Agency on a Slovak PAQUALITY Multiplier Event which was held virtually on April 13, 2021.

<b>Country:</b>	<b>Slovakia</b>	
<b>Recommendations for bridging the gaps</b>	<b>What national level should do?</b>	<b>What EAPAA should do?</b>
Programme focus of accreditation	The shift towards institutional accreditation in the Slovak Republic leads to the development of internal quality assessment criteria. At this stage of development, it is difficult to predict, what the possibilities of international accreditation acceptance are.	
Mission and aims of the study programmes	Add the mission definition to the criteria of accreditation	
PA domain and curricula	PA programmes have to follow the national rules, but they should do their best to follow international standards and the EAPAA requirements and accommodate these into their programmes' content and curricula.	Be more sensitive to the specifics of the national rules and requirements.
Requirement on the staff of the study programme	New national standards are currently applying specific requirements on the staff, based on the level of the study programme, where the staff is teaching. The institutional internal quality assessment standards will take these requirements also into consideration.	To define the special requirements on each level of study
Quality monitoring	Support the periodical monitoring of study programmes by different groups of stakeholders	
Evaluation reports in national language (same parts in English)	English and Slovak	
Focus on didactical concept and methods	Add this item to the criteria of accreditation	
Special prerequisites on the students for entry the programme	A change of the law, but it doesn't seem feasible.	Accept the different conditions in countries

## Slovenia

**The first step** aims at investigating the compatibility of accreditations. Methodology will consist on the comparison of EAPAA standards with national accreditation standards. Comparison should portray major differences between the standards of the two, including the content of the standards as well as the procedures of the accreditations, the second including also variations in time dimension. If national accreditation involves both institutional as well as programme accreditations, the two should be meaningfully incorporated. Legal, operational, time components, but also other relevant components of variations accreditation standards and procedures should be considered.

<b>COUNTRY:</b>	<b>Slovenia</b>	
<b>Differences in accreditations / standards</b>	<b>EAPAA</b>	<b>National</b>
Content	Programme focus of accreditations	Institutional focus of accreditations, programme focus only at initial accreditation when programme is established
	5 eligibility criteria; 13 standards ( <i>domain, mission, level, practice, curriculum, quality improvement, student assessment, jurisdiction, faculty, students' admission, supportive services, student services, public relations</i> )	5 standards for initial accreditation and irregular/sample evaluation (Composition and content – <i>knowledge and competencies, discipline, environmental contextualization</i> ; Concept – <i>programme implementation, conditions for the study</i> ). In addition, prescribed internal (university level) self-assessment and quality assurance standards.
	Periodical monitoring – every 7 years.	Continuous monitoring - prescribed internal self-assessment and quality assurance yearly reporting and monitoring.
	External assessment prevails through site visits and report assessment.	Internal organizational assessment and responsibility for quality assurance prevails - obligatory internal documented yearly self-assessment of the programme. Reporting focuses on competencies achievement, contemporary theoretical and practical relevance of programme contents, reflections from students surveys, programme delivery efficiency and students' performance, quality monitoring in teaching and development of staff, students' support activities materialized, internationalization of teaching, continuous programme development activities, provision of suggestions for future improvements and checking of materialization of past suggestions. Responsibility rests on programme directors and faculty senates, reports submitted to university office.
Procedures	7 years validity	5 years validity for institutional accreditation, programme holds permanent accreditation once granted, unless revoked through irregular national evaluation procedure.

	Voluntary involvement, non-administrative procedure with no appeal	Obligatory involvement, administrative procedure with appeal
	Main (core) three experts involve foreign scholars.	At least three experts – non-affiliated domestic student representative, domestic non-affiliated scholar and foreign non-affiliated scholar, all registered with agency.
	Regularly re-accreditation procedures only.	Irregular and sample evaluation procedures for programmes possibly performed by agency as set by legal provisions. The first one can be performed on the demand from ministry, students, and other relevant HE stakeholder, when there is a suspicion on the poor quality of the delivery of particular study programme. If minor mismatches are found, HEI is granted three-year period to make the appropriate and demanded changes. If larger mismatches are found, accreditation of the programme is revoked. For the second, it involves roughly 2 percent of all accredited study programmes in a country, but the selection in particular year is based on changing criteria, and this sampled evaluation is also part of the institutional re-accreditation process. The outcome of this procedure is the list of recommendations for the potential quality improvements in the contents and delivery of particular study programme.
Similarities (summary)	Major similarities are associated with prescribed standards, which are well aligned, although the scrutinization focus differentiates.	
Main differences (summary) and implications for the EAPAA accreditation feasibility	Type and content of accreditation (slightly lesser focus of national accreditation on domain, mission, jurisdiction, and public relations), time of validity – no national reaccreditations of programmes needed, procedural deviations (formality, expert composition, regularity). Implications: There is a possibility that, if particular programme is subjected to the periodical EAPAA re-accreditation process or was granted recently EAPAA accreditation, it might be proposed to national agency that this is potentially taken as a substitute to sampled evaluation of the programme, thus EAPAA taking the role as sample evaluator also. This would be the only possible proposal made to national agency, if they would consider it. For now, they are not recognizing that.	

**The second step** builds on the previous one, where ranking is performed. This ranking starts with identifying the differences; the elaboration starts with those differences that are of minor or modest nature, and thus compatibility could be potentially easy to achieve. Following, the outline continues with the ones, where the differences between the two are increasing.

COUNTRY: Slovenia			
Standard ranking	Difference description	Potential solution to difference accommodation	
		EAPAA perspective	National perspective
1.	Contents of	/	Balancing of contents and instructions for self-

	accreditation standards		evaluation report writing
2.	Team of experts composition	/	Concept of EAPAA could be followed
3.	Periodical vs. continuous monitoring	/	Yearly monitoring is demanding from the organizational perspective.
4.	Regularity of procedures	/	National agency could consider that EAPAA accreditation validity is a substitute for sample evaluation procedure – realistically, the sampling and reaccreditation procedures can take place simultaneously
.	External vs. internal focus of assessment	EAPAA could acknowledge the existence of yearly self-evaluation reports, produced by programme director and approved by faculty senate.	Language barrier of self-evaluation reports could be bridged.
6.	Accreditation focus and validity	/	/

**The third step** builds on the solutions' development and represents a core of the feasibility study. Thus, the output here reflects the potential to streamline the two accreditations, and the perspective here is national one. The evidence from the step 2 should be discussed with the representatives of the agency (potentially also university), and how they perceive the fit for potential recognition, also taking in the consideration potential evaluations (e.g., irregular, sample evaluations etc.). Alternative is to have focus groups based discussions with vice-rectors/vice-deans, programme directors and agency representatives on the issue. The output should focus on measures that both national level as well as EAPAA should take to bridge the gaps/differences.

Based on the consultations with one SQAA (national accreditation body in Slovenia) agency council member (Mr. M. Pečarič) and reflecting the view of the agency director, SQAA has so far not specifically and explicitly dealt with international accreditations. Since data on nationally accredited programmes is publicly provided at the agency web pages, if there is a wish, agency publishes also information whether specific programme has received also some other (international) accreditation.

COUNTRY:	Slovenia	
Recommendations for bridging the gaps	What national level should do?	What EAPAA should do?
Streamlining the procedures and contents of accreditations	Start considering that programmes also apply for international accreditation with specific reasons, and some quality assessment is already performed there	Start considering and acknowledging parts of national accreditation procedures as sufficient inputs for some parts of accreditation/evaluation

Annex III – Research template used for study on the relevance of EAPAA  
accreditation for PhD programmes and country feasibility studies  
(Part III of this report)

**RESEARCH TEMPLATE**

<b>Basic information about the PA PhD program</b> <i>(Partners are required to prepare this part mainly based on their desk research – i.e. considering information available on web pages of the programme)</i>	
<b>Programme Name:</b>	
<b>Organization:</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	
<b>Contact person (name and email):</b>	
<b>Since when the programme has been delivered?</b>	
<b>Do specializations exist within the programme?</b>	
<b>Motivations and expectations of the programme management toward international accreditation/quality of evaluation?</b> <i>(Partners are required to conduct a short semi-structured interview – either via telephone or email – with management of the programme. The survey should reflect on the following main questions and partners are expected to obtain as specific answers as possible.)</i>	
<b>1. Would the programme be willing to be accredited/evaluated by international agency/association?</b>	Partners are required to a) prepare a short summary of findings b) provide with extract from (relevant content of) the interview translated into English
<b>2. Why yes / why not? What specific reasons (expected benefits / barriers) are perceived by programme management?</b>	Partners are required to a) prepare a short summary of findings b) provide with extract from (relevant content of) the interview translated into English
<b>3. Has another programme of the Faculty/University been evaluated/accredited by international agency/association?</b>	Partners are required to a) prepare a short summary of findings b) provide with extract from (relevant content of) the interview translated into English
<b>4. If yes, what programme has undergone such evaluation and, if possible, with what expectations and results?</b>	Partners are required to a) prepare a short summary of findings b) provide with extract from (relevant content of) the interview translated into English
<b>Person interviewed:</b>	Name and Surname, organization, position
<b>Date of interview</b>	

## COUNTRY FEASIBILITY STUDIES

### Bulgaria

Basic information about the PA PhD programme	
<b>Programme Name:</b>	<b>Professional field 3.7. Administration and Management</b> PhD Programme: Organization and Management outside the sphere of material production PhD Programme: Economics and Management in Industry
<b>Organization:</b>	Varna Free University “Chernorizets Hrabar”
<b>Address:</b>	Varna Free University PhD Student Centre Yanko Slavchev 84, Chaika Resort, 9007 Varna, Bulgaria
<b>Contact person (name and email):</b>	Ms. Borislava Hristova phd@vfu.bg
<b>Since when the programme has been delivered?</b>	2007
<b>Do specializations exist within the programme?</b>	There are no specializations existing within the PhD programmes.
Motivations and expectations of the programme management toward international accreditation/quality of evaluation?	
<b>1. Would the programme be willing to be accredited/evaluated by international agency/association?</b>	The PhD programmes would be willing to be accredited/evaluated by international agency/association. They cooperate with the International Commission on Accreditation of Public Administration Education and Training at the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (Brussels, Belgium) and a pre-evaluation has been made.
<b>2. Why yes / why not? What specific reasons (expected benefits / barriers) are perceived by programme management?</b>	<p>a) <b>Expected benefits</b> - summary of findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Building a sustainable and recognizable in the external environment research vision of the programme;</li> <li>- Realization of a competitive and convertible research product in accordance with the needs and requirements of business, public and civil sector;</li> <li>- Realization of bi-directional transfer of lecturers and doctoral students - from VFU to leading European and world universities-partners of VFU and vice versa;</li> <li>- Improving the qualification and international convertibility of Programme’s academic staff;</li> <li>- Improving the access of PhD students to a partner network to exchange experience with experts from practice, doctoral and postdoctoral students.</li> </ul> <p>b) <b>Expected benefits</b> - extract from the interview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “The external accreditation could increase the quality of education in the field of systematized knowledge in public and business management and border research areas. This will focus the programme training even better on the mastering of</li> </ul>

	<p>specialized methods and techniques necessary for solving basic problems and conducting research in the field of public and business management.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “The international accreditation will bring the necessity of deepening and upgrading the fundamental and professional competence of doctoral students for research, practical-applied and teaching activities in the field of organization and management of the public sector and non-production activities of business.”</li> <li>- “This could be an extra regarding the promotion and internationalization of the programme by attracting foreign doctoral students and time-tested scientists in their countries.”</li> <li>- “The external reviews on the PhD programmes will strengthen the education-science-business relationship by attracting doctoral students with extensive practical, expert or consulting experience in business management and the public sector.”</li> <li>- “The international accreditation will expand the possibilities for development and participation in international and national research projects and initiatives with scientific sustainability in organizations from the public sector and the non-manufacturing sphere of business.”</li> <li>- „The answer to the international criteria for evaluation and accreditation would guarantee the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies, ensuring the full realization of doctoral students in professional and personal terms. The stimulating of personal and intellectual growth would provide the acquisition of transferable skills by creating an environment for improving the logical, creative and critical thinking needed to find a wide range of scientific and practical solutions. “</li> </ul> <p><b>Expected barriers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional burden on the budget of the Faculty when applying for EAPAA accreditation / certification.</li> <li>- Additional administrative burden in developing the materials needed for EAPAA accreditation / certification.</li> <li>- Insufficient motivation of PhD students and lecturers to carry out academic mobilities and joint researches.</li> <li>- Necessity to increase the share of publications in international refereed specialized publications and increase the citation index.</li> <li>- Necessity to increase the realization of research products on a project basis, according to the needs and requirements of business, public and civil domain.</li> <li>- Difficulties for joint research of doctoral students from different universities (due to the pandemic).</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Has another programme of the Faculty/University been</b></p>	<p>No other PhD programme of Varna Free University has been evaluated/accredited by international agency/association.</p>

<b>evaluated/accredited by international agency/association?</b>	
<b>4. If yes, what programme has undergone such evaluation and, if possible, with what expectations and results?</b>	N/A
<b>Person interviewed:</b>	Prof. Pavel Pavlov, PhD, Varna Free University “Chernorizets Hrabar”, Head of Varna Free University PhD Student Centre Assoc. prof. Mariya Velikova, PhD, Varna Free University, Head of Department Administration, Management and Political sciences.
<b>Date of interview</b>	04.06.2021

## Czech Republic

Basic information about the PA PhD programme	
<b>Programme Name:</b>	<b>Regional Development</b>
<b>Organization:</b>	Prague University of Economics and Business
<b>Address:</b>	Nám. W. Churchilla 1938/4, 130 67 Praha 3, Czech Republic
<b>Contact person (name and email):</b>	doc. Ing. Martin Pělucha, Ph.D., <a href="mailto:martin.pelucha@vse.cz">martin.pelucha@vse.cz</a> (programme guarantor)
<b>Since when the programme has been delivered?</b>	The programme is new, it was launched recently, in 2019. Since January 2020 the standard length was prolonged from 3 to 4 years during the internal accreditation process, because other programmes were accredited as 4 years programmes.
<b>Do specializations exist within the programme?</b>	No.
Motivations and expectations of the programme management toward international accreditation/quality of evaluation?	
<b>1. Would the programme be willing to be accredited/evaluated by international agency/association?</b>	In the present time the programme is not willing to be accredited, because the programme is taught in Czech. The guarantor does not think that international accreditation has any sense for Czech programmes (i.e. those delivered in Czech). May be in future, if the programme is in English. But there would be a problem to have employees for English courses.
<b>2. Why yes / why not? What specific reasons (expected benefits / barriers) are perceived by programme management?</b>	<p>The guarantor would like to undergo it, but the faculty management is not supporting this in the present. His main aim is to maintain the programme on a high level. In the past, they had a doctoral programme focusing on regional development and public administration, but this programme had issues with quality of research outputs during the accreditation, his accreditation was stopped for some time and it was a problem to maintain the programme.</p> <p>Therefore they wanted to reduce the programme to regional programme because, because for this they have high quality employees with research outputs and thus meet accreditation criteria (this would not be the case of the former part focusing on PA).</p> <p>The guarantor also thought that the faculty would face financial barriers if the international accreditation is not funded from the University funds.</p> <p>Among the barriers, he also emphasized a significant drop of students.</p>
<b>3. Has another programme of the Faculty/University been evaluated/accredited by international agency/association?</b>	<p>Yes. Faculty of International Relationship obtained EFMS (European Foundation for Management Development) accreditation for its MA programmes focusing on international businesses in 2018 (for 5 years).</p> <p>The University is undergoing AACSB – focused on accreditation of business-focused universities. Entrance evaluation has been</p>

<p><b>4. If yes, what programme has undergone such evaluation and, if possible, with what expectations and results?</b></p>	<p>running for 5 years, the process is almost finished, coordinated and funded by the Rectorate.</p> <p>Led also to renaming of the university title to make the title more attractive to students. Also the aim was to raise attractiveness of all programmes to students.</p> <p>Not all staff is identified with it, they do not see it relevant, most relevant for international programmes.</p>
<p><b>Person interviewed:</b></p>	<p>Doc. Ing. Martin Pěluča, Ph.D.</p>
<p><b>Date of interview</b></p>	<p>14.06.2021</p>

## Hungary

<b>Basic information about the PA PhD programme</b>	
<b>Programme Name:</b>	<b>Political Science Doctoral Programme</b>
<b>Organization:</b>	Doctoral School of International Relations and Political Science, Corvinus University of Budapest
<b>Address:</b>	1093. Budapest, Fővám tér 8.
<b>Contact person (name and email):</b>	Dr. Balázs Zoltán, zoltan.balazs@uni-corvinus.hu
<b>Since when the programme has been delivered?</b>	2000
<b>Do specializations exist within the programme?</b>	No
<b>Motivations and expectations of the programme management toward international accreditation/quality of evaluation?</b>	
<b>1. Would the programme be willing to be accredited/evaluated by international agency/association?</b>	<p>EAPAA accreditation process is perceived as potentially helpful in strengthening and professionalisation of public administration aspect of the programme, still this discipline is already 'fairly represented'. The programme would benefit from external recommendations regarding teaching public administration at PhD level. The programme meets internationally accepted standards for PhD-level studies. All courses are taught in English and methodological courses are strong, taught by 'best available professors'. According to programme management's knowledge of other, similar doctoral schools in Europe, the 'level [of teaching] is just fine'.</p> <p>Regarding quality assurance, there's The University Doctoral Council at the university level, which has recently approved a new document on internal quality assurance rules and regulations. This issue is being taken 'more and more seriously, there's an official document, which guarantees this self-reflection and self-revision process, including students and supervisors revising their own work'.</p>
<b>2. Why yes / why not? What specific reasons (expected benefits / barriers) are perceived by programme management?</b>	<p>The programme has been recently undergoing some modifications and fine-tuning resulting from merging of two doctoral schools around a year ago. For example, the programme is in the process of reviewing the courses as the merging of two doctoral schools 'revealed that there are some courses that are not really running, therefore they should be deleted'. Methodological courses underwent revision during the last year. An accreditation would help to provide some external feedback on the changes.</p> <p>Programme directors are responsible for all mandatory and elective courses, which are currently under revision. One of the problems identified by the programme management is chaos that appears in every curriculum development – 'students don't really know which course will be taught during which semester'. The programme management aims to and works on ensuring that the programme has a clear, ordered structure so students 'can anticipate what will happen during [their] studies'. The management plans necessary changes to ensure as broad course selection as possible but without repetitions (e.g., most non-mandatory courses taught once every two</p>

	<p>years). Another innovation is to offer courses of with broad/general topics, so ‘each professor can adjust the syllabus to the needs of the actual students who are participating in the course’. In this context of external assessment (accreditation), the programme management considers ‘all kinds of input (...) really welcome, because it would be really nice to know (...) whether my ideas of resilience and order and trying to find how to make a consistent whole of these sometimes-dissenting values is possible’. The programme management would appreciate all sorts of advice on how to make the programme orderly, but at the same time resilient, innovative, and flexible. An external advisory could help in this process.</p> <p>Regarding the challenges/potential barriers, the programme management is pushing for inviting younger professors to join the teaching staff of the programme as they’re perceived as generally speaking better English, having more international experience, and often have more reliable, up-to-date, fresh knowledge. The programme management believes that ‘selecting the best faculty for teaching is sometimes a difficult issue’, ‘a present challenge and it will remain a challenge for some time’.</p> <p>The programme management considers the gender balance of the faculty as improving; however, it recognises the challenges in this area, which are perceived as resulting from ‘relatively low representation of women in whole Hungarian academia (...) and this is reflected in the [programme’s] own faculty’.</p> <p>With respect to the internationalisation of the staff, the programme management highlights the recent changes at the University resulting in the possibility of paying competitive salaries ‘which opens the gates for international faculty staff’. The programme management is very much in favour of programme faculty internationalisations, although it’s ‘the very beginning’ of the road. The programme management admits that there’s ‘no real expertise in how to go international in terms of faculty’.</p> <p>Overall, the accreditation process is seen as definitely helpful in pushing for the programme’s development in its various aspects – ‘if there’s a serious and well-argued proposal or suggestion or counsel or evaluation of our work, which (...) makes it very clear, what we should do, then all this kind of [input] is very welcome’. Such input is perceived as helpful also within the university, ‘make our points and to push forward and advance, contribute to the aims of the university, which we also identify with’. The programme management considers the possibility of comparing own programme with other similar programmes ‘the best help [they] could imagine’.</p>
<p><b>3. Has another programme of the Faculty/University been evaluated/accredited by international agency/association?</b></p>	<p>Yes, MSc in Public Policy and Management (KGKP – Hungarian language of tuition) and MSc in Public Policy and Management (PUMA – English language of tuition) programmes were accredited by EAPAA for the period 2019-2026.</p>

<p><b>4. If yes, what programme has undergone such evaluation and, if possible, with what expectations and results?</b></p>	<p>It was the first accreditation for the PUMA (English) programme and second for the KGKP (Hungarian) one. The previous evaluation of the KGKP programme and recommendations included in the report contributed to the improvement of the programme in several aspects, being also helpful in fine-tuning of the English programme. The programmes were evaluated positively in 2019. The accreditation evaluation report highlighted strong and weaker aspects of the programmes, including also valuable recommendations.</p> <p>The evaluation report stated that the programmes 'fulfil the criteria of the academic content of Public Administration as it is understood by EAPAA' (EAPAA Accreditation Committee Evaluation Report, p. 1), have articulated core mission, provide general descriptions of the qualification of graduates of master degree, ensure adequate level of training for practical skills.</p> <p>Regarding strong aspects of the programmes, the report highlighted well-structured curricula providing a range of possibilities for students to adjust the studies to their individual needs; multidisciplinary approach with strong economic orientation; number and scope of skills courses in the mandatory courses group; sufficiently insightful descriptions of courses provided; wide range of specialisations; unique linking of theory and practice in the didactical approach; and utilising external reviews for increasing programme's quality, among others.</p> <p>Regarding recommendations for improvement, the report mentioned mainly strengthening the multidisciplinary character of the programmes by including additional law courses; better alignment of mission, competences, intended learning outcomes and assessing learning outcomes; further specifying the objectives of the programmes; improving the accessibility of courses' descriptions; updating the literature for some courses; considering the introduction of a more systematic follow-up of alumni; improving the involvement of students and other stakeholders in the programme's development; regular monitoring of gender balance and educational background of applicants and accepted students; and improving the sustainability of the PUMA programme by making it more attractive for fee-paying students via appropriate marketing.</p>
<p><b>Person interviewed:</b></p>	<p>Dr. Balázs Zoltán, Doctoral School of International Relations and Political Science, Corvinus University of Budapest, Director</p>
<p><b>Date of interview</b></p>	<p>27.05.2021</p>

<b>Basic information about the PA PhD programme</b>	
<p><b>Programme Name:</b></p>	<p><b>Doctoral School of Public Administration Sciences</b></p>
<p><b>Organization:</b></p>	<p>National University of Public Service</p>
<p><b>Address:</b></p>	<p>HU- 1083 Budapest, Ludovika tér 2</p>
<p><b>Contact person (name and email):</b></p>	<p>Prof. Kis Norbert, Vice- Rector, norbert.kis@uni-nke.hu</p>
<p><b>Since when the programme has been delivered?</b></p>	<p>2013</p>
<p><b>Do specializations exist</b></p>	<p>No</p>

<b>within the programme?</b>	
<b>Motivations and expectations of the programme management toward international accreditation/quality of evaluation?</b>	
<b>1. Would the programme be willing to be accredited/evaluated by international agency/association?</b>	In a longer term it might be a good opportunity.
<b>2. Why yes / why not? What specific reasons (expected benefits / barriers) are perceived by programme management?</b>	The doctoral school has been operating for six years, so it is a relatively new institution. Hence, it is still an undergoing process to formulate its own special characteristic, and specialization regarding disciplines, and searching for a clear scientific orientation and profile. It currently integrates a number of various disciplines with a multidisciplinary focus, embracing public administration management and sociology, legal studies, economics, International and European studies, public governance, Human resources in public administration etc. Successfully applying for an international accreditation might require more clear and narrow focus on disciplines (public administration) and, also, longer experience in operation. In these years the first doctoral students have been graduated from the programme and earned their doctoral titles. To provide a comprehensive external evaluation on the programme requires more experiences. Possibility of future accreditation will be considered, because it provides a number of possible benefit for the programme itself, such as enhancing internationalisation by attracting students and also academic staff from other countries, providing an external quality assurance, providing feedback for the staff and programme management as well, helps to strengthen the position of the institution in the education market and provide a clear positive feedback to government as well who is financing the institution.
<b>3. Has another programme of the Faculty/University been evaluated/accredited by international agency/association?</b>	No
<b>4. If yes, what programme has undergone such evaluation and, if possible, with what expectations and results?</b>	Not relevant.
<b>Person interviewed:</b>	Prof. Norbert Kis, Vice- Rector, <b>National University of Public Service</b>
<b>Date of interview</b>	30.05.2021



## Romania

Basic information about the PA PhD programme	
<b>Programme Name:</b>	<b>Administration and Public Policy</b>
<b>Organization:</b>	Faculty of Public Administration, The National University of Political Studies and Public Administration
<b>Address:</b>	Bd. Expoziției nr. 30A, et. 6, sector 1, București, 012104
<b>Contact person (name and email):</b>	Ani Matei, amatei@snsa.ro
<b>Since when the programme has been delivered?</b>	2001-2002
<b>Do specializations exist within the programme?</b>	No
Motivations and expectations of the programme management toward international accreditation/quality of evaluation?	
<b>1. Would the programme be willing to be accredited/evaluated by international agency/association?</b>	Yes
<b>2. Why yes / why not? What specific reasons (expected benefits / barriers) are perceived by programme management?.</b>	<p>An accreditation by an international agency would facilitate better recognition of the programme in the national and European academic environment;</p> <p>At the same time, by going through the procedures of external evaluation, the doctoral programme will make acquaintance with new standards, criteria and methodologies that will improve its curriculum.</p> <p>Also it will be a push factor concerning the methods of its development.</p> <p>Another benefit would stem from the possibility of integration into a network of doctoral programmes.</p>
<b>3. Has another programme of the Faculty/University been evaluated/accredited by international agency/association?</b>	Yes
<b>4. If yes, what programme has undergone such evaluation and, if possible, with what expectations and results?</b>	<p>The bachelor and master programs within the Faculty of Public Administration were accredited and re-accredited by EAPAA.</p> <p>By accrediting the content by EAPAA those programs manage to improve their compatibility with similar programs developed by prestigious European universities.</p>
<b>Person interviewed:</b>	Ani Matei, The National University of Political Studies and Public

	Administration, PhD supervisor
<b>Date of interview</b>	27.05.2021

<b>Basic information about the PA PhD programme</b>	
<b>Programme Name:</b>	<b>Administration and Public Policy</b>
<b>Organization:</b>	Babeş-Bolyai University; Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences
<b>Address:</b>	Traian Mosoiu 71, Cluj-Napoca, Romania 4--132
<b>Contact person (name and email):</b>	Catalin Baba, <a href="mailto:baba@fspac.ro">baba@fspac.ro</a> Neamtu Bogdana, <a href="mailto:neamtu@fspac.ro">neamtu@fspac.ro</a>
<b>Since when the programme has been delivered?</b>	2016
<b>Do specializations exist within the programme?</b>	No
<b>Motivations and expectations of the programme management toward international accreditation/quality of evaluation?</b>	
<b>1. Would the programme be willing to be accredited/evaluated by international agency/association?</b>	Yes
<b>2. Why yes / why not? What specific reasons (expected benefits / barriers) are perceived by programme management?</b>	<p>Yes, but with the condition that this international evaluation can be used instead of the national one.</p> <p>Accreditation of PhD schools in Romania is a very sensitive issue. While national accreditation of bachelor and master programmes is quite well established and is run relatively smoothly by ARACIS (national accreditation body) there is a different story with PhD accreditation.</p> <p>In the last 3 years PhD schools nationwide have been asked 3 times already to prepare self-evaluation files, without any follow-up from ARACIS.</p> <p>Right now, the process of preparing self-evaluation reports by PhD schools is under way. The rumour is that it will have a strong international component meaning that evaluation experts for the most part will be international.</p>
<b>3. Has another programme of the Faculty/University been evaluated/accredited by international agency/association?.</b>	No (at PhD level). Yes, at master level
<b>4. If yes, what programme has undergone such evaluation and, if</b>	At master level, there are programmes accredited by EAPAA in public administration. These are programmes developed in partnership with US and European universities, are small, elite

<p><b>possible, with what expectations and results?</b></p>	<p>programmes and attract international students.</p> <p>The expectation was to somehow certify that these programmes are in line with international trends, as a guarantee and marketing tool for attracting international students.</p> <p>These programmes are due for the 3<sup>rd</sup> round off accreditation and most notably in terms of results we can mention the fact that it has determined programme management to impose very high standards.</p>
<p><b>Person interviewed:</b></p>	<p>Name and Surname, organization, position  Neamtu Bogdana, <a href="mailto:neamtu@fspac.ro">neamtu@fspac.ro</a>  PhD supervisor,  Director, Public Administration and Management Department</p>
<p><b>Date of interview</b></p>	<p>19.05.2021</p>

## Slovakia

<b>Basic information about the PA PhD programme</b>	
<b>Programme Name:</b>	<b>Public Economics and Policy</b>
<b>Organization:</b>	Faculty of Economics, Matej Bel University
<b>Address:</b>	Tajovského 10, Banská Bystrica
<b>Contact person (name and email):</b>	Beáta Mikušová Meričková, Prof. Ing. PhD., beata.mikusovamerickova@umb.sk
<b>Since when the programme has been delivered?</b>	2014 - Public Economics and Policy 2006 – 2014 Public Sector Economics and Public Services 1997 - 2006 Sectoral and Branch Economics (Public Economics and Administration included)  The professional training programme in Public Economics and Public Administration was formed at the Faculty of Economics of Services and Tourism (FEST) in 1997. Based on transformation of higher education system of Slovak Republic FEST was altered 1 July 1992 and the Faculty of Economics was set up as a part of the University of Matej Bel in Banska Bystrica. From the very beginning of its existence the Public Economics and Administration programme has presented unique training programme that was one of a kind in Czechoslovakian education in that time. FEST was the very first educational institute providing this kind of training in the area of the former Czechoslovakia. At the present time the Faculty of Economics still has dominant position among the other educational institutes thank to long-term tradition in professional training in Public Economics and Administration.
<b>Do specializations exist within the programme?</b>	No
<b>Motivations and expectations of the programme management toward international accreditation/quality of evaluation?</b>	
<b>1. Would the programme be willing to be accredited/evaluated by international agency/association?</b>	Yes.
<b>2. Why yes / why not? What specific reasons (expected benefits / barriers) are perceived by programme management?</b>	The Public Economics and Public Policy PhD. study programme is aimed to educate highly qualified, multicultural conscious specialist – manager, adaptable in changing conditions of international labour market, able to utilise and develop theoretical knowledge and practical skills within public economics and administration. Providing graduates with the training, skills and experience is being adjusted to the trends of globalisation and internationalism, stressing the high professionalism, language skills, mastering IT, multicultural aspects and ethical responsibility to society. This quality of education is reached by not only by national accreditation processes, but also by evaluation of the study programme by international agency.
<b>3. Has another programme of the Faculty/University</b>	Yes

<b>been evaluated/accredited by international agency/association?</b>	
<b>4. If yes, what programme has undergone such evaluation and, if possible, with what expectations and results?</b>	Bachelor of Territorial Management Master of Territorial Studies Conditionally certified by European Association for Public Administration Accreditation
<b>Person interviewed:</b>	Beáta Mikušová Meričková, Prof. Ing. PhD.,
<b>Date of interview</b>	11.05.2021

<b>Basic information about the PA PhD programme</b>	
<b>Programme Name:</b>	<b>Public Administration</b>
<b>Organization:</b>	Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Faculty of Public Administration
<b>Address:</b>	Popradská 66, 040 11 Košice, Slovakia
<b>Contact person (name and email):</b>	fvs-vzdelavanie@upjs.sk
<b>Since when the programme has been delivered?</b>	2012
<b>Do specializations exist within the programme?</b>	No
<b>Motivations and expectations of the programme management toward international accreditation/quality of evaluation?</b>	
<b>1. Would the programme be willing to be accredited/evaluated by international agency/association?</b>	The PhD. study programme Public Administration would be considered from the Faculty of Public Administration management point of view for future international accreditation / evaluation.
<b>2. Why yes / why not? What specific reasons (expected benefits / barriers) are perceived by programme management?</b>	The management of the Faculty of Public Administration sees several potential benefits of an international accreditation concerning the PhD study programme Public Administration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased international attention for the study programme,</li> <li>- Increased competitiveness of the study programme and of the faculty,</li> <li>- Improved position in obtaining international applicants for the PhD. study programme, who have been studying Master level study programmes in public administration or with similar orientation, in a foreign country,</li> <li>- Improved position in reaching of and networking with international experts considered for their involvement in PhD study programme management (international consultants, international opponents, international study board members).</li> </ul> The management of the Faculty of Public Administration sees the

	unclear and questionable acceptance by the national accreditation authority as the main barrier of an international accreditation concerning the PhD study programme Public Administration.
<b>3. Has another programme of the Faculty/University been evaluated/accredited by international agency/association?</b>	Currently there are no other study programmes in the field of public administration offered by the Faculty of Public Administration, which have been evaluated or accredited by international agency or association.
<b>4. If yes, what programme has undergone such evaluation and, if possible, with what expectations and results?</b>	-
<b>Person interviewed:</b>	doc. JUDr. Mgr. Michal Jesenko, PhD. dean Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice Faculty of Public Administration
<b>Date of interview</b>	28.05.2021

<b>Basic information about the PA PhD programme</b>	
<b>Programme Name:</b>	<b>Public Policy and Public Administration</b>
<b>Organization:</b>	University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Faculty of Social Sciences
<b>Address:</b>	Nám. J. Herdu 2, 917 01 Trnava, Slovakia
<b>Contact person (name and email):</b>	doc. PhDr. Andrea Čajková, PhD. andrea.cajkovaucm.sk
<b>Since when the programme has been delivered?</b>	2015
<b>Do specializations exist within the programme?</b>	No
<b>Motivations and expectations of the programme management toward international accreditation/quality of evaluation?</b>	
<b>1. Would the programme be willing to be accredited/evaluated by international agency/association?</b>	- Yes, in one – two years. - Given that this is a quality study programme focused on research in the context of the needs of public administration practice and public policy making in Slovakia, we are of course interested in proving this quality at the level of international accreditation. Due to the fact, that currently all study programmes undergo state quality assessment, we can imagine this form of international accreditation at the earliest in a time frame of one to two years.
<b>2. Why yes / why not?</b>	- international recognition of the study programme quality.

<b>What specific reasons (expected benefits / barriers) are perceived by programme management?</b>	- Accreditation is an incredibly important facet of our study programmes. The international accreditation should bring our study programmes to a degree employers do respect. Our aim is to constantly improve, to bring students constantly new information and procedures and to improve the overall quality of studies, and it is international accreditation that can bring us the necessary feedback that we are doing well.
<b>3. Has another programme of the Faculty/University been evaluated/accredited by international agency/association?</b>	No. We are currently focusing on the new conditions of national accreditation, where in the process of harmonizing the internal quality system of higher education institutions with the new currently valid standards, when specific conditions must be met for each study programme. following the successful completion of the current process, we will consider obtaining international accreditation
<b>4. If yes, what programme has undergone such evaluation and, if possible, with what expectations and results?</b>	Not relevant.
<b>Person interviewed:</b>	doc. PhDr. Andrea Čajková, PhD., FSV UCM, Vice-dean for Science and Research
<b>Date of interview</b>	17.05.2021

<b>Basic information about the PA PhD programme</b>	
<b>Programme Name:</b>	<b>Public Administration and Regional Development</b>
<b>Organization:</b>	University of Economics in Bratislava, Faculty of National Economy
<b>Address:</b>	Dolnozemska cesta 1, 852 35 Bratislava, Slovakia
<b>Contact person (name and email):</b>	doc. Ing. Štefan Rehak, PhD. stefan.rehak@euba.sk
<b>Since when the programme has been delivered?</b>	2002
<b>Do specializations exist within the programme?</b>	No
<b>Motivations and expectations of the programme management toward international accreditation/quality of evaluation?</b>	
<b>5. Would the programme be willing to be accredited/evaluated by international agency/association?</b>	No.
<b>6. Why yes / why not? What specific reasons (expected benefits /</b>	The main reason being the fact that all the study programmes at the Faculty of National Economy are currently under review process and will go through national accreditation procedure. It is

<p><b>barriers) are perceived by programme management?</b></p>	<p>likely that the current study programme (all degree levels) will be merged with other study programmes and/or an entirely new degree will be created.</p> <p>Also, financial aspects are also a deterrent to the international accreditation. Furthermore, students generally today do not see the benefit of having an internationally accredited study programme. Most of our PhD students aim to stay in Slovakia, where the majority of employers do not require or recognise internationally accredited programmes as an extra benefit.</p>
<p><b>7. Has another programme of the Faculty/University been evaluated/accredited by international agency/association?</b></p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p><b>8. If yes, what programme has undergone such evaluation and, if possible, with what expectations and results?</b></p>	<p>*International Finance (Master's degree).  **Global Finance (Master's degree).  (These are the study programmes offered by the Faculty of National Economy. Other internationally accredited programmes are offered by other faculties at the University of Economics in Bratislava.)</p> <p>*This programme is provided as a double degree programme in partnership with Nottingham Trent University (NTU).  <a href="https://nhf.euba.sk/www_write/files/studium/prijimacie-konanie/19-20/Promo_ING_2020/Brozury/NHF_ING_IF.pdf">https://nhf.euba.sk/www_write/files/studium/prijimacie-konanie/19-20/Promo_ING_2020/Brozury/NHF_ING_IF.pdf</a></p> <p>** This programme is provided as a joint diploma/degree in partnership with International College, the National Institute of Development Administration (ICO NIDA) in Bangkok (Thailand).  <a href="https://nhf.euba.sk/www_write/files/studium/prijimacie-konanie/19-20/Promo_ING_2020/Brozury/NHF_ING_GF.pdf">https://nhf.euba.sk/www_write/files/studium/prijimacie-konanie/19-20/Promo_ING_2020/Brozury/NHF_ING_GF.pdf</a></p>
<p><b>Person interviewed:</b></p>	<p>doc. Ing. Štefan Reháč, PhD.  Head of Department of Public Administration and Regional Development</p>
<p><b>Date of interview</b></p>	<p>25.05.2021</p>

## Slovenia

Basic information about the PA PhD programme	
<b>Programme Name:</b>	<b>Governance and Economics in the Public Sector</b>
<b>Organization:</b>	University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Public Administration
<b>Address:</b>	Gosarjeva ulica 5, SI-1000 Ljubljana
<b>Contact person (name and email):</b>	Maja Klun, maja.klun@fu.uni-lj.si
<b>Since when the programme has been delivered?</b>	2017
<b>Do specializations exist within the programme?</b>	Yes
Motivations and expectations of the programme management toward international accreditation/quality of evaluation?	
<b>9. Would the programme be willing to be accredited/evaluated by international agency/association?</b>	The challenge is that this is joint international PhD programme, which complicates the procedures of gaining accreditation. Besides, the time period of programme delivery is still rather short for the criteria set.
<b>10. Why yes / why not? What specific reasons (expected benefits / barriers) are perceived by programme management?</b>	
<b>11. Has another programme of the Faculty/University been evaluated/accredited by international agency/association?</b>	All own programmes delivered by and in responsibility of the faculty are internationally accredited. The first international accreditation was obtained in 2008. For this specific endeavour was to see if the programme can meet international standards and to get some reflection on what should be improved. Furthermore, an objective was also to get competitive advantage inside UL as well as in HE space of Slovenia.
<b>12. If yes, what programme has undergone such evaluation and, if possible, with what expectations and results?</b>	
<b>Person interviewed:</b>	Maja Klun, programme director
<b>Date of interview</b>	31.05.2021

Basic information about the PA PhD programme	
<b>Programme Name:</b>	<b>Public Administration, 3 cycle</b>
<b>Organization:</b>	New University, Faculty of Government and European Studies

<b>Address:</b>	Žanova ulica 3, SI-4000 Kranj
<b>Contact person (name and email):</b>	Ana Kozar, ana.kozar@fds.nova-uni.si
<b>Since when the programme has been delivered?</b>	N/A
<b>Do specializations exist within the programme?</b>	N/A
<b>Motivations and expectations of the programme management toward international accreditation/quality of evaluation?</b>	
<b>13. Would the programme be willing to be accredited/evaluated by international agency/association?</b>	Yes
<b>14. Why yes / why not? What specific reasons (expected benefits / barriers) are perceived by programme management?</b>	New University is currently in procedure to gain international accreditation BAC (British Accreditation Council). They perceive this as of value for both university as well as faculties under its umbrella, to be internationally accredited and to be able to fulfil standards prescribed by BAC international agency. The fulfilment of standards should lead also to greater quality in the delivery of study programmes.
<b>15. Has another programme of the Faculty/University been evaluated/accredited by international agency/association?</b>	N/A
<b>16. If yes, what programme has undergone such evaluation and, if possible, with what expectations and results?</b>	N/A
<b>Person interviewed:</b>	Ana Kozar, secretary general
<b>Date of interview</b>	31.05.2021