

**Report of the Panel of the External Review of the  
Agency for Quality Assurance and Career Development  
(AKKORK)**

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## 0 Executive Summary

This is the report of the review of the *Agency for Quality Assurance and Career Development* (AKKORK) undertaken in May 2014 for the purpose of determining whether the agency meets the criteria for Full Membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

The review panel came to the conclusion in the light of the documentary and oral evidence, that AKKORK is in compliance with the ENQA Membership Criteria, as follows: ENQA Criteria 2,3,4,5 – fully compliant; ENQA Criteria 1,6,7,8 – substantially compliant.

AKKORK has made significant progress since the 2011 review, when the application for ENQA full membership was rejected and addressed most recommendations satisfactorily.

There are, however, still some areas that require the attention of AKKORK in order to become fully compliant with the ENQA criteria and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). These relate in particular to ENQA criterion 1a and the ESG Part 2.

The Review Panel is aware of the complexity of the Russian higher education environment, due to legislative provisions, to the large number of HE institutions on a large territory which creates logistic problems to traditional External audit procedures such as site visits and participation of student evaluators, where costs elements are not to be neglected.

The Review Panel underlines the contribution AKKORK has made at national level to the development of independent quality assessment, in particular regarding study programmes, thus enhancing the positive evolution of quality assurance based on the ESG in many Russian HEIs.

## 1 Background and outline of the review process

According to the ENQA Statutes<sup>1</sup> Full membership of ENQA is open to quality assurance agencies in the field of higher education from European member states that have been operating and conducting actual quality assurance activities for at least two years. Before being accepted as a Full Member, an applicant agency must satisfy the Board that it meets the criteria for Full membership. The applicant agency will thereby also meet the ESG.

In November 2004, the General Assembly of ENQA agreed that the third part of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* should be incorporated into the membership provisions of its regulations. Substantial compliance with the ESG thus became the principal criterion for Full membership of ENQA. The ESG were subsequently adopted at the Bergen ministerial meeting of the Bologna Process in 2005.

The external review of AKKORK was conducted in line with the process described in *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area* and in accordance with the timeline set out in the Terms of Reference. The review panel for the external review of AKKORK was composed of the following members:

- Radu Damian, Member of the Executive Bureau and Director, International relations, projects and cooperation, Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Romania (Chairman);
- Bastian Baumann, Independent Higher Education Consultant, Germany (Secretary);
- Mikus Dubickis, Professional Master's student at Riga Technical University
- Jean-Pierre Finance, former President of the University Henri Poincaré, Nancy and Advisor for EU affairs at the University Rectors Conference, France;
- Patricia Georgieva, Director, Qualifications and Quality Support Centre, Bulgaria.

AKKORK produced a self-evaluation report, which provided a substantial portion of the evidence that the panel used to form its conclusions. The panel conducted a site-visit to validate fully the self-evaluation and clarify

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Statutes-of-ENQA-07.10.2011.pdf>

any points at issue. Finally, the review panel produced the present final report on the basis of the self-evaluation report, site-visit and its findings. In doing so it provided an opportunity for AKKORK to comment on the factual accuracy of the draft report. The review panel confirms that it was given access to all documents and people it wished to consult throughout the review.

## 2 Glossary of Acronyms

AKKORK	Agency for Quality Assurance and Career Development
CEENQA	Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
EFQUEL	European Foundation for Quality in E-Learning
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
EU	European Union
FS	Russian Federation Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Science
FSES	Federal State Educational Standards
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
NAA	National Accreditation Agency
NCPA	National Centre of Public Accreditation
QA	Quality Assurance
SER	Self-Evaluation Report

### **3 Introduction**

#### ***3.1 Background and reason for commissioning the report***

AKKORK has applied for ENQA membership first in April 2007 under its previously used acronym AQA. The Board of ENQA rejected the application. The major reason for the rejection of this application was that the agency at that time had not been operating and conducting actual quality assurance activities for two years. Beyond that, the ENQA Board identified several problems in connection with the operation of AKKORK. In December 2007 AKKORK (AQA) was granted associate status with ENQA, which at that time corresponded to the current Affiliate status.

AKKORK applied again for membership in 2009. However, the ENQA Board did not consider the application as sufficiently thorough. AKKORK submitted an amended application in January 2010, which the ENQA Board again rejected. The reasons for rejecting the application were mainly based on problems and non-compliance in the areas of resources, activities, independence, publication of reports, website, system-wide analysis, and internal QA of the agency.

In 2011, AKKORK requested ENQA to coordinate an external review of the agency in order to apply for Full membership. The review took place in September 2011. Full membership was denied by the ENQA Board based on the review report, which outlined deficiencies in the areas of use of external Quality Assurance (QA) procedures, independence, external QA criteria and accountability procedures. Specific recommendations were addressed to AKKORK (c.f. Annex 1). The progress made in those areas is commented upon in the respective sections of the findings in this report.

In 2013, AKKORK reapplied for Full membership and requested a new external review. The sole purpose for commissioning the review was to evaluate the way in which and to what extent AKKORK fulfils the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). Hence, the review corresponds to a Type A review. The review was coordinated by ENQA, supported by ENQA Secretariat staff Nathalie Lugano and Paula Ranne.

#### ***3.2 Review process***

The review leading up to this report consisted of an analysis of the self-evaluation report and additional documents, and a site-visit to AKKORK, including a series of talks and interviews.

### *3.2.1 Self-evaluation report and additional documents*

AKKORK produced a self-evaluation report (SER), which the panel used to prepare for the site-visit. The review panel found that the SER had several shortcomings. The SER did not provide sufficient information about important aspects in terms of AKKORK's operations and with regard to some of the ENQA criteria. The SER was almost entirely descriptive, thereby lacking in major parts the analytical character that a self-evaluation document should normally contain. Even the SWOT analysis that was provided as an annex to the SER fell rather short of the expectations of such a document. The review panel therefore deemed the SER as to some extent inadequate for the purpose of AKKORK's internal quality assurance and enhancement purposes. It should be positively noted though that the SER did describe the various steps and actions that AKKORK took as a response to the findings of the last ENQA review in 2011.

The SER was made available to the review panel well in advance of the site-visit. However, some of the additional documentation, referred to as annexes in the SER became only available in English language a few days before the site-visit.

### *3.2.2 Site-visit*

The site-visit was carried out in Moscow from 28 to 30 May 2014. The review panel held a telephone conference together with the responsible ENQA Secretariat staff two weeks prior to the site-visit. The purpose of the telephone conference was to brief about the upcoming site-visit and to exchange some preliminary impressions in order to prepare some of the questions deemed relevant.

The agenda of the site-visit (see annex 2) was discussed between the panel chair, the panel secretary and AKKORK. Most of the meetings were scheduled well in advance. However, some of the meetings and especially the names of the participants were only finalised upon arrival of the review panel. A few changes to the agenda had to be made in the course of the site-visit, due to traffic constraints, the schedules of the ministerial representatives and the mix-up of the agenda of one interviewee.

The liaison person of AKKORK was unfortunately hospitalised prior to the site-visit so that further arrangements were made with a range of different staff members of AKKORK. AKKORK provided for good (external) interpretation during the meetings, which were held in Russian language.

Apart from the meeting with the ministerial representatives, all meetings were held in the AKKORK office. The layout of the office gave rise to a slightly unusual situation, namely that the meetings were not held in a soundproof room, but behind a panel wall that did not reach the ceiling of the room. The only soundproof room in the office would have been too small for the majority of interview sessions. The meetings themselves were to a large extent very informative and enabled the review panel to draw assess the work of AKKORK adequately. During the interviews, AKKORK also presented itself as more reflective and analytical than what the SER provided.

During the site-visit, some changes were made to the website of AKKORK and the panel based its judgements on the version of the website as of the last day of the site-visit. The appeals regulations were sent to the panel chair and the panel secretary in July 2014 after being adopted by AKKORK's Supervisory Board on 25 June and were therefore not taken into account. However, it should be noted that AKKORK swiftly dealt with some of the comments that the review panel made.

AKKORK did everything to accommodate any requests of the panel, including the provision of additional documentation on the spot that became necessary to assess. Also, in all practical aspects of the visit AKKORK facilitated the entire process with great care and provided very warm hospitality and thus working conditions. The review panel would like to express its appreciation and thanks to AKKORK.

### *3.2.3 Review report*

On the basis of the documentary evidence, comprising the SER, all of its annexes and AKKORK's website, the evidence gathered during the site-visit and the Russian law on education the present review report has been drafted. It consists of sections outlining general characteristics of AKKORK and the Russian QA system, evidence found in relation to the ENQA criteria and an analyses of the evidence in relation to the compliance. In those cases where the review panel has not been able to assert that AKKORK is fully compliant with the ENQA criteria, recommendations were made. These recommendations are to be understood that if they were to be implemented AKKORK would be fully compliant with ENQA criteria. As part of the analysis, however, further suggestions were made. AKKORK should also look at these suggestions and might wish to take appropriate

action. The priorities should nevertheless be to become fully compliant with the ENQA criteria.

The draft report was provided by the panel Secretary and circulated to the panel members. Based on their comments a final draft version was compiled by the panel Secretary and sent to AKKORK for accuracy check. After receiving the comments by AKKORK the final report was compiled.

### ***3.3 Higher education system and quality assurance in Russia***

The basis for regulations regarding higher education (HE) and quality assurance in the Russian Federation has been the law on Education from 1992, which has been amended several times. In 2012 a new law was elaborated that came into effect in 2013. The last amendment to the law also introduced some changes in the area of quality assurance through independent organisations, as independent accreditation had not been the subject of national laws previously.

The law on education now provides for four types of quality assurance:

- state accreditation
- public-professional accreditation
- public accreditation
- independent quality assessment.

None of these types of quality assurance is compulsory, but a higher education institution (HEI) that does not have state accreditation enjoys only limited rights, e.g. not issuing state recognised diplomas, which are a requirement to be employed in the public service sector. It is, however, a requirement for any HEI to obtain licensing by the Russian Federation Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Science (FS).

State accreditation is carried under the authority of the FS by the National Accreditation Agency (NAA). State accreditation is granted to the study programmes of HEIs that meet the Federal State Educational Standards (FSSES). State accreditation used to be awarded also to HEIs at institutional level, but as of the latest change of the law, state accreditation exclusively refers to programme accreditation.

Public-professional accreditation can be awarded by employers' associations and organisations authorised by them. Accreditation is granted on the basis of professional standards and requirements of the labour market in the areas of the profession. The public-professional accreditation is also exclusively granted at programme level.

Public accreditation can be awarded by Russian, international or foreign organisations. The HEIs obtaining public accreditation need to prove conformance with the standards set by organisation that accredits them.

Public-professional or public accreditation do not replace state accreditation, but the results of an HEI obtained in the process of public-professional or public accreditation are taken into account by the FS. There are currently debates as to whether the FS would in the future grant state accreditation automatically to those HEIs, which have obtained public-professional or public accreditation by a body or organisation that is listed by a national register operated by the FS.

### ***3.4 AKKORK's role in Russian HE***

AKKORK has been established in 2005 as a non-for-profit organisation in order to function as an independent quality assurance agency. The legal founders of AKKORK are two limited liability companies named "Obrazovanie cherez vsu zhizn" (Lifelong learning) and "Garantii kachestva" (Quality assurance). Though they are not the proprietors of AKKORK.

The idea behind the foundation of AKKORK was to add a new perspective on quality assurance into the Russian education system. The focus of AKKORK was on the introduction of quality assurance mechanisms that are more in line with European, Bologna compatible, and international features and therefore go beyond the assessments that are undertaken by FS. The idea was to support both public and private HEIs in Russia that wanted to reform themselves in line with international developments. AKKORK thus understands itself as an innovator within the Russian HE system. The knowledge of AKKORK has been recognised by public authorities so that AKKORK is included in discussions and working groups that deal with system-wide reforms. Therefore, AKKORK also had an influence on the current law on education.

AKKORK provides public accreditation and has also been entrusted by "Opora Rossii" (All-Russia non-governmental organisation of small and medium-sized businesses) as well as the Russian Engineering Union, the Federation of Restaurateurs and Hoteliers, the Association of Russian Managers and the Russian Academy of Education to carry out public-professional accreditation. In addition, AKKORK undertakes evaluations and audits. AKKORK also uses the close cooperation with different business organisations and individual companies to reflect the needs of the economy in its standards.

AKKORK is one out of three independent organisations (including also the National Centre of Public Accreditation (NCPA)) that have been accredited by the FS. Since 2013, this accreditation allows AKKORK to undertake accreditation based on the state standards. However, AKKORK uses a multi-standard approach. This multi-standard approach means that AKKORK has made an effort to include various aspects into its standards. The AKKORK standards have been developed on the basis of the FSES as well as employers' standards, take into account practices relating to the ESG and other quality assurance models, such as those of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM).

The outcomes of AKKORK's accreditation can be taken into consideration for the state accreditation. The applying HEI, however, only has to inform the FS that it sought public or public professional accreditation, but does not have to provide the reports. In each case where AKKORK awarded accreditation, state accreditation was also obtained. But there have been cases where AKKORK did not grant accreditation, but state accreditation was nevertheless obtained. The latter cases occurred due to the wider criteria used by AKKORK than the FSES.

Public HEIs that want to obtain accreditation by an independent organisation are not allowed to simply choose one of them, but they need to follow the public procurement procedures. Thus AKKORK operates in a competitive environment. The number of HEIs interested in obtaining independent accreditation is growing, though, as also their environment is becoming more competitive. AKKORK organises a wide range of events that focus on the promotion of quality assurance and obviously the work of AKKORK. Generally, a trend in HEIs can be observed that they are considering quality assurance as more important. Most HEIs now have added quality assurance to the portfolio or title of one of Vice-Rectors and many HEIs also have a quality department.

AKKORK is also active in other areas, such as consultancy or contracted research. AKKORK also publishes its own journal, entitled "Kachestvo obrazovaniya" (Educational Quality), which is very widely distributed amongst Russian HEIs and issued in copies of 10.000.

### ***3.5 Organisation of AKKORK***

AKKORK is operating as an autonomous not-for-profit organisation. The two founding organisations are not the legal owners of AKKORK's properties. AKKORK's property, which is the result of its economic activities is owned by AKKORK itself. The founding organisations provide an annual subsidy to AKKORK. There is no membership of AKKORK.

AKKORK is comprised of different bodies:

- General Meeting
- Supervisory Board
- Advisory Council
- Accreditation Council
- Executive body
- Auditing Commission
- International Accreditation Council

An organisational chart of AKKORK is attached to the report (annex 3).

The General Meeting is the highest body of AKKORK. It consists of all the members of the other bodies of AKKORK. However, when it meets, not all members are present, but delegates of the individual bodies are attending the meeting. The General Meeting can change the statutes of AKKORK, it elects members of the Supervisory Board, the Advisory Council, the Accreditation Council and the Auditing Commission. It also appoints the Director General and adopts annual reports and the annual balance sheets.

The Supervisory Board is in charge of developing the policies and the strategic plan of AKKORK and the general coordination of AKKORK's activities. The supervisory Board is also the body that acts as the appeals commission. The members of the Supervisory Board are business representatives and "authoritative" persons in the area of education. The Supervisory Board has a student member.

The Advisory Council adopts the criteria for the nomination of reviewers and is in charge of "quality control" of reviews. This is undertaken by issuing a brief report on each of the reviews. The Advisory Council also undertakes assessments of the process and procedures used and proposes changes to these. Members of the Advisory Council are representatives of the academic community. In addition, there is also an employer and a student representative.

The Accreditation Council decides about granting accreditation on the basis of the review reports as well as the brief reports made by the Advisory Council. It is also the body that finally adopts the criteria used by AKKORK. In this process, it interacts with the Advisory Council, which provides recommendations. The members of the Accreditation Council are representatives of the academic community and the world of business.

The executive body of AKKORK is the Director General. The Director general is accountable to the General Meeting and the Supervisory Board. He / she is in charge of arranging and carrying out all activities of

AKKORK, including finances. He / she also is in charge of employment affairs.

The Auditing Commission undertakes an internal financial audit once a year, the results of which are presented to the General Meeting.

In addition, an International Accreditation Council has been established recently, which is supposed to approve the criteria AKKORK uses in its international activities.

AKKORK has agreements with individual experts in other parts of the Russian Federation, but does not operate regional departments with employed staff. These experts are supposed to promote quality culture.

### ***3.6 AKKORK's European and international engagement***

AKKORK considers its European and international involvement as an important feature. AKKORK stresses the importance of and promotes actively the ES as well as the Bologna Process generally. AKKORK has been seeking full membership status within ENQA most of the time of its existence (see above). This focus is based on two aspects. Firstly, AKKORK's vision of quality assurance exceeds that of the current national system. Therefore, AKKORK places an emphasis on the ESG. Secondly, AKKORK is operating in a competitive environment and acquiring full membership with ENQA, and thus an acknowledgement of its work to be in line with European practices, is considered a high priority.

AKKORK is also active within the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA).

## 4 Findings: AKKORK compliance with ENQA criteria

### 4.1 ENQA criterion 1 / ESG 3.1 and ESG 3.3

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis. The external quality assurance of agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

*The external quality assurance activities may involve evaluation, review, audit, assessment, accreditation or other similar activities and should be part of the core functions of the member.*

#### 4.1.1 ESG Part 2: External quality assurance processes

The external quality assurance of agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

##### 4.1.1.1 *ESG 2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures*

#### **STANDARD:**

External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

**2011 review recommendations:** “AKKORK must emphasise the identification of and assessment of internal QA systems of HEIs, even when evaluating only some study programmes at a given HEI.”

##### 4.1.1.1.1 Evidence

AKKORK has been undertaking an assessment of internal QA systems both for programme and institutional reviews. This assessment has been done according to the criterion “organisation and management”. Following the recommendations from the 2011 review, AKKORK has put more focus on

this aspect and introduced a separate criterion entitled “internal quality management system”.

The majority of AKKORK’s activities lies at the programme level. AKKORK points out in its regulations for reviewers that the main basis for decisions is supposed to be the quality / level of learning outcomes of study programmes and the quality assurance system. Reviewers are asked to assess whether the “programme management system (the list and composition of units, functions, duties and responsibilities areas distribution of various structural units) is effective”. Reviewers are suggested to inquire “How is performance of standards, rules and regulations approved ... controlled in your division?”.

#### 4.1.1.1.2 Analysis

AKKORK indeed has addressed the recommendation from 2011 and put more emphasis on internal quality assurance mechanisms also for programme reviews.

AKKORK suggests in its reviewers regulations that a second key area for the programme review should be either an “evaluation of quality assurance of education or the factors that create the conditions of the programme realization”. This statement might be misleading to the reviewers, as the second alternative could be interpreted as general study conditions.

Generally AKKORK’s procedures take into account the internal quality assurance processes during its reviews. The instructions for reviewers do touch upon individual elements of an internal quality assurance system. The review panel could, however, not find evidence that a systematic assessment is undertaken for programme reviews to what extent all programme features are linked to the institutional quality assurance system. In particular, the criteria used by AKKORK do not fully cover the relevance of information systems by HEIs to inform the effective management of study programmes, and an assessment of the provision of impartial and objective information about study programmes offered. Therefore, it could not be concluded that all aspects that form part of the ESG Part 1 are consistently applied in AKKORK’s procedures. However, due to the information provided in the SER and the information gained in the interviews, including those with higher education institutions, the review panel found that AKKORK is in practice evaluating the internal quality assurance mechanisms. In particular, the introduction of the new criterion regarding the internal quality management system is a significant improvement compared to AKKORK’s previous focus of assessment.

#### 4.1.1.1.3 Conclusion on compliance

The review panel concluded that AKKORK is in **substantial compliance** with ESG standard 2.1.

#### 4.1.1.1.4 Recommendation

AKKORK should further elaborate its criteria in order to ensure that systematic assessments of study programmes are embedded in the review process and that all aspects of the ESG Part 1 are assessed.

#### 4.1.1.2 *ESG 2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes*

##### **STANDARD:**

The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.

**2011 review recommendations:** “The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes especially at the programme level could be determined more consistently regarding the various documents / webpages of AKKORK.”

#### 4.1.1.2.1 Evidence

AKKORK states both in the SER and on its website the general aims and objectives for its work. Also individual documents, such as its mission statement provide information about the aims and objectives of its activities.

AKKORK provides information about the different quality assurance processes it undertakes on its website. The information that is provided contains explanations of the procedural steps and summarises the criteria that are going to be used.

The criteria and processes used by AKKORK have been developed with the support of and input by stakeholders, including HEIs, students, employers, public organisations as well as educational authorities. The criteria as well as the aims and objectives of the processes have also been discussed at public conferences.

For some of the review processes, such as the independent programme accreditation or the international accreditation, the website of AKKORK also lists the aims and objectives of the exercise.

#### 4.1.1.2.2 Analysis

AKKORK provides satisfactory information about the procedures it uses on its website. This information is easily accessible and understandable. AKKORK has sufficiently involved stakeholders in the process of determining the goals and objectives as well as the procedures and criteria used. The review panel also acknowledges that AKKORK provides information about the general aims and objectives of its work. In parts this information is mixed with general statements of anticipated advantages for HEIs undergoing AKKORK assessments, which are rather marketing statements. Whilst AKKORK may not individually address the aims and objectives for each specific form of assessment it provides, the aims and objectives mentioned are applicable to all of its operations and are thus addressed in a more generalised manner.

AKKORK has a clear understanding of what it would like to achieve by its quality assurance processes. However, public information about the aims and objectives are not available for each of the different individual assessment processes. This information can only be found for some of the types of services that AKKORK provides.

#### 4.1.1.2.3 Conclusion on compliance

The review panel concluded that AKKORK is in **substantial compliance** with ESG standard 2.2.

#### 4.1.1.2.4 Recommendation

AKKORK should systematically provide information about the aims and objectives for each of its activities. This information could also be offered in a comparative manner in order to better outline the differences between the assessment activities.

#### 4.1.1.3 *ESG 2.3 Criteria for decision*

<b>STANDARD:</b>
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Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.

**2011 review recommendations:** "Evaluation and accreditation criteria should be made more unequivocal, more clearly defined, and more easily accessible on AKKORK's website(s) and in documentation of the actual accreditation processes.

AKKORK should consider assigning at least two reviewers for each study programme in order to help ensuring consistency and reliability of assessments and interpretation of criteria."

#### 4.1.1.3.1 Evidence

AKKORK uses a multi-standard approach, in which it combines different aspects into its criteria. Its criteria are therefore an amalgamation of the FSES, professional standards, elements of the ESG and other quality assurance processes, such as those used by EFQM, or the European Foundation for Quality in E-Learning (EFQUEL). AKKORK also provides very detailed regulations for its reviewers in order to determine, which areas should be assessed. In these regulations AKKORK also gives lists of questions that should be addressed in the review process.

Decisions are made on the basis of written reports by the reviewers. In addition, the Advisory Council provides a short report for each of the reviews, in which it reflects on the reviewers' report.

On the English language versions of AKKORK's website only an overview of the criteria is found, in which AKKORK explains what aspects of a study programme or an institution are assessed. On the Russian language version, the criteria can be found for independent evaluation at programme level, which forms the most important part of AKKORK's work, after they have been added during the review. The document listing the criteria also feature a wide range of indicators that AKKORK is using for the interpretation of compliance with its criteria. For public-professional accreditation of programmes, the same criteria are used. For the other types of external quality assurance, i.e. international accreditation of programmes, international accreditation of e-learning, and the audit and certification of quality management system, criteria cannot be found.

#### 4.1.1.3.2 Analysis

AKKORK uses different sets of elaborated criteria for its different review processes, according to its multi-standard policy. The criteria are very detailed and contain sub-criteria and in some case sub-sub-criteria.

AKKORK ensures the consistency of the decisions through detailed regulations about the work of the reviewers and through the additional brief report provided by the Advisory Council. The decision about accreditation is taken by the Accreditation Council, which therefore also ensures consistency.

AKKORK also addressed the recommendation of the 2011 review and uses a minimum of two reviewers in all of its assessments, one being an academic and one an employer.

The precise criteria are not easily locatable. On the English language version of the website, AKKORK just provides an overview of criteria items, rather headlines of the criteria. Until the review, the exact criteria were provided to HEIs that are interested in undergoing a review by AKKORK. AKKORK explained this with the fact that they operate in a competitive environment and that it considers the elaborated criteria it has developed as some form of intellectual property that is not to be made public, as others could copy them. AKKORK added criteria during the review, but not for all of its external quality assurance activities. For the ones that are published, finding them is slightly complicated, as they are not clearly marked as criteria. The review panel, therefore, is of the opinion that all the criteria should be published in full on AKKORK's website in a way that makes it easy for any interested party to have a look at them. The easy availability of criteria is not just an important feature for interested HEIs, but also for other actors and stakeholders in the Russian Federation and internationally in order to determine the value of the work of AKKORK.

#### 4.1.1.3.3 Conclusion on compliance

The review panel concluded that AKKORK is in **substantial compliance** with ESG standard 2.3.

#### 4.1.1.3.4 Recommendation

AKKORK should fully publish its criteria on its website in a more easily accessible and clear manner.

#### 4.1.1.4 *ESG 2.4 Processes fit for purpose*

<b>STANDARD:</b>
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All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them.

**2011 review recommendations:** “AKKORK could consider simplifying the organisation of the reviewers work (Corporation of Reviewers, status levels and rating of reviewers).

AKKORK could consider including students in review panels.

AKKORK could consider inviting foreign experts to evaluation teams and create a pool of international reviewers.”

#### 4.1.1.4.1 Evidence

AKKORK describes in the SER and on its website and other documents the overall aims and objectives for its review processes. The focus lies on quality improvement and the identification of strengths and weaknesses.

AKKORK follows the general pattern of self-evaluation/site-visit/draft report/final report. The follow-up mechanism is discussed in the section on ESG standard 2.6 below.

AKKORK uses detailed regulations for the selection of reviewers and their training, outlined in the document “Regulations on Work with Reviewers”. AKKORK also works with student reviewers, however not consistently in all reviews, but according to their information in about 80 % of cases. International reviewers have been involved in a small number of cases.

AKKORK has included international reviewers in some reviews.

#### 4.1.1.4.2 Analysis

The experts that are working as reviewers for AKKORK are generally well suited. This is guaranteed through the selection and nomination process as well as the trainings offered. In addition, the materials, which reviewers receive by AKKORK as preparation for the reviews are sufficiently detailed and elaborate. Furthermore, the AKKORK staff in charge of the review is in individual contact with the reviewers.

Also, AKKORK places a great importance of promoting the idea of quality enhancement as opposed to the predominant notion of quality control and its criteria reflect this approach.

AKKORK has improved its approach of including students in reviews. However, this is still not the case in all its reviews. AKKORK explains this

with the lack of adequate student experts and the unwillingness of some HEIs to have a student in the panel, as this would entail further costs. However, when the review panel inquired about whether the student organisations, with whom AKKORK has established relations, have been approached to suggest student reviewers, this had not been systematically practiced. Hence, AKKORK could better use its existing relations to ensure that each review team will also contain a student.

AKKORK has taken the 2011 recommendation into account and included international reviewers in its work. However, this practice has only been implemented in few reviews. AKKORK argues that the costs for international reviewers would substantially limit AKKORK's chances of winning the tenders. In the cases where also an international reviewer is part of the team, they undertake an independent assessment. The review team is not comparing the "foreigner's assessment" with the "nationals' assessment". The review panel would like to suggest that AKKORK may wish to increase the practice of including foreign reviewers in panels. AKKORK could consider more prominently presenting the added value that foreign expertise could provide for the review so that more institutions would be willing to cover the associated additional costs.

AKKORK has been enhancing its procedures and criteria to ensure that they are fit for purpose. Understanding the importance to adhere systematically to each element of the ENQA criteria in every review, AKKORK aims at gradually increasing the acceptance of these approaches amongst HEIs. The review panel also found that AKKORK's processes are a significant improvement in the context of quality assurance in the Russian Federation, in particular taking into account the methodology used in state accreditation procedures.

#### 4.1.1.4.3 Conclusion on compliance

The review panel concluded that AKKORK is in **substantial compliance** with ESG standard 2.4.

#### 4.1.1.4.4 Recommendation

AKKORK should ensure that students are part of the review team for each assessment.

#### 4.1.1.5 *ESG 2.5 Reporting*

**STANDARD:**

Reports should be published and should be written in a style which is clear and readily accessible to its intended readership. Any decisions, commendations or recommendations contained in reports should be easy for a reader to find.

**2011 review recommendations:** “AKKORK should consider publishing all full reports on its website.

Standard file formats could be used for published reports (e.g. doc and/or pdf).

Dates should be indicated on expert reports.”

#### 4.1.1.5.1 Evidence

AKKORK publishes the review reports of the accredited programmes on its website. A change in the law has made it easier for AKKORK to publish the reports as recommended by the 2011 review. It had been unlawful to publish a report without the consent of the HEI. This legal obstacle has been removed and AKKORK now publishes the reports in full on its website. The reports of institutional evaluations and accreditations are available on request.

AKKORK uses a standard template for reviewers. The review team is dividing the responsibilities of writing the report amongst themselves. The reports contain information about the findings of the review, including identified areas of strengths and weaknesses as well as recommendations.

#### 4.1.1.5.2 Analysis

AKKORK’ reports are structured well and allow a reader to easily identify the recommendations made. AKKORK has also systematically addressed the recommendations from 2011 as regards the reviews reports of accredited programmes, and has published them in a common standard file format. However, reports from institutional reviews are not published, but are only available on request. There is a list of the HEIs that passed the reviews.

In addition, only the reviews of those HEIs are listed, which successfully passed accreditation and only the reports of the study programmes which have been accredited are published. Negative reports are neither published, nor is there any indication that a review at all took place, as the area, in which the reports are published is rather a register of accredited study programmes.

#### 4.1.1.5.3 Conclusion on compliance

The review panel concluded that AKKORK is in **substantial compliance** with ESG standard 2.5.

#### 4.1.1.5.4 Recommendation

AKKORK should publish all of its review reports on its website, including those at institutional level and negative ones.

#### 4.1.1.6 *ESG 2.6 Follow-up procedures*

##### **STANDARD:**

Quality assurance processes which contain recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan, should have a predetermined follow-up procedure which is implemented consistently.

**2011 review recommendations:** “The various documents describing follow-up processes should be harmonised with each other.”

#### 4.1.1.6.1 Evidence

The review reports contain suggestions and recommendations for improvement and the rectification of shortcomings. The HEI under review is supposed to submit a plan of “corrections of concerns” within three months after receiving the review report, according to the “Regulations for HEI”. In the same document, it is outlined that a structured follow-up mechanism between the HEI and AKKORK is in place.

The review panel found out in its talks and interviews that this formal follow-up mechanism is in a considerable number of cases not followed through. Most HEIs view the review process as finished once they obtain the review report. This is especially the case when AKKORK undertakes the review on behalf of one of the employers’ organisations (public-professional accreditation). AKKORK states that if they undertake the review on behalf of an employers’ organisation, the follow-up would be in the hands of the employers’ organisation. Some HEIs reported that there

was no contact between them and AKKORK after the review undertaken by and for AKKORK. Others were asked by AKKORK to submit a plan of action.

#### 4.1.1.6.2 Analysis

There are different approaches to the follow-up of reviews. In the cases of public-professional accreditation, there is no proper follow-up mechanism done by AKKORK. It is AKKORK's understanding that they are not responsible for the follow-up, as only the review was carried out by AKKORK. However, the panel considers the follow-up as part of the external review and not as a separate activity. This is especially the case because the employer organisations do not have the capacity to undertake the follow-up procedure and it would methodologically be inconsistent to have a review and the follow-up done by different organisations. Also in other cases, the follow-up is not carried out as specified in AKKORK's documents. AKKORK explains this in part with the fact that HEIs always have to undergo a tender procedure for any future work. The review panel understands from this that the follow-up mechanism is not part of the actual review, but an additional element.

HEIs that were interviewed also showed an interest in a closer follow-up by AKKORK.

#### 4.1.1.6.3 Conclusion on compliance

The review panel concluded that AKKORK is in **partial compliance** with ESG standard 2.6.

#### 4.1.1.6.4 Recommendation

AKKORK should ensure that there is a structured follow-up mechanism for each of its reviews. This should be made part of the contract signed with the HEI.

#### 4.1.1.7 *ESG 2.7 Periodic reviews*

#### **STANDARD:**

External quality assurance of institutions and/or programmes should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.

**2011 review recommendations:** “AKKORK could consider including an “obligatory” or strongly advised periodicity element in its institutional and programme review procedures.

The three-year cycle however, seems to be a bit too short. (The cycle for state accreditation in Russia is 6 years.)”

#### 4.1.1.7.1 Evidence

The validity of AKKORK’s accreditation is normally 3 years. However, based on the recommendations from the 2011 review, AKKORK extended the validity period for those accreditations that have been regarded as adhering to “high standards” to six years.

#### 4.1.1.7.2 Analysis

The cycle of 3 years validity of the accreditation is comparatively short. AKKORK argues that in this way, progress could be better observed and HEIs could also be better prepared for state accreditation, which is valid for six years. The review panel believes that the matter of observing progress of an HEI should rather be done by systematically using a follow-up mechanism.

HEIs do not have the obligation to pass accreditation. Even if they decide to undergo accreditation, they are bound by the procurement regulations and cannot decide freely to undertake the next round of accreditation with the same quality assurance agency as in the previous round. The review panel is of the opinion that the fact that HEIs can freely choose whether to undergo a new round of accreditation does not change the fact that AKKORK’s accreditations have a periodicity in general.

#### 4.1.1.7.3 Conclusion on compliance

The review panel concluded that AKKORK is in **substantial compliance** with ESG standard 2.7.

#### 4.1.1.7.4 Recommendation

AKKORK should consider extending the validity for all its accreditations to avoid accreditation fatigue in universities.

#### 4.1.1.8 *ESG 2.8 System-wide analyses*

**STANDARD:**

Quality assurance agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments etc.

**2011 review recommendations:** “Additionally to publications and conferences devoted to general QA and methodology issues AKKORK should make and publish summary reports describing and analysing the actual findings of its reviews, evaluations.”

#### 4.1.1.8.1 Evidence

AKKORK has up to now published two system-wide analyses, both in hard copies as well as on its website. The first analysis is for the year 2011. The second analysis covers the years 2012/13. The second analysis was only uploaded on the website during the site-visit. These analyses cover advancements in the area of QA in the Russian Federation as well as identification of gaps in the methodologies used by HEIs and their quality culture.

AKKORK also uses some of its findings and its expertise on quality assurance generally in its journal “education quality”. This journal is widely distributed amongst organisations and individuals interested in HE in the Russian Federation and addresses specific issues that are informed by the findings of AKKORK’s reviews of institutions and study programmes. In addition, AKKORK is frequently participating in seminars, round tables and conferences, in which representatives provide an insight into the findings of AKKORK. Furthermore, AKKORK undertakes different projects, some of which focus on the development of the quality assurance system in the Russian Federation.

#### 4.1.1.8.2 Analysis

AKKORK does undertake activities in the area of system-wide analyses. It is very active nationally and also internationally to present findings on the status quo and the progress of the Russian HE system generally and the quality assurance system in particular.

The system analytical reports are also an appropriate way of using the knowledge gained through the different activities of AKKORK. However, none of the institutional representatives and stakeholders the review panel talked to was aware of these analytical reports. AKKORK uses the findings for its own work, but the externally added value of the reports is

minor. In contrast, the journal was known to everyone and is widely disseminated.

#### 4.1.1.8.3 Conclusion on compliance

The review panel concluded that AKKORK is in **substantial compliance** with ESG standard 2.8.

#### 4.1.1.8.4 Recommendation

AKKORK should disseminate its analytical reports to HEIs and among stakeholders in a more efficient and consistent way.

#### 4.1.1.9 *Summary of findings ESG 3.1 / ESG Part 2*

The review panel found that AKKORK is with the exception of ESG 2.6 (partial compliance) in substantial compliance with ESG Part 2. Therefore, the review panel concluded that AKKORK is in **substantial compliance** with ESG 3.1.

#### 4.1.1.10 *Recommendation ESG 3.1 / ESG Part 2*

See the aforementioned recommendations in the individual sections.

#### 4.1.2 ESG 3.3: Activities

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis.

**2011 review recommendations:** “AKKORK should clearly separate its consultancy and evaluation services and not offer both of them at the same HEI.”

#### 4.1.2.1 *Evidence*

AKKORK undertakes different external quality assurance procedures. It undertakes:

- independent external assessment of the education quality at programme level,
- accreditation of study programmes in Russia and other countries,
- audit and certification of education quality management systems,
- public-professional accreditation of study programmes.

In the year 2012/13 AKKORK has conducted a total of approximately 200 reviews.

#### *4.1.2.2 Analysis*

The different external quality assurance activities that AKKORK is carrying out are core part of the function of AKKORK. In fact, AKKORK is much more active in this area than in its other core function, career development.

The majority of activities of AKKORK are in the area of programme reviews. However, even in the area of institutional reviews, a major focus is placed on the quality of study programmes, rather than institutional level strategies and management questions.

AKKORK also conducts consultancy services, although at a relatively small scale. AKKORK has indicated to follow the recommendations from the 2011 review and to separate its consultancy activities from the external quality assurance. However, in the overview of different projects AKKORK has undertaken, it still shows that for example at the North-Eastern Federal University in Yakutsk study programmes were accredited for the period and that consultancy was provided to them for an “assessment of their own educational standards”

#### *4.1.2.3 Conclusion on compliance*

The review panel concluded that AKKORK is in **substantial compliance** with ESG standard 3.3.

#### *4.1.2.4 Recommendation*

AKKORK should continue to ensure that consultancy services and external quality assurance are not offered at the same HEI within a reasonable timeframe.

#### *4.1.3 Conclusion ENQA criterion 1*

Based on the assessment of the review panel that AKKORK is in substantial compliance with ESG Part 2 and with ESG standard 3.3, it is

the overall assessment of the review panel that AKKORK is in **substantial compliance with ENQA criterion 1**.

#### **4.2 ENQA criterion 2 / ESG 3.2: Official status**

Agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.

**2011 review recommendations:** “AKKORK could consider publishing its Charter on its website.”

##### *4.2.1 Evidence*

AKKORK is an independent quality assurance agency. Nevertheless, it is recognised by a competent authority. AKKORK is one of three independent agencies that have been accredited by the FS. The FS is also taking into account the AKKORK reports when deciding about state accreditation. AKKORK also is involved in an advisory function in different bodies of the Ministry of Education and Science, for example is the Executive Director a member of the Council of the State Office for quality control.

##### *4.2.2 Analysis*

AKKORK’s work has been assessed as being of good quality by ministerial representatives. The outcomes of the AKKORK reviews are taken into account and state accreditation has never been rejected in case of a positive review by AKKORK. State accreditation has, however, been granted on some occasions, when AKKORK’s decision was negative. This is due to the difference in criteria used for state accreditation. AKKORK performs its external quality assurance in line with national regulations, which is ensured through the multi-standard approach.

AKKORK is the grant beneficiary of several projects funded by the Ministry of Education and Science. The Ministry and other national bodies are in exchange of opinions with AKKORK about the future of quality assurance in the Russian Federation.

##### *4.2.3 Conclusion on compliance*

The review panel concluded that AKKORK is in **full compliance** with ENQA criterion 2 / ESG standard 3.2.

#### 4.2.4 Recommendation

None.

### **4.3 ENQA criterion 3 / ESG 3.4: Resources**

Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes, procedures and staff.

**2011 review recommendations:** "AKKORK should consider the financial sustainability of its operations and make a strategy for establishing stable, reliable financing and trying to find additional sources of income.

AKKORK should devote special attention to staff workload and material and non-material motivation, the development of special QA knowledge and skills for staff including English language training.

AKKORK is recommended to try to find the necessary financial and human resources for developing an overall agency information system, operating as a database, and including possibly all the data and processes related to AKKORK's activities, making possible for experts, members of the various bodies, and staff to prepare/access evaluations and decisions logged in the database, online."

#### 4.3.1 Evidence

AKKORK operates according to its statutes on the basis of financial self-sustainability. It receives an annual financial support by the two founding organisations. The majority of its financial income is generated through the different services it offers. The majority of these are the external quality assurance activities (85% of total income). In addition, income is generated through projects and consultancy services. As a not-for-profit organisation, all income needs to be invested into the organisation.

AKKORK has 12 full-time employees. These employees fulfil different functions within AKKORK's departments. The staffing policy is determined by the needs that arise. Between 2011 and 2013, staff has increased by 1 employee.

AKKORK has an office, which could accommodate up to 21 staff, which is the legal maximum for the space that AKKORK rents (currently approximately 200 sqm). It would be possible to rent further office space in the same complex if the need arises.

#### *4.3.2 Analysis*

The financial situation of AKKORK does not give rise to major concerns. The budget is growing steadily, even if not at high rates. However, the fact that no operational surplus is made and no reserves are built up, could become problematic in the future. The legal situation prohibits that the founders withdraw any money from the organisation due to its not-for-profit status. Therefore, the review panel would like to suggest that AKKORK may wish to start building up a financial reserve that could cover costs in case that there would be brief financial difficulties.

On some occasions the review panel was presented with the argument that certain elements in the review processes are more difficult to implement, as AKKORK needs to submit financial tenders. These arguments should, however, not inhibit AKKORK to fully act in line with the ESG. For example, the fact that it might become more expensive to include student reviewers in all reviews should not become decisive.

The employees of AKKORK appear well qualified for their respective portfolios. However, their workload is comparatively high, especially if there is only one employee in a specific department. As AKKORK wishes to engage even further in international activities, it has followed the recommendations from the review in 2011 and started offering English language classes to its employees. Besides that, AKKORK offers a range of professional development activities, as part of its staff training programme. An overview of the activities for 2013 was presented to the review panel.

The infrastructure as well as the possibility to expand in the long term is deemed adequate by the review panel. AKKORK addressed the recommendation of the 2011 review about the implementation of an IT database set after some consideration with a financially more simple solution. AKKORK now uses dropbox as the main feature for sharing documents between staff and also reviewers.

#### *4.3.3 Conclusion on compliance*

The review panel concluded that AKKORK is in **full compliance** with ENQA criterion 3 / ESG standard 3.4.

#### 4.3.4 Recommendation

None.

### **4.4 ENQA criterion 4 / ESG 3.5: Mission statement**

Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available statement.

*This statement should describe the goals and objectives of the member's quality assurance processes, the division of labour with relevant stakeholders in higher education, especially the higher education institutions, and the cultural and historical context of its work. The statement should make clear that the external quality assurance process is a major activity of the member and that there exists a systematic approach to achieving its goals and objectives. There should also be documentation to demonstrate how the statement is translated into a clear policy and management plan.*

**2011 review recommendations:** "AKKORK should make available on its website the Mission document in final and full, with inclusion of the division of responsibilities between organisations taking part in QA processes in Russia."

#### 4.4.1 Evidence

AKKORK's mission is "to build and develop an independent system of education quality assessment and education quality assurance in Russia, corresponding to principles of the Bologna Declaration and the world's best practices". This mission statement is placed on the main website.

Moreover, AKKORK has its principles and objectives published on the website.

#### 4.4.2 Analysis

AKKORK's adopted document "Mission" contains the mission statement, its objectives and tasks. This document is not publicly available. Instead, the various elements contained therein are placed in different parts of the website.

The statements regarding AKKORK's objectives and tasks clearly demonstrate that quality assurance is one of the main tasks of AKKORK. Based on the activities that AKKORK is undertaking, the review panel believes that AKKORK uses its mission in order to determine its activities.

However, there was no documentation that would prove that this is done in a systematic manner.

#### 4.4.3 Conclusion on compliance

The review panel concluded that AKKORK is in **full compliance** with ENQA criterion 4 / ESG standard 3.5.

#### 4.4.4 Recommendation

None.

### **4.5 ENQA criterion 5 / ESG 3.6: Independence**

Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.

*An agency will need to demonstrate its independence through measures, such as:*

- *its operational independence from higher education institutions and governments is guaranteed in official documentation (e.g. instruments of governance or legislative acts);*
- *the definition and operation of its procedures and methods, the nomination and appointment of external experts and the determination of the outcomes of its quality assurance processes are undertaken autonomously and independently from governments, higher education institutions, and organs of political influence;*
- *while relevant stakeholders in higher education, particularly students/learners, are consulted in the course of quality assurance processes, the final outcomes of the quality assurance processes remain the responsibility of the agency.*

**2011 review recommendations:** “AKKORK should address the independence issue, reconsider the membership and chairing of its various bodies and ensure that persons having leading HEI or state authority positions are not selected for service for AKKORK.”

#### 4.5.1 Evidence

AKKORK is registered as an independent organisation. It does not have any formal links with the national authorities or with any HEI. AKKORK undertakes its activities independently, including the elaboration of its criteria, processes and procedures.

The Accreditation Council, which takes the decision about accreditation, is also independent. Its members are not nominated or appointed by a national authority or an HEI.

According to Russian laws, interference of authorities into the affairs of private organisations is not permitted.

#### *4.5.2 Analysis*

AKKORK is indeed formally independent from any national authority or HEI. AKKORK determines its policies, procedures and criteria independently on its own.

In the 2011 review, though, independence was put into question in a more informal manner. The multiple functions of people represented on the Supervisory Board, the Advisory Council and the Accreditation Council have been addressed as problematic. AKKORK has taken this recommendation seriously and also individual members of AKKORK's bodies seem to have understood that their involvement in various functions could undermine AKKORK's independence. The Chair of the Accreditation Council resigned after the 2011 review was published.

Currently, two of the members of the Accreditation Council also have functions as Vice-rectors of HEIs. The review panel is of the opinion that this does not cause a particular problem for the independence of AKKORK in the sense of the ENQA criterion and the ESG. The review panel believes that any individual in a body of AKKORK who would have a conflict of interest in a specific decision making process would not be involved in that decision.

#### *4.5.3 Conclusion on compliance*

The review panel concluded that AKKORK is in **full compliance** with ENQA criterion 5 / ESG standard 3.6.

#### *4.5.4 Recommendation*

None.

#### **4.6 ENQA Criterion 6 / ESG 3.7: External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the members**

- i. The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available.
- ii. These processes will normally be expected to include:
  - a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;
  - an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency;
  - publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;
  - a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.

*Agencies may develop and use other processes and procedures for particular purposes. Agencies should pay careful attention to their declared principles at all times, and ensure both that their requirements and processes are managed professionally and that their conclusions and decisions are reached in a consistent manner, even though the decisions are formed by groups of different people. Agencies that make formal quality assurance decisions, or conclusions which have formal consequences should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of each agency.*

**2011 review recommendations:** "AKKORK should revise its documents on processes, criteria and procedures and eliminate repetitions, overlaps and disharmonies."

##### **4.6.1 Evidence**

AKKORK operates on the basis of multi-standard criteria, which combine different sets of criteria and other practices as well as the ESG, as outlined previously. The processes and procedures are defined in different documents aimed at HEIs and reviewers. These processes and procedures are elaborated by the methodological department of AKKORK. An overview of the main aspects of the criteria is found on the website of AKKORK.

Internal procedures are outlined in the different documents, prescribing the functions of the different bodies of AKKORK as well as in AKKORK's statutes.

AKKORK uses the methodology of a self-evaluation report, a site-visit and a written report, including decisions and recommendations.

#### *4.6.2 Analysis*

AKKORK does have a vast set of regulations regarding processes and procedures, which are predefined and publicly available. The criteria that AKKORK uses as multi-standard criteria are, however, not accessible for all external quality assurance activities. Also the ones that are published are not easily accessible online, apart from the main headlines (see also section 4.1.1.3).

AKKORK's procedures feature the element of self-evaluation of the institution under review, a site-visit takes place and a report is published, including decisions and recommendations. However, as outlined in section 4.1.1.6, the follow-up procedure of AKKORK is not fully implemented in practice, especially in the cases of public-professional accreditation. As stated in section 4.1.1.4, AKKORK includes students as reviewers in the majority of its reviews, but not consistently in all. As already outlined in section 4.1.1.5, AKKORK does not publish all of its reports, but only those that successfully obtained programme accreditation.

AKKORK stated that it has an appeals system. However, there had not been any appeals regulations at the time of the site-visit. Different bodies had some role in the appeals process, with a stronger focus on the advisory council, but also during the interviews with members of these bodies, no light could be shed on the procedure. However, since the independent reviews that AKKORK undertakes are of voluntary nature and hence AKKORK's decisions do not have formal consequences, the review panel found that in this regard AKKORK does adhere to the ENQA criteria even though this should be improved and addressed.

AKKORK does, however, operate on the basis of adequate processes and criteria.

#### *4.6.3 Conclusion on compliance*

The review panel concluded that AKKORK is in **substantial compliance** with ENQA criterion 6 / ESG standard 3.7.

#### 4.6.4 *Recommendation*

AKKORK should clearly determine its appeals procedure and make it available on its website.

AKKORK should ensure that there is a structured follow-up mechanism for each of its reviews. This should be made part of the contract signed with the HEI.

AKKORK should publish all of its review reports on its website, including those at institutional level and negative ones.

AKKORK should fully publish its criteria on its website.

AKKORK should ensure that students are part of the review team for each assessment.

### **4.7 ENQA Criterion 7 / ESG 3.8: Accountability procedures**

Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.

*These procedures are expected to include the following:*

- i. a published policy for the assurance of the quality of the agency itself, made available on its website;*
- ii. documentation which demonstrates that:*
  - the agency's processes and results reflect its mission and goals of quality assurance;*
  - the agency has in place, and enforces, a no-conflict-of-interest mechanism in the work of its external experts, Committee/Council/Board and staff members;*
  - the agency has reliable mechanisms that ensure the quality of any activities and material produced by subcontractors, if some or all of the elements in its quality assurance procedure are subcontracted to other parties;*
  - the agency has in place internal quality assurance procedures which include an internal feedback mechanism (i.e. a means to collect feedback from its own staff and council/board); an internal reflection mechanism (i.e. means to react to internal and external recommendations for improvement); and an external feedback mechanism (i.e. means to collect feedback from experts and reviewed institutions for future development) in order to inform and underpin its own development and improvement.*
- iii. a mandatory cyclical external review of the agency's activities at least once every five years which includes a report on its conformity with the membership criteria of ENQA.*

**2011 review recommendations:** “AKKORK should revise its internal regulatory documentation in order to eliminate repetitions, overlaps and disharmonies. AKKORK could consider to create/compile its basic internal regulatory document in the form of By-laws, where all the organisational and operational issues could be included and regulated.

AKKORK should establish regular (annual) external feedback mechanisms asking for the opinion of evaluated HEIs, experts, and other stakeholders. Results of such feedback should be analysed and acted upon, corresponding to the PDCA principle.”

#### *4.7.1 Evidence*

AKKORK states that its internal quality policy is in line with the ESG and that it operates on the basic principles of openness, transparency and objectivity. AKKORK has a quality policy available in Russian language on its website.

AKKORK has undergone an external review by ENQA in 2011. Also AKKORK has been accredited by the FS as an independent quality assurance agency.

AKKORK has a no-conflict-of-interest for its reviewers and each reviewer needs to declare and sign that they do not have any conflict of interest with regard to the review they are undertaking. There are detailed procedures to be followed. Furthermore, the HEIs under review have the possibility to object to individual reviewers on the basis of a possible conflict of interest. The final decision about the composition of the review team lies with the Director General.

AKKORK regularly carries out internal feedback activities. Reviewers are asked to submit feedback questionnaires and informal discussions are held at the meetings of reviewers. Also HEIs that have been reviewed are asked to provide feedback in a periodic manner. AKKORK states that the data gathered from the individual feedback mechanisms are processed and analysed. Staff is consulted in a more informal manner about their suggestions for improvement.

Each department of AKKORK writes an annual report. All of these reports are then compiled into an annual AKKORK report.

#### *4.7.2 Analysis*

AKKORK undertakes a range of different internal QA activities. The compilation of formal annual reports is also informally supplemented by intermediate reports of each department on a quarterly basis.

The no-conflict-of-interest mechanisms for reviewers are adequate. However, such mechanisms do not exist internally for staff or members of the different bodies.

The external review of AKKORK has been done in the course of applying for ENQA membership. Therefore, in practice AKKORK has been the subject of an external review more regularly than every five years. However, it is not defined anywhere that it is obligatory to undergo external review at least once every five years.

#### *4.7.3 Conclusion on compliance*

The review panel concluded that AKKORK is in **substantial compliance** with ENQA criterion 7 / ESG standard 3.8.

#### *4.7.4 Recommendation*

AKKORK should officially adopt that it will undergo an external review at least every five years.

AKKORK should develop a mechanism to ensure that staff and members of AKKORK's bodies do not have any conflict of interest with regard to reviews they are involved in / decide about.

### **4.8 ENQA criterion 8: Consistency of judgements, appeals system and contribution to ENQA aims**

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The agency pays careful attention to its declared principles at all times, and ensures both that its requirements and processes are managed professionally and that its judgments and decisions are reached in a consistent manner, even if the judgments are formed by different groups</li> <li>ii. If the agency makes formal quality assurance decisions, or conclusions which have formal consequences, it should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of the agency.</li> <li>iii. The agency is willing to contribute actively to the aims of ENQA.</li> </ul> |
|--|

**2011 review recommendations:** No specific recommendations.

#### *4.8.1 Evidence*

AKKORK has applied for ENQA membership in the past. As an affiliate member, AKKORK actively takes part in ENQA activities, meetings, and projects.

AKKORK refers to ENQA and the ESG in many of its documents and it is also part of AKKORK's mission to integrate the principles of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) into the Russian higher education and quality assurance system.

#### *4.8.2 Analysis*

Membership of ENQA remains a high priority for AKKORK, both for reputational purposes and for reasons of principle. AKKORK indeed places a strong emphasis on the European principles generally and the ESG in particular. AKKORK is also actively engaged, both in order to improve its functioning and in order to make its knowledge about the HE system in Russia better known abroad. It can be to a larger extent ascribed to AKKORK that knowledge about the ESG is raising amongst HEIs in the Russian Federation.

The other aspects of this criterion have been addressed in section 4.6.

#### *4.8.3 Conclusion on compliance*

The review panel concluded that AKKORK is in **substantial compliance** with ENQA criterion 8.

#### *4.8.4 Recommendation*

AKKORK should clearly determine its appeals procedure and make it available on its website.

## 5 Conclusion and development

### **5.1 Overall findings**

AKKORK has made considerable progress compared to the 2011 review. However, it is not yet fully compliant with all of the ENQA criteria and the ESG. Especially, ENQA criteria 1a (and therefore ESG Part 2) and 6 require significant improvement.

Yet, it is the view of the review panel that AKKORK takes the ENQA recommendations seriously and works on their implementation.

**In the light of the documentary and oral evidence during the site visit, the Review Panel is satisfied that AKKORK is in compliance with the ENQA Membership Criteria. The agency is substantially compliant to justify full membership of ENQA, although it is not fully compliant to all ENQA Membership Criteria.**

The review panel finds that AKKORK is fully compliant with these criteria:

- ENQA Criterion 2
- ENQA Criterion 3
- ENQA Criterion 4
- ENQA Criterion 5.

The review panel finds that AKKORK is only substantially compliant with these criteria:

- ENQA Criterion 1
- ENQA Criterion 6
- ENQA Criterion 7
- ENQA Criterion 8.

The agency is recommended to take appropriate action, so far as it is empowered to do so, to achieve full compliance with these criteria at the earliest opportunity.

### **5.2 Recommendations**

- AKKORK should further elaborate its criteria in order to ensure that systematic assessments of study programmes are embedded in the review process and that all aspects of the ESG Part 1 are assessed.
- AKKORK should systematically provide information about the aims and objectives for each of its activities. This information could also be offered in a comparative manner in order to better outline the differences between the assessment activities.
- AKKORK should fully publish its criteria on its website in a more easily accessible and clear manner.
- AKKORK should ensure that students are part of the review team for each assessment.
- AKKORK should publish all of its review reports on its website, including those at institutional level and negative ones.
- AKKORK should ensure that there is a structured follow-up mechanism for each of its reviews. This should be made part of the contract signed with the HEI.
- AKKORK should consider extending the validity for all its accreditations to avoid accreditation fatigue in universities.
- AKKORK should disseminate its analytical reports to HEIs and among stakeholders in a more efficient and consistent way.
- AKKORK should continue to ensure that consultancy services and external quality assurance are not offered at the same HEI within a reasonable timeframe.
- AKKORK should clearly determine its appeals procedure and make it available on its website.
- AKKORK should officially adopt that it will undergo an external review at least every five years.
- AKKORK should develop a mechanism to ensure that staff and members of AKKORK's bodies do not have any conflict of interest with regard to reviews they are involved in / decide about.

## **6 Annexes**

Annex 1: Comparative overview of 2011 and 2014 recommendations

Annex 2: Agenda of the site-visit

Annex 3: Organisational chart

Annex 4: Terms of reference

### Annex 1: Comparative overview of 2011 and 2014 recommendations

ENQA criterion / ESG	2011 review		2014 review	
	Level of compliance	Recommendations	Level of compliance	Recommendations
ENQA Criterion 1a ESG 2.1: Use of internal QA procedures	Partially compliant	AKKORK must emphasise the identification of and assessment of internal QA systems of HEIs, even when evaluating only some study programmes at a given HEI.	Substantially compliant  (Progress has been made compared to 2011)	AKKORK should further elaborate its criteria in order to ensure that systematic assessments of study programmes are embedded in the review process and that all aspects of the ESG Part 1 are assessed.
ENQA Criterion 1a ESG 2.2: Development of external QA processes	Substantially compliant	The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes especially at the programme level could be determined more consistently regarding the various documents / webpages of AKKORK.	Substantially compliant	AKKORK should systematically provide information about the aims and objectives for each of its activities. This information could also be offered in a comparative manner in order to better outline the differences between the assessment activities.
ENQA Criterion 1a ESG 2.3: Criteria for decisions	Partially compliant	Evaluation and accreditation criteria should be made more unequivocal, more clearly defined, and more easily accessible on AKKORK's website(s) and in documentation of the actual accreditation processes.	Substantially compliant  (Progress has been made compared to 2011)	AKKORK should fully publish its criteria on its website in a more easily accessible and clear manner.

		AKKORK should consider assigning at least two reviewers for each study programme in order to help ensuring consistency and reliability of assessments and interpretation of criteria.		
ENQA Criterion 1a ESG 2.4: Processes fit for purpose	Substantially compliant	AKKORK could consider simplifying the organisation of the reviewers work (Corporation of Reviewers, status levels and rating of reviewers).  AKKORK could consider including students in review panels.  AKKORK could consider inviting foreign experts to evaluation teams and create a pool of international reviewers.	Substantially compliant	AKKORK should ensure that students are part of the review team for each assessment.
ENQA Criterion 1a ESG 2.5: Reporting	Partially compliant	AKKORK should consider publishing all full reports on its website.  Standard file formats could be used for published reports (e.g. doc and/or pdf).  Dates should be indicated on	Substantially compliant  (Progress has been made compared to 2011)	AKKORK should publish all of its review reports on its website, including those at institutional level and negative ones.

		expert reports.		
ENQA Criterion 1a ESG 2.6: Follow-up procedures	Fully compliant	The various documents describing follow-up processes should be harmonised with each other.	Partially compliant  (The panel had a different assessment in terms of whether follow- up procedures are actually undertaken as compared to 2011)	AKKORK should ensure that there is a structured follow-up mechanism for each of its reviews. This should be made part of the contract signed with the HEI.
ENQA Criterion 1a ESG 2.7: Periodic reviews	Non-compliant	AKKORK could consider including an “obligatory” or strongly advised periodicity element in its institutional and programme review procedures. The three-year cycle however, seems to be a bit too short. (The cycle for state accreditation in Russia is 6 years.)	Substantially compliant  (The review panel has a different interpretation of the criteria compared to 2011: The review panel considers that AKKORK’s reviews are periodic, as their validity is stipulated. If an HEI does not ask for a new	AKKORK should consider extending the validity for all its accreditations to avoid accreditation fatigue in universities.

			<p>accreditation, the previous one becomes invalid. The fact that an HEI does not ask for a new accreditation cannot be blamed on AKKORK or undermine the principle of periodicity.)</p>	
<p>ENQA Criterion 1a ESG 2.8: System-wide analysis</p>	<p>Partially compliant</p>	<p>Additionally to publications and conferences devoted to general QA and methodology issues AKKORK should make and publish summary reports describing and analysing the actual findings of its reviews, evaluations.</p>	<p>Substantially compliant  (Progress has been made compared to 2011)</p>	<p>AKKORK should disseminate its analytical reports to HEIs and among stakeholders in a more efficient and consistent way.</p>
<p>ENQA Criterion 1a: ESG 3.1: Use of external QA procedures</p>	<p>Partially compliant</p>	<p>See aforementioned individual remarks</p>	<p>Substantially compliant  (Progress has been made compared to 2011)</p>	<p>See aforementioned individual remarks</p>
<p>ENQA Criterion 1b: ESG 3.3: Activities</p>	<p>Substantially compliant</p>	<p>AKKORK should clearly separate its consultancy and evaluation services and not offer both of them at the same</p>	<p>Substantially compliant</p>	<p>AKKORK should continue to ensure that consultancy services and external quality assurance are not offered at the same HEI within a</p>

		HEI.		reasonable timeframe.
ENQA Criterion 2: ESG 3.2: Official status	Fully compliant	AKKORK could consider publishing its Charter on its website.	Fully compliant	None
ENQA Criterion 3: ESG 3.4: Resources	Substantially compliant	<p>AKKORK should consider the financial sustainability of its operations and make a strategy for establishing stable, reliable financing and trying to find additional sources of income.</p> <p>AKKORK should devote special attention to staff workload and material and non-material motivation, the development of special QA knowledge and skills for staff including English language training.</p> <p>AKKORK is recommended to try to find the necessary financial and human resources for developing an overall agency information system, operating as a database, and including possibly all the data and processes related to AKKORK's activities, making possible for experts, members of the various bodies, and staff to prepare/access evaluations</p>	Fully compliant  (Progress has been made compared to 2011)	None

		and decisions logged in the database, online.		
ENQA Criterion 4: ESG 3.5: Mission statement	Fully compliant	AKKORK should make available on its website the Mission document in final and full, with inclusion of the division of responsibilities between organisations taking part in QA processes in Russia.  The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes could be determined more consistently regarding the various documents / webpages of AKKORK.	Fully compliant	None
ENQA Criterion 5: ESG 3.6: Independence	Partially compliant	AKKORK should address the independence issue, reconsider the membership and chairing of its various bodies and ensure that persons having leading HEI or state authority positions are not selected for service for AKKORK.	Fully compliant  (Progress has been made compared to 2011)	None
ENQA Criterion 6: ESG 3.7: External QA criteria and processes used by the agencies	Partially compliant (criteria)  Substantially compliant (processes)	AKKORK should revise its documents on processes, criteria and procedures and eliminate repetitions, overlaps and disharmonies.	Substantially compliant  (Progress has been made compared to 2011)	AKKORK should clearly determine its appeals procedure and make it available on its website.  AKKORK should ensure that there is a structured follow-up mechanism for each of its reviews. This should be made part of the contract signed

				<p>with the HEI.</p> <p>AKKORK should publish all of its review reports on its website, including those at institutional level and negative ones.</p> <p>AKKORK should fully publish its criteria on its website in a more easily accessible and clear manner.</p> <p>AKKORK should ensure that students are part of the review team for each assessment.</p>
ENQA Criterion 7: ESG 3.8: Accountability procedures	Partially compliant	<p>AKKORK should revise its internal regulatory documentation in order to eliminate repetitions, overlaps and disharmonies. AKKORK could consider to create/compile its basic internal regulatory document in the form of By-laws, where all the organisational and operational issues could be included and regulated.</p> <p>AKKORK should establish regular (annual) external feedback mechanisms asking for the opinion of evaluated HEIs, experts, and other stakeholders. Results of such</p>	<p>Substantially compliant</p> <p>(Progress has been made compared to 2011)</p>	<p>AKKORK should officially adopt that it will undergo an external review at least every five years.</p> <p>AKKORK should develop a mechanism to ensure that staff and members of AKKORK's bodies do not have any conflict of interest with regard to reviews they are involved in / decide about.</p>

		feedback should be analysed and acted upon, corresponding to the PDCA principle.		
ENQA Criterion 8: Consistency of judgements, appeals system and contribution to ENQA aims	Substantially compliant		Substantially compliant	AKKORK should clearly determine its appeals procedure and make it available on its website.

## Annex 2: Site-visit agenda

Time	Content	Participants	Location	Notes
28 May 2014				
<b>Throughout the day</b>	Arrival of Review panel members and transfer to the hotel			
<b>20.00h</b>	Briefing Meeting of the review panel and dinner		Restaurant	Private meeting
29 May 2014				
	Transfer from the hotel to AKKORK office			
<b>08.45-09.00h</b>	Preparation of review panel		AKKORK office	Private meeting
<b>09.00-10.00h</b>	Leadership of AKKORK	Director of AKKORK Sergei Anisimov	AKKORK office	
<b>10.00-10.15h</b>	Panel discussion		AKKORK office	Private meeting
<b>10.15-11.15h</b>	SER Team	Sergei Anisimov, Director;  Natalia Baranova, Deputy Director and Head, Project Office;  Erika Soboleva, Head, International Office (by Skype);  Tatiana Poshakova, Manager, Development Office;  Elena Zakhvatova, Key Manager, Development Office;  Alexander Drondin, Manager Project Office;	AKKORK office	
<b>11.15-11.30h</b>	Coffee break		AKKORK office	

<b>11.30-12.30h</b>	Supervisory Board	Aleksey Kasprzhak, Deputy head of the Supervisory Board	AKKORK office	
<b>12.30-13.30h</b>	Lunch	Restaurant "Maestro"	AKKORK office	Private meeting
<b>13.30-14.30h</b>	Members of the Accreditation Council	Sergey Korshunov, Chairman, Accreditation Council;  Boris Pozdneev, Member, Accreditation Council;  Evgeniya Karavaeva, Member, Accreditation Council;	AKKORK office	
<b>14.30-14.45h</b>	Panel discussion		AKKORK office	Private meeting
<b>14.45-15.45h</b>	Meetings with AKKORK staff	Liudmila Stepanchenko, Head, Development Office;  Tatiana Porshakova, Manager, Development Office;  Elena Zakhvatova, Key Manager, Development Office;  Alexander Drondin, Manager Project Office;  Natalia Avdeenko, Manager, Project Office;  Aishat Temirova, Editor in Chief, Journal "Quality of education"	AKKORK office	
<b>15.45-16.00h</b>	Coffee break		AKKORK office	
<b>16.00-17.00h</b>	Meetings with HEIs that have been reviewed	Larisa Harlamova, Head of department of quality assurance of education, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia;  Elena Simakova, Deputy head of	AKKORK office	

Department of Ecology and Industrial Safety, MSTU Bauman;

Valentina Bolochagina, Head of department of quality and certification of education, Moscow State University of Culture and Arts;

Igor Ilyichev, Head of department of Applied Economics of MISA;

Alexander Efremov, First Vice-Rector, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia

<b>17.00-17.15h</b>	Tour of the premises and facilities	AKKORK office	
<b>17.15h</b>	Transfer to the hotel		
<b>17.30-18.30h</b>	Panel discussion	Hotel	Private meeting
<b>19.00h</b>	Dinner	Restaurant	Private meeting

30 May

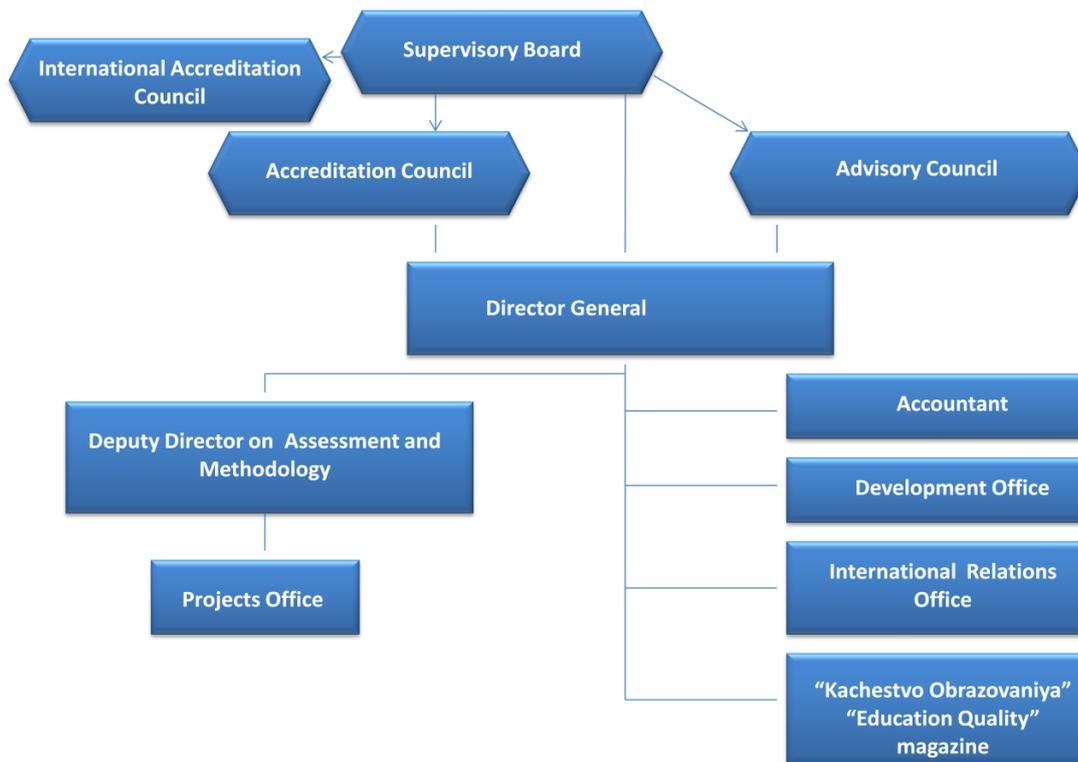
<b>08.45h</b>	Transfer from the hotel to AKKORK office		
<b>9.00-10.00h</b>	Members of the Advisory Council	Vladimir Shadrikov, Director of the Institute of education content NRU "Higher School of Economics", chairman of Advisory Council AKKORK;	AKKORK office
		Viktor Zvonnikov, Vice Rector of SUM;	
		Yuriy Pesotsky, Head of the Committee on personnel for SMEs and Education at Russian Public Organization of Small and medium-sized businesses "SUPPORT OF RUSSIA"	

<b>10.00-10.15h</b>	Panel discussion HEIs		AKKORK office	Private meeting
<b>10.15-11.15h</b>	Meeting with AKKORK experts (reviewers)	Olga Zaitseva; Vitaliy Vershinin; Tatiana Zvorykina; Irina Logvinova	AKKORK office	
<b>11.15-11.30h</b>	Coffee break			
<b>11.30-12.30h</b>	Meetings with students that have been involved in reviews	Anna Abaimova; Stiven Likhtenberg; Evgeny Yakovlev; Sergei Huseni; Vagram Movseyan; Vladimir Dorin	AKKORK office	
<b>12.30-13.30h</b>	Lunch	Restaurant "Maestro",		Private meeting
<b>15.00-15.30h</b>	Meetings with stakeholders	Natalia Yablonskene, Head of the education programmes, Department State Corporation ROSNANO;  Tseren Mandijev, Head of All-Russian Agriculture Union;  Natalia Tikhomirova, Rector, MESI and member of the presidium, Mosocw Region Rectors Council		
	Transfer to MoES			
<b>17.00-18.00h</b>	Meeting with MoE officials	Veniamin Kaganov, Deputy Minister of Education and Science;  Evgeniy Ugrinovich, Director of the International Department, Ministry of Education and Science;  Nina Ivanova, Deputy Director, FS;  Sergey Rukavishnikov, Director of Department, FS;	AKKORK office	

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<b>18.00-19.30h</b>	Report preparation	AKKORK office	Private meeting
<b>19.30-20.00h</b>	Initial feedback	AKKORK office	
<b>20.00h</b>	Transfer to the hotel		
<b>21.00h</b>	Dinner	Restaurant	
31 May			
<b>Throughout the day</b>	Transfer to the airport		

### Annex 3: Organisational Chart of AKKORK



## **Annex 4: Terms of reference**

External review of the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Career Development (AKKORK) by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

### Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE

August 2013

#### 1. Background and Context

Established in 2005 as an autonomous non-profit organisation (according to the Civil Code of RF and the Law on Non-profit Organisations), AKKORK is the first public external QA agency in Russia. The agency was founded by two Russian limited liability companies named "Obrazovanie cherez vsu zhizn" (Lifelong learning) and "Garantii Kachestva" (Quality assurance), respectively.

The mission of the agency to form and develop in Russia an independent system of education quality assessment and assurance which corresponds to the principles of the Bologna declaration and the world best practices.

AKKORK offers its services both on the secondary and higher education level but mostly on the latter level. The major types of activities cover:

- quality review (evaluation / audit);
- accreditation and certification (voluntary, non-state);
- project work and business activity related to the scope of the agency (studies, research on a contract basis).

Evaluation and accreditation are offered both for institutions and programmes. AKKORK's main activities relate to study programme evaluation.

In December 2007, AKKORK (at that time using the acronym AQA) was granted associate status (now Affiliate status) with ENQA.

AKKORK applied three times for ENQA membership: twice for Candidate membership in April 2007 and in 2009 and once for Full membership in 2011. AKKORK is applying for Full membership for the second time.

#### **2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation**

This is a type A review, as defined in the *Guidelines for external*

*reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area.* It will evaluate the way in which and to what extent AKKORK fulfils the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. Consequently, the review will also provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether AKKORK should be accepted as Full Member of ENQA.

The review panel is not expected, however, to make any judgements as regards granting Full Membership.

### **3. The Review Process**

The process is designed in the light of the *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area*.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Formulation of the Terms of Reference and protocol for the review;
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel;
- Self-evaluation by AKKORK including the preparation of a self-evaluation report;
- A site visit by the review panel to AKKORK;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final evaluation report by the Review Committee of the ENQA Board;
- Analysis of the scrutiny by the ENQA Board and their decision regarding ENQA membership;
- Follow-up of the panel's and/or ENQA Board's recommendations by the agency.

#### **3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members**

The review panel consists of five members: four external reviewers (one or two quality assurance experts, representative(s) of higher education institutions, student member) and a review secretary. Three of the reviewers (including the review secretary) are nominated by the ENQA Board on the basis of proposals submitted to ENQA by the national agencies, and are drawn from senior serving members of Board/Council or staff of ENQA member agencies. The fourth external reviewer is drawn from a nomination provided by the European University Association (EUA). The nomination of the student member is asked from the European Students' Union (ESU). One of the panel members serves as the chair of the review.

Current members of the ENQA Board are not eligible to serve as reviewers.

ENQA will provide AKKORK with the list of suggested experts with their respective curriculum vitae to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The experts will have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards the AKKORK review.

### **3.2 Self-evaluation by AKKORK, including the preparation of a self-evaluation report**

AKKORK is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-evaluation process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- Self-evaluation is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;
- The self-evaluation report is broken down by the topics of the evaluation: background description of the current situation of the Agency; analysis and appraisal of the current situation; proposals for improvement and measures already planned; a summary of perceived strengths and weaknesses;
- The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which AKKORK fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the ESG. The report is submitted to the review panel a minimum of eight weeks prior to the site visit.

### **3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel**

AKKORK will draw up a draft proposal of schedule of the site visit to be submitted to the review panel two months before the planned dates of the visit. The schedule includes an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit, the duration of which is 2 days. The approved schedule shall be given to AKKORK at least one month before the dates of the visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by AKKORK in arriving in Moscow, Russia.

The site visit will close with an oral presentation and discussion of the major issues of the evaluation between the review panel and AKKORK.

### **3.4 Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report**

On the basis of the review panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the review panel. The report will take into account the purpose and scope of the evaluation as defined under article 2. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings with regards to each ENQA membership criteria. A draft will be submitted for comment to AKKORK within two months of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If AKKORK chooses to provide a statement in reference to the draft report it will be submitted to the chair of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report. Thereafter the review panel will take into account the statement by AKKORK, finalise the document and submit it to AKKORK and ENQA.

The report is to be finalised within three months of the site visit and will not exceed 40 pages in length.

### **4. Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report**

AKKORK will consider the expert panel's report and may inform ENQA of its plans to implement any recommendations contained in the report. The review report will be published on the AKKORK website. The report will also be published on the ENQA website, regardless of the review outcome and decision by the Board.

### **5. Use of the report**

ENQA shall retain ownership of the report. The intellectual property of all works created by the expert panel in connection with the review contract, including specifically any written reports, shall be vested in ENQA.

The review report is to be used by the Board of ENQA for the purpose of reaching a conclusion on whether AKKORK has or has not met the membership criteria/ESG.

The working paper authored by the Panel is to be considered as a report owned by ENQA only after being approved by the ENQA Board.

Once submitted to AKKORK and ENQA and until the decision by the Board is made, the working paper may not be used or relied upon by AKKORK the panel and any third party and may not be disclosed without the prior written consent of ENQA. AKKORK may use the report at its discretion only after the Board decision has been made.

AKKORK shall be aware that, should an application to the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) be

submitted, the Chair of the panel might be approached by the Register Committee for any request for clarification. The Chair of the panel may give a response but he/she is requested to copy the Director of ENQA on all correspondences.

## 6. Budget

AKKORK shall pay the following review related fees:

Fee of the Chair	4,750 EUR
Fee of the Secretary	4,750 EUR
Fee of the 3 other panel	8,250 EUR (2,750
Administrative overhead for	5,000 EUR
Experts Training fund	1,250 EUR
Travel and subsistence expenses	6,000 EUR

This gives a total indicative cost of 30,000.00 EUR for a review team of 5 members. In the case that the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, AKKORK will cover any additional costs after the completion of the review. However, the ENQA Secretariat will endeavour to keep the travel and subsistence expenses in the limits of the planned budget, and will refund the difference to AKKORK if the travel and subsistence expenses go under budget.

In the event of a second site visit required by the Board and aiming at completing the assessment of compliance, and should the agency accept a second visit, an additional fee of 500 EUR per expert, as well as travel and subsistence costs are recoverable from the agency.

## 7. Indicative Schedule of the Review

Agreement on terms of reference and contract	September 2013
Appointment of review panel members	October 2013
Self-evaluation completed	By February 2014
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	Feb-March 2014
Briefing of review panel members	March 2014
Review panel site visit	April 2014
Draft of evaluation report to AKKORK	June 2014
Statement of AKKORK to review panel if necessary	June 2014
Submission of final report to ENQA	July 2014
Consideration of the report by ENQA and response of AKKORK	September 2014
Publication of report	September 2014