Strategia Agenției Naționale de Asigurare a Calității în Educație și Cercetare 2025-2029
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STRATEGY

NATIONAL AGENCY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

(2025–2029)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronym	Meaning
ANACEC	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research
GB	Governing Board of ANACEC
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
SSC	Specialized Scientific Councils
DETVAE	Department of Evaluation in Technical Vocational Education and Continuing Education
DHEE	Department of Higher Education Evaluation
DEIR	Department of Evaluation in Research and Innovation
AVET	Adult Vocational Education and Training
AI	Artificial Intelligence
VET	Vocational Education and Training
MoER	Ministry of Education and Research
EU	European Union
ANACIP	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education
NSI	National School Inspectorate
NCAA	National Council for Accreditation and Attestation
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
CEENQA	Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
ETF	European Training Foundation

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

With the approval of the Education Code in 2014, the legal and institutional framework of the national quality assurance system was defined. One of its components was the establishment and operation of an institution responsible for implementing state policies and contributing to development in line with the best international standards in its areas of competence.

In this context, Government Decision No. 201 of 28 February 2018 established the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC), which represents a continuation of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education (ANACIP), having absorbed the National School Inspectorate (NSI) and the National Council for Accreditation and Attestation (NCAA). ANACEC operates in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, the Education Code, the Code on Science and Innovation, the laws of the Republic of Moldova, decrees of the President, decisions of Parliament, ordinances and decisions of the Government, other normative acts, and international treaties to which the Republic of Moldova is a party.

During 2018–2024, ANACEC laid the foundations for a quality culture in technical vocational education, higher education, adult vocational education and training, and research and innovation. However, the challenges faced by ANACEC, namely staff turnover and inefficient digitalization of evaluation processes, disrupt the institution's activity. At the same time, global transformations in education and research require new approaches to be taken into account.

Thus, during 2025–2029, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research aims to:

- increase institutional capacities;
- harmonize quality assurance instruments in education and research with international standards;
- apply information technologies in external evaluation and institutional activities;
- obtain the status of an independent institution;
- provide consultancy, mentoring and technical support to institutions;

- join ENQA and be registered in EQAR.

Chapter II. DESCRIPTION OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

Over the last five years, ANACEC had a clearly defined policy and a 2018–2023 development strategy, which created the premises for quality assurance in education and research in the Republic of Moldova. The Agency's department carried out a series of actions aimed at building public confidence in the quality of studies provided by national educational institutions.

The Department for Evaluation in Technical Vocational Education and Continuing Education (DETVAE) ensures external evaluation for the provisional authorization, accreditation and reaccreditation of vocational training programmes in technical vocational education and adult vocational education and training.
The DETVAE contributed to the development and updating of normative and methodological acts within its area of competence.

Within the previous Strategy, DETVAE organized and coordinated the external evaluation process for the accreditation/provisional authorization of 548 vocational training programmes in technical vocational education, within 203 VET institutions, and 1,185 continuing education programmes within 254 adult vocational education and training institutions, contributing to the establishment of 125 and 211 external evaluation commissions, respectively.

The Department of Higher Education Evaluation (DHEE) conducts external evaluation for the provisional authorization, accreditation and reaccreditation of bachelor's and master's degree study programmes.

The dynamics of evaluations conducted in higher education currently indicates an increase in the number of evaluations over the years, a trend that continues at present. External quality evaluation activities have been initiated and organized for the accreditation/reaccreditation/provisional authorization of 789 higher education study programmes (469 bachelor's programmes, 5 integrated higher education programmes, 295 master's programmes and 20 doctoral programmes).

DHEE has developed and updated the normative and methodological framework in its area of competence, which is currently used but remains open to improvement in light of trends in existing education systems.

The results of research and innovation evaluation activities currently show that the Department for Evaluation in Research and Innovation (DEIR) has preliminarily examined and coordinated the evaluation of attestation files of scientific and scientific-teaching staff, scientific publications and other types of evaluations. As a result, the following were confirmed:

- 106 habilitated doctor scientific titles;
- 956 doctor scientific titles;
- 96 scientific-teaching titles of university professor;
- 503 scientific-teaching titles of associate professor;
- 1,088 authorizations to supervise doctoral studies;
- 84 high-level qualification documents obtained abroad were recognized and equated in the Republic of Moldova.

Within the process of awarding/confirming scientific titles under the Regulation on the operation of specialized scientific councils and the awarding of scientific titles, 80 files for the establishment of Specialized Scientific Councils (SSC) for defending habilitated doctor theses and 667 files for the establishment of SSCs for defending doctor theses were analyzed and subsequently approved.

At the same time, 141 attestation files were rejected for failure to meet quality and scientific ethics standards, including 33 for the establishment of SSCs, 27 for confirmation of scientific titles, 17 for confirmation of scientific-teaching titles, 8 for recognition and equivalence of high-level qualification documents obtained abroad, and 56 for obtaining the right to supervise doctoral studies.

During the period concerned, 100 files for the evaluation of scientific journals were examined, resulting in the accreditation of 68 scientific journals.

Based on the provisions of the Regulation on the recognition, classification and recording of scientific events (2018 and 2022 editions), DEIR developed the registers of planned scientific events (2019–2021), registers of materials published on the basis of organized scientific events (2020, 2021), and registers of organized scientific events (2022, 2023).

During the reference period, the procedure for creating, updating and managing the Register of Experts of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research in the fields of research and innovation was launched (Methodology approved by Governing Board of ANACEC Decision No. 2 of 12 May 2020; supplemented/amended by Governing Board of ANACEC Decision No. 4 of 28 January 2022).

As of 1 January 2023, this Register included 369 expert evaluators: 19% in economics, sociology, media and communication; 17.3% in chemical, biological and geonomical sciences; 14% in humanities; 12% in education sciences and psychology; 10% in legal, political, military and intelligence sciences; 9% in medical sciences; 8% in engineering sciences and technologies; 6% in mathematics, information science and physical sciences; and 5% in agricultural sciences.

In order to improve the normative framework and align it with international good practices, DEIR developed new normative acts and promoted amendments to existing acts as follows: 2018 – 18; 2019 – 13; 2020 – 12; 2021 – 10; 2022 – 6; 2023 – 7.

Current realities show that ANACEC performs its responsibilities in accordance with the legislation in force, but there are premises for improving its activity to meet European standards. Following an analysis of the current situation, ANACEC’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats, were identified. These issues may influence the institution’s capacity to fulfil its mission; understanding them, while taking into account human resources, ICT tools, management strategies and transformations in the field, will enable the institution to address challenges coherently and constructively.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Alignment of activities with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG);
- Ensuring transparency and accountability through publication of decisions and reports and involvement of relevant stakeholders;
- Capitalizing on five years of own operational experience and institutional legacy (ANACIP, NCAA, NSI);
- Ensuring expertise through the involvement of national and international evaluators in evaluation processes.

WEAKNESSES

- Limited public visibility, reducing ANACEC's role in the national education system;
- Insufficient human resources, both at staff level and among external evaluators;
- Limited financial resources, affecting institutional development and long-term sustainability;
- Lack of an integrated research information system, including modern digital tools for online submission of files, evaluation and plagiarism prevention;
- Maintaining a hierarchical position subordinate to the Ministry of Education and Research (MoER), contrary to the principles of institutional independence promoted at European level.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Leveraging international cooperation and affiliation with European professional networks (ENQA, CEENQA, ETF), contributing to institutional recognition globally;

- Increasing partnerships with international organizations and external evaluation agencies for exchange of good practices and expertise;
- Accelerating digitalization through the adoption of artificial intelligence and modern technological solutions integrated into evaluation and monitoring.

THREATS

- Incoherence of the normative framework, with gaps and contradictions that generate uncertainty in applying standards;
- Uncertainty regarding the legal regime governing ANACEC's property rights;
- Vulnerability to legislative changes and institutional and financial instability;
- Staff turnover leading to the loss of qualified human resources;
- Decline of the national scientific culture, including proliferation of pseudo-scientific publications;
- Possible external influence on Governing Board decisions due to the lack of firm independence safeguards;
- Predominantly formal and quantitative orientation of evaluation processes, to the detriment of the quality of educational and scientific outcomes;
- Chronic underfunding, with a direct effect on long-term institutional sustainability.

CHAPTER III. MISSION, VISION AND PRINCIPLES OF THE STRATEGY

1. Mission of the ANACEC Strategy

The mission of ANACEC is to implement state policies and promote the best international practices in quality assurance in technical vocational education, higher education, adult vocational education and training, and research and innovation through rigorous external evaluation, constructive dialogue with stakeholders and continuous development of a quality culture.

2. Vision of the ANACEC Strategy

Ensuring a high-quality education and research system, thereby guaranteeing professional training and research recognized by the development partners of the Republic of Moldova, thus contributing to the sustainable development of the education system and society for the purpose of European integration.

3. Basic principles for implementing the ANACEC Strategy

As an institution whose mission is to promote and ensure a quality culture, ANACEC focuses on a set of fundamental principles necessary to ensure society's confidence in the services provided and to maximize the relevance and quality of external quality evaluation processes in education and research, including:

- **Independence in activity.** ANACEC operates without external influence, ensuring objectivity and impartiality in evaluating the quality of education and research.
- **Accountability.** ANACEC is accountable to society and beneficiaries, ensuring transparency and public accountability in all its processes.
- **Professionalism.** Activities are carried out competently, in accordance with best practices and international standards, through trained and qualified experts.
- **Integrity and ethics.** ANACEC promotes honesty, fairness and compliance with ethical standards in all its actions.
- **Efficiency and effectiveness.** Resource and process management is oriented towards achieving optimal results.
- **Transparency.** Decision-making and activities are open and accessible to the public and stakeholders.
- **Respect for university autonomy and institutional specificity.** ANACEC respects academic freedom and the particularities of each educational institution, adapting its evaluations accordingly.
- **Cooperation and partnership.** ANACEC promotes collaboration with stakeholders, such as the MoER, educational institutions, research organizations, authorities and other national and international agencies, to develop a quality culture.

• **Impartiality and objectivity.** Decisions are based on clear criteria, without subjective influence, ensuring the credibility of the evaluation process.

• **Harmonization with European and international standards.** Alignment of the normative and methodological framework with European good practices for integration and international recognition.

CHAPTER IV. GENERAL OBJECTIVES

Based on the experience accumulated during a stage of the institution's activity, the implementation of the previous strategy, the recommendations of the ENQA report and the results of the public consultation process, in order to ensure the success of activities aimed at ensuring a quality culture in technical vocational education, higher education, adult vocational education and training, and research and innovation, the ANACEC Strategy will focus on six general objectives that will guide activities during 2025–2029.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES	KEY DIRECTIONS
1. Ensuring the quality of education and research in the Republic of Moldova in accordance with European Union standards.	▪ Harmonization of education and research quality assurance instruments with European Union practices. ▪ Increasing ANACEC's role in the development and implementation of education and research policies.
2. Sustainable development of the external quality evaluation system in education and research.	▪ Strengthening the evaluation expert ecosystem. ▪ Ensuring quality human resources. ▪ Making external quality evaluation instruments in education and research more efficient.
3. Strengthening ANACEC's capacities in quality assurance in education and research in order to	▪ Strengthening the institution as an autonomous entity.

increase beneficiaries' confidence in the services provided.	▪ Developing and implementing an efficient internal quality management system. ▪ Optimizing the institutional structure and ensuring the resources necessary for ANACEC to operate efficiently. ▪ Developing ANACEC staff. ▪ Promoting a performance-oriented organizational culture.
4. Strengthening ANACEC's role as a strategic consultant for educational institutions and other stakeholders.	▪ Developing ANACEC's institutional capacity to provide consultancy, mentoring and technical support to institutions. ▪ Developing strategic partnerships for the adoption and implementation of good practices in quality assurance.
5. Leveraging information technologies in ANACEC's areas of competence.	▪ Developing an integrated information system to support internal and external evaluation processes. ▪ Increasing institutional visibility and transparency through digital means.
6. International recognition of ANACEC.	▪ Joining ENQA and being included in the EQAR Register. ▪ Promoting ANACEC's international visibility.

Chapter V. ESTIMATED IMPACT OF THE STRATEGY

The Strategy will have an impact on:

- strengthening the quality culture in vocational training and research;
- improving the positive image and credibility of the vocational training and research system in the Republic of Moldova;
- increasing the quality of human resources employed in various sectors of the labour market.

The general objectives set out in this Strategy are intended to have an impact on: the development/operation of the institution; its transparency in the public sphere; the continuous professional development of employees; evaluator training; training young researchers regarding new

trends in research and innovation; ensuring the institution's visibility nationally and internationally; developing existing partnerships and establishing new ones; and digitalizing evaluation processes.

Chapter VI. EXPECTED RESULTS AND PROGRESS INDICATORS

1. Expected results

As a result of implementing the Strategy, a number of important results will be achieved, ensuring the quality of both the education system and research. In this regard, the Strategy defines a series of key directions that will ensure the achievement of its mission, vision and objectives, as well as quality assurance in education and research.

- External evaluation, in accordance with current requirements, of programmes in technical vocational education, higher education and adult vocational education and training, as well as organizations in research and innovation.
- Ensuring the quality of educational and research services required by society, thereby creating the premises for the Republic of Moldova to align with European and international standards.
- Ensuring quality in research and innovation, which will guarantee qualified specialists capable of conducting research in various fields, thus contributing to an innovative and prosperous economy.

2. Progress indicators

Implementation of the Strategy will be monitored through indicators for tracking and evaluating planned actions, which will make it possible to measure the level of Strategy implementation and determine whether the established objectives have been achieved, including:

- Indicators for external evaluation of study programmes/educational institutions;
- Research and innovation quality indicators;
- Indicators of institutional development, transparency and accountability of ANACEC;
- International cooperation and recognition indicators;
- Social and economic impact indicators.

Chapter VII. GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE STRATEGY

1. Factors for successful implementation of the Strategy

The ANACEC Strategy is a document intended to ensure, consolidate and increase the effectiveness of the institution's activity. This can be influenced by a series of factors that act on its activity in different ways and with different intensity. Accordingly, a number of factors are envisaged that can ensure the success of the Strategy, provided that the human resources required to implement it, the necessary financial resources and effective institutional management are taken into account. These factors are:

Institutional management capacity. An essential factor in ANACEC's activity, requiring its leadership to strengthen efforts and apply competencies to increase the institution's effectiveness in order to further promote a quality culture and ensure society's confidence in the institution.

Change management. Successful implementation of the Strategy is linked to changes that may occur in various forms and affect several aspects during implementation. This requires awareness of the need for

change and rapid adaptation to change at all levels of the institution, increasing its chances of success.

Application of information technologies. An essential factor in the 21st century on which the institution's activity depends, as well as the acceleration of processes supporting the achievement of short-, medium- and long-term objectives. Their use is therefore necessary to achieve the general strategic objectives.

Regulation of the field. As the Republic of Moldova aspires to join the European Union, a normative framework harmonized with EU legislation and standards in quality assurance will enable the institution to achieve its objectives and ensure its visibility at European and international level.

Trust in the institution's activity. An essential factor providing beneficiaries with assurance that the institution is capable of ensuring processes focused on quality and objectivity

2. Stages of Strategy implementation

The Strategy will focus on two basic stages. The first stage of institutional development will cover 2025–2027, and the second will cover 2028–2029. Thus, during the first development stage, 2025–2027, the priority will be to fulfil the institution's mission, namely to develop the best international standards aligned with EU requirements in the assigned areas of competence, in order to become a high-performing quality culture assurance institution in technical vocational education, higher education, adult vocational education and training, and organizations in research and innovation, operating in accordance with the legislation in force.

➢ **Development stage for 2025–2027 will include:**

- Strengthening the evaluation expert ecosystem.
- Ensuring an efficient internal quality management system.
- Harmonizing education and research quality assurance instruments with EU practices.
- Strengthening the institution as an autonomous entity.
- Joining ENQA and being included in the EQAR Register.

- Optimizing the institutional structure and ensuring the resources necessary for ANACEC to operate efficiently.
- Developing ANACEC staff.
- Promoting a performance-oriented organizational culture.
- Developing ANACEC's institutional capacity to provide consultancy, mentoring and technical support to institutions.
- Increasing institutional visibility and transparency through digital means.
- Promoting ANACEC's international visibility.

The second development stage will aim for the institution to become a high-performing entity in the development, assurance and promotion of a quality culture according to the best international standards and in accordance with state policies.

➢ **Development stage for 2028–2029 will include:**

- Developing strategic partnerships for the adoption and implementation of good practices in quality assurance.
- Increasing ANACEC's role in the development and implementation of education and research policies.
- Ensuring quality human resources.
- Continuing to optimize the institutional structure and ensuring the resources necessary for ANACEC to operate efficiently.
- Continuing the development of ANACEC staff.
- Continuing to ensure a performance-oriented organizational culture.
- Continuing to develop ANACEC's institutional capacity to provide consultancy, mentoring and technical support to institutions.
- Developing an integrated information system to support internal and external evaluation processes.
- Maintaining institutional visibility and transparency through digital means.
- Continuously promoting ANACEC's international visibility.

3. Monitoring mechanism

The Strategy establishes the essential benchmarks for evaluating the level of achievement of its objectives. Monitoring of the ANACEC Strategy

implementation process is carried out permanently and continuously by monitoring the implementation of the entity's annual activity plans. For implementation of the ANACEC Strategy 2025–2029, the following monitoring procedures will be carried out:

1. Annual monitoring will be conducted by the Governing Board of ANACEC (GB) and the Ministry of Education and Research. Annual development reports on Strategy implementation will be issued as a result of:

- Implementation of the activity plans of the institution's subdivisions and its annual plan;
- Monitoring indicators collected by the institution concerning quality culture assurance in technical vocational education, higher education, adult vocational education and training, and organizations in research and innovation;
- Reports of the institution's subdivisions.

2. Quarterly and annual reports will include an analysis of the level of aspects arising from Strategy implementation; their compliance with annual activity plans; identification of reasons for delays and changes aimed at improving implementation of the general objectives; and a retrospective of the evolution of evaluation indicators included in the ANACEC Strategy, including those related to risk management. These elements will serve as a basis for developing recommendations to improve the institution's activity and the system as a whole.

4. Implementation risks

Identifying and assessing risks, as well as making decisions regarding actions necessary to mitigate or eliminate them, are essential elements of the Strategy implementation process. In this regard, and in the context of implementing the previous strategy, the following possible risks were identified in implementing the ANACEC Strategy 2025–2029:

- Limited organizational and operational independence of the institution;
- Frequent restructurings that may cause instability and lack of continuity in ANACEC's activity;

- Reduction or delay of budget allocations for financing the institution, which may jeopardize achievement of the Strategy's general and specific objectives;
- Deficiencies in the recruitment/employment/motivation system for human resources, which may hinder the recruitment of qualified staff and lead to reduced institutional capacities.

5. Evaluation of Strategy implementation

Evaluation of the ANACEC Strategy implementation process is carried out both quantitatively and qualitatively, through the preparation of quarterly and annual activity reports.

The quarterly and annual ANACEC activity reports will include a retrospective of all results achieved across all dimensions of the institution's activity.

In 2026, upon completion of the first stage of the ANACEC Strategy, an interim evaluation report will be prepared. Criteria such as performance, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the ANACEC Strategy implementation will be taken into account. Thus, following the first stage evaluation, developments across various dimensions will be considered against the established intermediate indicators, and recommendations may be made to adapt the final indicators according to progress achieved and national and international trends in quality assurance in education and research.

In 2029, upon completion of the implementation of the ANACEC Strategy, a final evaluation report will be prepared with the contribution of all institutional subdivisions. The final report will be published on the website www.anacec.md by 31 January of the following year.