



STRATEGIC PLAN

2015 - 2019

UPDATED VERSION MAY 2019



### *Areas of activity*

AVEPRO's strategic plan for 2015-2019 focuses on the consolidation of its achievements in the previous years of activity, seeking, where possible, to improve upon the organization, management and realization of its evaluation activities. The following Strategic Plan is proposed in relation to suggested improvements regarding the Agency's staff.

In general terms, the strategic items upon which the 2015-2019 plan is based are:

- ✓ The Agency's organization and governance
- ✓ Strengthening self-evaluation structures and procedures (internal evaluations) in Ecclesiastical Faculties/Institutions
- ✓ Optimization of external evaluation procedures and modes of performance, acting above all on the identification, selection and training of experts
- ✓ Organization of evaluation cycles on a national basis
- ✓ Communications and institutional relations

Each item will have its own general and specific goals and objectives, which will be pursued through ad hoc activities and projects.



## UPDATES MAY 2019

In general terms, AVEPRO is seeking to respect its own Strategic Plan from the points of view of both the goals set and deadlines. Constant monitoring makes it possible to calibrate activities so that the Agency remains on the right track.

### **1. AVEPRO Organization and Governance**

AVEPRO can consider itself an acknowledged and stable organization. Its Statute has been revised, also in the light of the first years of experience, and approved. One member of staff has been employed with a full-time permanent contract and efforts are being made to increase the number of staff in order to ensure the realization of and an increase in activities, while maintaining high standards and seeking to improve where possible.

► Point 1 of the Strategic Plan has been substantially complied with, while point 1.1 (Ensure the structure and organization of AVEPRO are sufficient to achieve its goal) will continue throughout next years.

### **2. Strengthening self-evaluation structures and procedures (internal evaluations) in Higher Education Institutions**

Following the approval of the new ESG and the publication of the Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis gaudium* AVEPRO is reviewing its own guidelines, linking the evaluation process with the Strategic Planning of Ecclesiastic Academic Institutions (as requested by the Institutions themselves).

► Point 2 has been substantially complied with.

### **3. Optimization of external evaluation procedures and modes of performance**

The issue of external evaluation has also been brought to the fore, due to a desire to bring the AVEPRO guidelines in line with those of the ESG 2015. Despite having sought inspiration from the EQAREP project, the Agency is encountering problems with the standardization of reports. The new guidelines offer a model evaluation report and the Agency will send a form in word format to the external evaluation commission with the aim of overcoming this problem.

This issue, together with the training of experts, will have to be dealt with by the Scientific Council as soon as it takes office. Also in this area efforts will be made to provide alternative solutions, taking inspiration from the policies, processes and forms used by other Agencies belonging to ENQA.

► Point 3 of the Strategic Plan has been substantially complied with.

### **4. Organization of evaluation cycles on a national basis**

The organization of evaluation cycles on a national/regional basis has proven a satisfactory model. The Agency has collaborated with the Spanish Episcopal Conference in order to facilitate the



evaluation of Spanish Faculties. A similar situation will hopefully arise soon with Poland: meetings have already been held with the head of the local Episcopal Conference and it is hoped that PKA, the national accreditation agency, will also be involved. It must be emphasised that each situation presents different and specific needs, to which AVEPRO seeks to respond. In certain countries it is decidedly more complicated to launch the process: this can lead to delays and probably means that the length of the evaluation cycle will need to be reviewed, prolonging it from 5 to 6 or 7 years, as already established in other European countries (e.g. Norway).

➤ Point 4 of the Strategic Plan has been substantially complied with. As indicated by the Board in May 2015, points 4.9 (Evaluation of a non-European Ecclesiastical Institution) and 4.10 (Evaluation of a Catholic University) have been postponed. Moreover, as indicated in *Veritatis gaudium*, the academic Ecclesiastical institution will be engaged in drafting their statutes according to the new norms within December 2019. The Congregation for Catholic Education has proposed to AVEPRO to postpone the evaluations outside Europe and with Catholic Universities after the approval of the new Statutes of the Institutions.

## **5. Communication and institutional relations**

Despite its best efforts, this is another area in which AVEPRO must strengthen its activities. The management of the website in 5 languages provides opportunities but generates complications. The Agency produces analysis papers and should probably find a way to disseminate and publicize them better.

➤ In line with the above, a probable re-consideration of the web site and the whole structure of communication of the Agency will be analysed during the upcoming self-evaluation of the Agency aimed at reconfirming ENQA full membership.

### 1. AVEPRO ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

	YEAR		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019	
	SEMESTER		1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>								
1.1 Ensure the structure and organization of AVEPRO are sufficient to achieve its goals and objectives (on the basis of ENQA recommendations and AVEPRO reports)												
1.2 Establish respective positioning between AVEPRO and national QA agencies												
1.3 Prepare a new SER in order to: 1) confirm full membership of ENQA 2) face CCE quinquennial supervision of AVEPRO												
1.4 Update/Revision of the Statutes												

### 2. STRENGTHENING SELF-EVALUATION STRUCTURES AND PROCEDURES (INTERNAL EVALUATIONS) IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

	YEAR		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019	
	SEMESTER		1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>								
2.1 Support the development of the Self-Evaluation process												
2.2 Update of support and training												
2.3 Review of guidelines (ESG 2015)												
2.4 Follow-up and monitoring of effectiveness												

### 3. OPTIMIZATION OF EXTERNAL EVALUATION PROCEDURES AND MODES OF PERFORMANCE

	YEAR		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019	
	SEMESTER		1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>								
3.1 Development of supporting documentation												
3.2 Review of guidelines (ESG 2015)												
3.3 Redefinition of the “role of experts”												
3.4 Standardization of Site Visit Reports												
3.5 Follow-up and monitoring												

#### 4. ORGANIZATION OF EVALUATION CYCLES ON A NATIONAL BASIS

	YEAR		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019	
	SEMESTER		1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>								
4.1 Define, in agreement with the CCE, in which countries it may be of interest to carry out evaluations in the coming years			█				█					
4.2 Set up of the first evaluation cycle in Spain			█	█	█							
4.3 Set up of the first evaluation cycle in: Slovakia, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia and Portugal					█	█	█					
4.4 Set up of the first evaluation cycle in Poland					█	█	█					
4.5 Set up of the first evaluation cycle in: Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Malta and Austria							█	█				
4.6 Set up of the second evaluation cycle in Lithuania											█	
4.7 Set up of the second evaluation cycle in France									█			
4.8 Set up of the second evaluation cycle in Italy												█
4.9 Evaluation of non-European Ecclesiastic Institutions									█	█		
4.10 Evaluation of Catholic Universities									█	█		

#### 5. COMMUNICATION AND INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

	YEAR		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019	
	SEMESTER		1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>								
5.1 Keep the website up to date			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
5.2 Provide information to all stakeholders on AVEPRO's activities and operations			█		█		█		█		█	
5.3 Publications: key studies, national overviews, case studies etc.				█		█		█		█		█
5.4 Participation in international events			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
5.5 Organization of seminars to spread good practice and share fruitful experiences				█		█						█



## ➤ *Goals and objectives*

### **1. AVEPRO organization and governance**

#### 1.1 *Ensure the structure and organization of AVEPRO are sufficient to achieve its goals and objectives*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Define and revise the number, skills and profiles of the workforce;
- ✓ Request a new organizational chart from the Secretariat of State and the Secretariat for the Economy;
- ✓ Deliver the two reports (on resources and other recommendations) requested by ENQA (January 2015 and January 2016);
- ✓ Update and revise the Statutes;
- ✓ Define and conduct an evaluation of the Agency;
- ✓ Carry out an evaluation of the staff;
- ✓ Define a training path for the staff;
- ✓ Budget submitted by 15 September each year.

#### 1.2 *Establish respective positioning between AVEPRO and national/regional QA agencies*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Establish the framework for relations between AVEPRO and national QA agencies;
- ✓ Develop a protocol for possible collaboration (*ad hoc* evaluation or national level evaluation);
- ✓ Utilization of ENQA full membership for negotiating agreement;
- ✓ EQAR full membership as a facilitating tool;
- ✓ Define an agreement with AKAST;
- ✓ Attend national and international meetings of the EUA, ENQA, INQAAHE etc., to establish relations with other agencies;
- ✓ Collect data on national accreditation agencies and quality agencies and on requirements in the various countries;
- ✓ Evaluate the feasibility of the “AVEPRO Regional Branches” model.

#### 1.3 *Prepare a new SER to:*

- 1) *confirm full membership of ENQA*
- 2) *face CCE quinquennial supervision of AVEPRO*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Define a precise improvement plan for the Agency following the recommendations of the ENQA review report;
- ✓ Define the priorities and actions to be taken with the CCE and AVEPRO’s governing bodies;
- ✓ Critically evaluate the cost and benefits of full membership of ENQA;
- ✓ Application for full membership of ENQA;



- ✓ Critically evaluate the cost and benefits of EQAR membership (if applicable);
- ✓ Possible application for full membership of EQAR.

#### 1.4 *Update/Revision of the Statutes*

##### *Action items:*

- ✓ Develop a proposal for the revision of the Statute;
- ✓ Discuss the proposal before submitting it to the Commission established by the Secretariat of State.

## **2. Strengthening self-evaluation structures and procedures (internal evaluations) in Higher Education Institutions**

#### 2.1 *Support the development of the Self-Evaluation process*

##### *Action items:*

- ✓ Set down a possible schedule for an internal review cycle;
- ✓ Promote the establishment of a Quality Officer/function in each Institution/Faculty.

#### 2.2 *Update of support and training*

##### *Action items:*

- ✓ Organization of training seminars for Institutions on a national/regional basis;
- ✓ Update advisory documents aimed at Institutions (e.g. questionnaires, guidelines);
- ✓ Development of new guidelines in the following areas:
  - a) strategic planning
  - b) PhDs in the context of European Higher Education
  - c) internationalization.

#### 2.3 *Revision of guidelines (ESG 2015)*

##### *Action items:*

- ✓ Once the revised version of the ESG has been published, organization of a working group aimed at “translating” the new approach of the ESG into updated guidelines for the Ecclesiastical Higher Education System;
- ✓ Organization of informative meetings with other QA Agencies in order to stimulate cooperation regarding the redrafting of operational guidelines for Higher Education Institutions;
- ✓ Organization of informative seminars aimed at illustrating the updated version of the guidelines.

#### 2.4 *Follow-up and monitoring of effectiveness*

##### *Action items:*

- ✓ Define procedures for follow-up and monitoring as part of the guidelines for internal quality assurance, to include an annual report on quality activities from each Institution (1-3 pages depending on institutional size).



### **3. Optimization of external evaluation procedures and modes of performance**

#### *3.1 Development of supporting documentation*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Update the documentation created to explain the external review process.

#### *3.2 Revision of guidelines (ESG 2015)*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Once the revised version of the ESG has been published, organization of a working group aimed at “translating” the new approach of the ESG into updated guidelines for external evaluation in the framework of the Ecclesiastical Higher Education System;
- ✓ Organization of informative seminars for the Institutions, to illustrate the updated version of the guidelines.

#### *3.3 Redefinition of the “role of experts” in the framework of AVEPRO evaluation procedures*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Definition of a “model” for the “external review panel”;
- ✓ Update and broaden the register/database of external peer reviewers;
- ✓ Simplify procedures for the appointment of experts;
- ✓ Organization of training seminars for experts.

#### *3.4 Standardization of Site Visit Reports*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Redefinition of a model and a format for the External review Report (in the light of the new version of the ESG);
- ✓ Redefinition of a model and a format for the Quality Improvement Plan (in the light of the new version of the ESG).

#### *3.5 Follow-up and monitoring*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Development of a standardized procedure for the preparation of the Quality Improvement Plans;
- ✓ Elaboration of model and a format for QIPs;
- ✓ Development of a procedure aimed at monitoring the implementation of QIPs.

### **4. Organization of evaluation cycles on a national basis**

#### *4.1 Define, in agreement with the CCE, in which countries it may be of interest to carry out evaluations in the coming years*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Development of a detailed activity plan;
- ✓ Communication of the plan to local stakeholders (Episcopal Conferences, Institutions,



National QA Agencies);

- ✓ Define a specific plan of action for informative seminars (when necessary) in specific countries;
- ✓ Send a notice from the CCE and AVEPRO to all Institutions present in the countries selected, providing the information necessary to prepare for evaluations.

#### 4.2 *Set up of the first evaluation cycle in Spain*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Realization of the Self-Evaluation procedure;
- ✓ Realization of the external evaluation;
- ✓ Follow up and Quality Improvement Plans.

#### 4.3 *Set up of the first evaluation cycle in: Slovakia, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, Bosnia Herzegovina, Portugal and Croatia*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Realization of the Self-Evaluation procedure;
- ✓ Realization of the external evaluation;
- ✓ Follow up and Quality Improvement Plans.

#### 4.4 *Set up of the first evaluation cycle in Poland*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Realization of the Self-Evaluation procedure;
- ✓ Realization of the external evaluation;
- ✓ Follow up and Quality Improvement Plans.

#### 4.5 *Set up of the first evaluation cycle in: Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Malta and Austria*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Realization of the Self-Evaluation procedure;
- ✓ Realization of the external evaluation;
- ✓ Follow up and Quality Improvement Plans.

#### 4.6 *Set up of the second evaluation cycle in Lithuania*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Realization of the Self-Evaluation procedure;
- ✓ Realization of the external evaluation;
- ✓ Follow up and Quality Improvement Plans.

#### 4.7 *Set up of the second evaluation cycle in France*

*Action items:*



- ✓ Realization of the Self-Evaluation procedure;
- ✓ Realization of the external evaluation;
- ✓ Follow up and Quality Improvement Plans.

#### 4.8 *Set up of the second evaluation cycle in Italy and Ireland*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Realization of the Self-Evaluation procedure;
- ✓ Realization of the external evaluation;
- ✓ Follow up and Quality Improvement Plans.

#### 4.9 *Evaluation of non-European Ecclesiastic Institutions*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Realization of a pilot project with Ecclesiastical Faculties located outside Europe.

#### 4.10 *Evaluation of Catholic Universities*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Realization of a pilot project with Catholic Universities located in Europe.

### **5. Communication and institutional relations**

#### 5.1 *Keep the website up to date*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Update the news and documentation on the website, translating (where possible) the texts into the five languages.

#### 5.2 *Provide information to all stakeholders on AVEPRO's activities and operations*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Publish the Strategic Plan on the website;
- ✓ Organize ad hoc seminars and/or conferences.

#### 5.3 *Publications: key studies, national overviews, case studies etc.*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Realization of a study aimed at monitoring the effectiveness of the AVEPRO guidelines and tools for evaluation procedures;
- ✓ Realization of national/regional reports on the “state of the art of QA in Ecclesiastical Institutions.”

#### 5.4 *Participation in international events*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Attend national and international meetings of the EUA, ENQA, INQAAHE and other



national/international bodies.

*5.5 Organization of seminars to spread good practice and share fruitful experiences*

*Action items:*

- ✓ Organization of a seminar aimed at fostering AVEPRO activities.



## ➤ Risk Analysis

### *Items for consideration*

- Failure to update and strengthen resources (both human and financial) on the part of the Holy See
- Higher Education Institutions perceive AVEPRO's work as a centralized or a bureaucratic exercise
- The cultural and linguistic diversity across the Higher Education Institutions
- Limited or absent relations of cooperation with national QA Agencies
- Excess of requests (from the Institutions or other stakeholders) to deal with national or regional "specificities"
- Limited respect for the guidelines and procedures suggested by AVEPRO on the part of the Academic Institutions
- Quality offices and committees not established within the Institutions
- Inadequate organization and effective attribution of an adequate role (also in terms of governance) to Quality offices
- Difficulty of finding experts willing to carry out an onerous, demanding and responsibility-laden task free of charge
- Not complete "adherence" to the guidelines and procedures suggested by AVEPRO and lack of homogeneity among the Evaluation Teams
- Not complete "adherence" to the guidelines and procedures suggested by AVEPRO and lack of homogeneity among the Self-Evaluation Reports
- Lack of international presence and participation in conferences/events
- Website data and contents (in five languages) not up to date



## ➤ **Action Plan**

### *Items for consideration*

#### ➤ ***AVEPRO organization and governance***

- a) *Awareness-building interventions* regarding competent structures with the aim of strengthening AVEPRO's resources in line with the recommendations put forward by the ENQA commission and reiterated in the report sent to ENQA in January 2015
- b) *Flexibility of the approach to evaluation and instruments*: The higher education system also needs to be analyzed on the basis of linguistic and territorial "clusters" (e.g. academic quality in the Roman Institutions).
- c) *Support for Projects*: Support should be provided for Institutions intending to expand their activities in "peripheral areas" of the usual activity of an Ecclesiastical academic structure (fundraising, distance courses, inter- and multi-disciplinarity, etc.).

#### ➤ ***Strengthening self-evaluation structures and procedures (internal evaluations) in Higher Education Institutions***

- d) *Process dynamics*: evaluation does not end with the visit, but continues with the definition of the QIP and especially with the internalization of resources, competences and people who act within the Institution to reinforce the Quality culture.
- e) *Participation*: The role of participation in the preparation of the SER should be emphasized, as well as the importance of creating a stable Quality Team within the academic Institution.
- f) *SWOT analysis*: the role and importance of the SWOT analysis needs to be insisted upon in order to permit meta-analysis at the system level (the examples of financial fragility, shrinking numbers of students and the growing numbers of non-permanent teaching staff in the Ecclesiastical Academic Institutions are emblematic: if this is a systemic trend, what measures can be taken?). All the Institutional activities should be evaluated (research, degree courses, Doctorates, participation in international projects) as well as organization, governance, resources, decision making process, structures etc.

#### ➤ ***Optimization of external evaluation procedures and modes of performance***

- g) *Documentation and formats for External Evaluation*: the "recommendations" and "observations" provided by the Teams need to be more visible and easily identifiable. This should also facilitate a process of *Standardization of External Evaluation Reports*.
- h) *Single method for the preparation of Reports*: the languages in which the reports are written should gradually be limited to Italian and English.
- i) *Subject of evaluation*: The evaluation of degree courses needs to be included as a decisive component of evaluation.
- j) *Evaluation process and site visit*: Greater attention needs to be paid by the Evaluation Teams to the procedures effectively implemented by the Institutions and the processes launched.
- k) *Training of experts*: Training needs to be increased for experts, including ad hoc meetings on territorial/linguistic bases.



➤ ***Organization of evaluation cycles on a national basis***

- l) *Definition of actions to be realized in different countries, according to the number and presence of Ecclesiastical Institutions.*
- m) *Attempt to establish constant cooperation with the local Episcopal Conferences (and, where necessary, the Nunciatures).*
- n) *Preparation of support materials for possible “national contact points”, which would have the task of combining the needs of the Academic Institutions and of AVEPRO, as well as providing logistic and networking support for the organization of informative and training events.*
- o) *Cooperation from all local stakeholders in order to identify competent professionals capable of fulfilling the role of experts on the AVEPRO-appointed Evaluation Teams.*

➤ ***Information and Communication***

- p) *Clarification of the reasons why Academic Institutions are required to undergo the evaluation process: the origin and reasons behind the whole evaluation process need to be remembered, also highlighting that it is an expression of a political will on the part of the Holy See in relation to a whole series of activities, processes and procedures to be realized in the context of higher education.*
- q) *Boost AVEPRO’s presence at international meetings and events organized both by associations and bodies that represent QA Agencies and by Academic Institutions.*