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STRATEGY

AGENCY FOR SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

2010 - 2014



agency for science and higher education



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Zagreb, April 2010



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Foreword by the ASHE Director

Ever since its establishment ASHE has actively participated in a wide range of interventions aimed at changes and reforms in the field of quality assurance in science and higher education. One of the most demanding tasks was to help stakeholders in the system of science and higher education to understand the importance of quality assurance and demonstrate their ability to act professionally and independently towards inciting changes. In order to better respond to these challenges, ASHE has devoted itself to professional development by learning from the European and global examples of best practice and its own experience in quality assurance procedures, regardless of the previously unsuitable legal framework and low public recognition. Today, ASHE is a fully independent organization working for the public interest, recognized in the Croatian higher education system. Our task is to implement various procedures of external quality evaluation of higher education and science, to continuously educate and provide training for quality assurance experts and to counsel higher education institutions and scientific organizations in improving the quality of their activities.

In this, it has been crucial to identify the needs of all stakeholders by developing highly efficient communication and fostering development of quality assurance mechanisms.

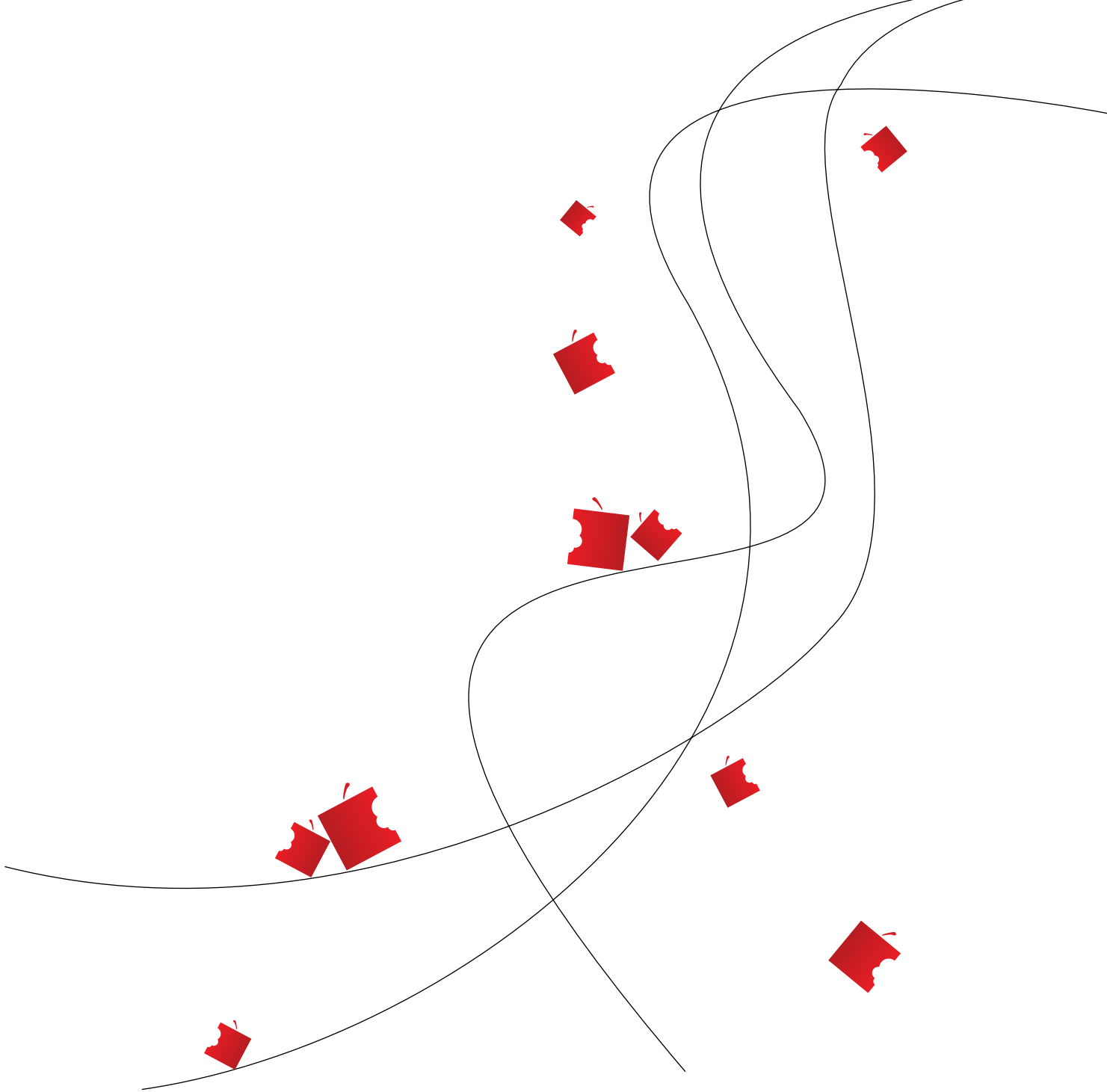
Since its establishment, ASHE has been focused on justifying the public trust. This prompted us to include all stakeholders, especially students, in our decision-making bodies. In 2009 we also included representatives of civil society, as well as business community, with the aim of inciting changes in the functioning of public services.

In front of you is the strategic document for the 2010 – 2014 period, which is a product of joint efforts of the complete ASHE staff, and especially those in charge of the specific areas and changes introduced by the 2009 Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education which regulates quality assurance in science and higher education, as well as ASHE competences. Since we are about to finalize the reforms connected with the harmonization of Croatian higher education with the European, we seek to enhance cooperation with similar agencies in Europe and the United States, as well as contribute to strengthening of the European dimension of quality assurance.

In the coming five-year period we are fully prepared to face all challenges which can arise in achieving the set goals.



Professor Jasmina Havranek, PhD
ASHE Director



Current situation in the ASHE surroundings

Globalization brought about a number of changes which increased the impact of the economy and the market on higher education, while diminishing the importance of the state. During the past decade the Republic of Croatia has worked intensely on implementing reforms related to harmonization with the principles of the Bologna Declaration, primarily aimed at achieving recognition within the European Higher Education Area. The reforms include introduction of the 3-2-3 study cycles and establishment of quality assurance systems at higher education institutions, which is an important factor of comparability of study programs in the European Higher Education Area as well as student and teacher mobility. All study programs were restructured in line with the Bologna principles, and the revision of the study programs is under way.

The Republic of Croatia in 2007 launched the development of the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CQF) which will, among other things, facilitate employability and individual personal development. The importance of CQF is reflected in improving links of study programs with the needs of the labour market, as well as enhanced defining of learning outcomes. In 2010 the Republic of Croatia enters the phase of establishing the institutional basis for implementation of the CQF and adopting proposal of standards of all qualifications received in the Republic of Croatia.

ASHE also fosters the transformation of Croatian science and its recognition within the European Research Area - ERA.

The Bologna process in Europe initiated the establishment of national quality assurance agencies. Upon joining the Bologna process, the Government of the Republic of Croatia established the Agency for Science and Higher Education, registered with the Zagreb Commercial Court on March 8th 2005.

Globally, quality assurance agencies constantly face new challenges and demands. The need to foster dialogue and quality development within the European Higher Education Area was behind the establishment of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ENQA – and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education – EQAR – both tasked with promoting cooperation among agencies and providing guarantees for the quality of their work.

In the reforms aimed at harmonizing Croatian higher education and science with the Bologna principles, ASHE cooperates with other stakeholders in higher education and science, primarily higher education institutions, scientific organizations, Rectors' Conference, Council of Universities and University Colleges of Applied Sciences, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Student Council, National Council for Higher Education, National Council for Science and the National Foundation for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development of the Republic of Croatia.

With numerous positive changes, there was also a negative side to the reform, primarily the inflation of higher education institutions and their study programs. The legal framework enabled the reform to be carried out very quickly, but it failed to define the processes and roles of all stakeholders in quality improvement. In order to promote Croatian higher education as a driver of social development, it is crucial that higher education institutions continually work on improving the quality of existing higher education programs. This gave rise to the need to externally assess study programs, higher education institutions and all scientific activities using objective and clear criteria, as well as develop internal quality improvement and assurance systems which would enable higher education institutions and scientific organizations to assume responsibility for the development of quality culture. Changes in the legal framework while reforms were carried out enabled their further implementation, fostered the quality of reforms and regulated the roles of stakeholders in the Croatian quality assurance system in higher education and science:

- Higher education institutions and scientific organizations are responsible for efficiency and implementation of quality outcomes of educational and research activities. With this in mind public universities have been trusted with self-accreditation of their study programs;
- National Councils, the highest expert bodies in the state, assumed a strategic role and were tasked with the creation of national strategies and policies for higher education and science and development of national academic standards;
- National Foundation for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development of the Republic of Croatia is responsible for evaluating research projects, among other things;
- Rectors' Conference is the decision-making body in issues of common interest for the activities and development of universities in the Republic of Croatia;
- Student Council is the coordinating body promoting the interests of students.

All stakeholders in higher education and science are expected to work in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area – ESG, developed by the E4 group (ENQA - European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, EUA - European University Association, ESU - European Students' Union and EURASHE - European Association of Institutions in Higher Education).

About ASHE

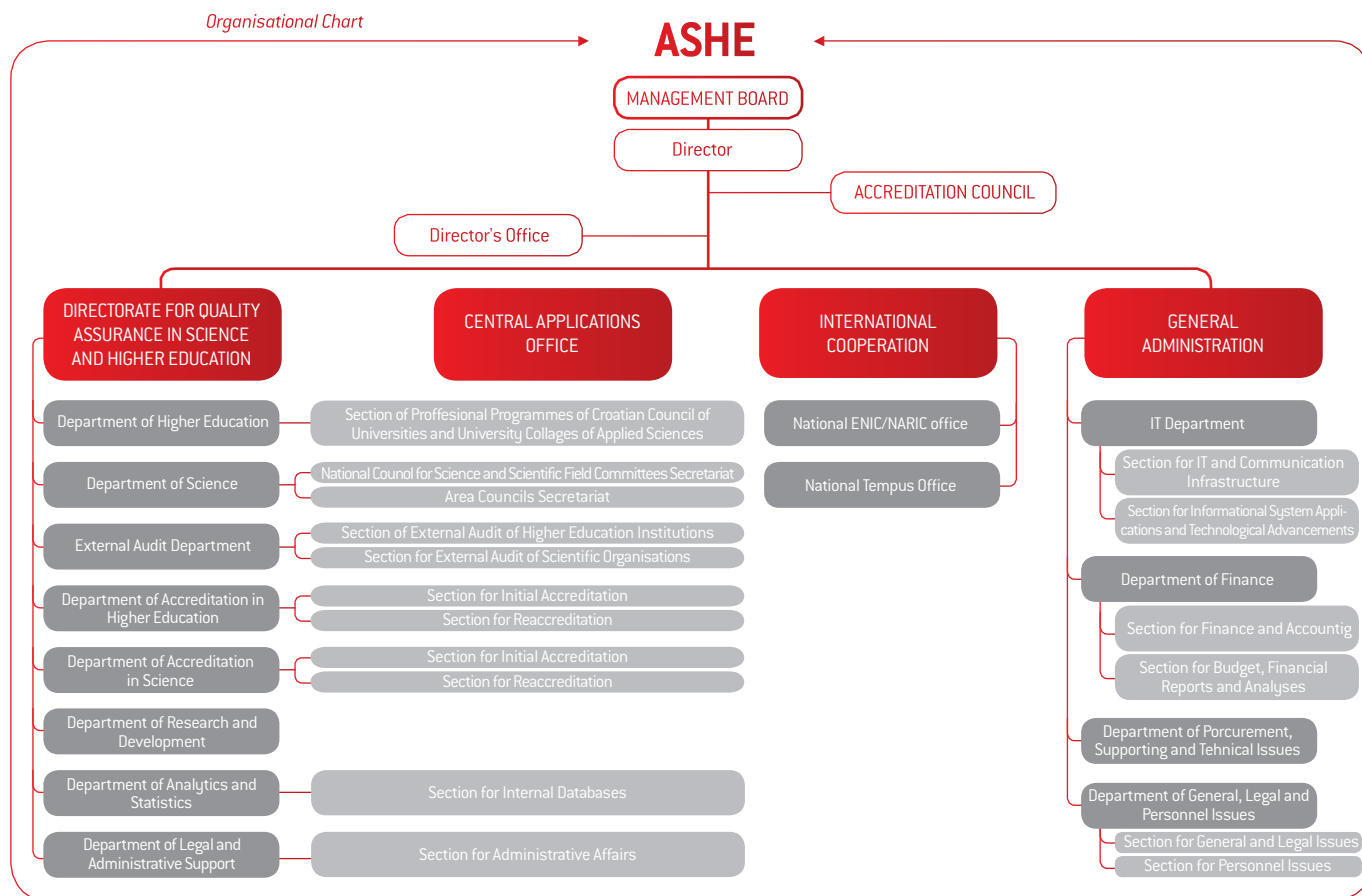
Internal organisation

ASHE bodies are: the Management Board, Director and the Accreditation Council.

Management Board supervises the work of ASHE and reaches decisions pertaining to its activities.

Accreditation Council is an expert body that issues documents regarding evaluation procedures, as well as final decisions on quality of higher education institutions and scientific organisations.

Both bodies comprise representatives of all stakeholders in higher education and science, including students. For the purpose of greater transparency, Accreditation Council also comprises representatives of civil society organisations from the area of higher education and science.



Activities of ASHE

The Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education (Official Gazette 45/09) redefined ASHE's responsibilities and established its independent status.

The responsibilities of ASHE include:

- Initial accreditation
- Re-accreditation
- Thematic evaluation
- External audit
- Recognition of foreign higher education qualifications
- Activities related to integration and cooperation with international associations and networks in the area of quality assurance in higher education and science
- Collecting and processing the data on the system of higher education and science
- Integrating information on requirements for enrolment to higher education institutions
- Providing information on requirements for enrolment to Croatian higher education institutions, and information on the system of higher education and science.

Activities of ASHE are further regulated by the Statute and other general legal acts, in accordance with the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education, and other regulations.

For the time being, ASHE is financed from the state budget and is a beneficiary of the EU pre-accession funds. The ASHE Statute allows for a possibility of self-financing.

SWOT analysis

In order to better respond to trends, ASHE drafted a SWOT analysis that served as a base for establishing the strategic goals and related activities.

STRENGTHS

Employees competences
Lifelong learning of employees and anticipating trends
Independence
Participation of stakeholders in ASHE activities
Efforts towards public awareness
Improvement of quality assurance procedures
Educational role of ASHE
Development of NISVOZ
System wide analyses
Cooperation with other agencies

WEAKNESSES

Infrastructure (lack of space)
Inaccurate public perception of ASHE (as an administrative/ control body)
Internal communication
Associate status in ENQA
Inadequate regional positioning

OPPORTUNITIES

Creation of the Croatian Qualifications Framework
New legislation that opens up new opportunities (with regard to ASHE's activities)
Growing student awareness of their role as stakeholders (activities, responsibilities)
Support of government bodies
Growing awareness of the importance of quality assurance in higher education and science
Becoming a full member of the EU
Analysis and revision of the Bologna process on national level

THREATS

Flawed public perception of ASHE (and state agencies in general)
Adverse economic situation
Lack of national standards
Small academic community (possibility of conflicts of interest)
Poor motivation of other stakeholders (resistance to changes, insufficient cooperation and exchange of experience)
Inadequate recognisability of Croatian science and higher education
Inadequate and insufficient information on the higher education and science system

SWOT analysis lists ASHE's strengths and weaknesses, as well as threats and opportunities from its surroundings.

ASHE continues with efforts to eliminate all deficiencies shown in the SWOT analysis.

By implementing this Strategy, our aim is to reduce or remove listed threats, overcome weaknesses we can influence, foster and enhance our strengths and take advantage of the opportunities that arise.

Mission, purpose, vision and values

MISSION

ASHE mission is to continuously support quality improvement of science and higher education, by applying European and international best practices.

VISION

The quality of Croatian higher education and science is recognized and acknowledged in the international context.

Through continued improvement of quality culture and participation in the development of science and higher education, ASHE contributes to achieving global competitiveness of Croatian higher education and science.

PURPOSE

In order to achieve its mission, ASHE cooperates closely with higher education institutions, scientific organisations and other stakeholders in higher education and science, on:

- quality improvement of higher education and science, as well as opportunities to acquire specific educational levels
- dissemination of reliable information on the quality of academic standards to students, higher education institutions' management and the public
- comparing the achieved standards and quality levels with the quality and standards of similar institutions in the country and EU
- active trend following
- developing the quality culture in higher education and science.

VALUES

ASHE fosters the following values in its work:

reliability - ASHE employees perform their tasks independently, objectively, fairly and honestly, and make evidence-based judgements and decisions

professionalism - ASHE strives to reach high professional standards in its work

accountability - ASHE is accountable for its work to the society as a whole

flexibility - ASHE adapts easily to the needs of stakeholders and trends in higher education and science in order to respond to all the challenges which support the diversification of higher education institutions and scientific organisations

cooperation - ASHE encourages mutual cooperation of all employees in common problem solving and responding to challenges arising from the introduction of new activities

openness - demonstrated through the transparency of ASHE work and building the trust of users of ASHE services. ASHE publishes the results of its work online and in print (brochures, reports, analyses).

Goals

LONG-TERM:

- actively participate in the development of higher education quality policies in the Republic of Croatia and improve the national quality assurance guidelines
- actively participate in assuring and improving the quality of higher education and science in the Republic of Croatia
- develop the quality culture in higher education and science
- establish the national network of quality assurance systems in higher education and science
- connect the national network for quality assurance in higher education with the international networks (ENQA, INQAAHE)
- develop and further the cooperation with similar agencies in Europe and globally.

SHORT-TERM:

- build a flexible organization, well-equipped to respond to all external changes
- be admitted into ENQA
- be admitted into EQAR.

Positioning

In the following period ASHE will develop its activities of quality assessment in science and higher education in order to become an equal and reliable partner to other stakeholders. At the same time it will continue its cooperation with similar agencies in the European Union and actively strive to become a regional leader in its field.

ASHE has established several priorities:

- to be recognized by its surroundings as a reliable partner to all stakeholders in higher education and science;
- to implement the results of its experience and good practices and to disseminate them to other stakeholders in higher education and science;
- to continuously improve cooperation with other stakeholders and partners;
- to train its staff in performing analyses and providing expertise necessary to improve higher education and science.

In this document, ASHE presents its mission, vision and goals in order to achieve the established priorities. With this in view, we included a detailed presentation of the main activities to be implemented in the following period to achieve each of the goals. We have also included monitoring mechanisms the purpose of which is to determine the efficiency of each activity in achieving the set goals and objectives, and consequently in accomplishing the ASHE mission.

Organizational culture

Special attention was given to development of the internal quality culture, at the institutional as well as the individual level. We believe that it is possible to improve the organizational culture by promoting individual initiative and contribution of creative ideas aimed at developing new shared attitudes. By fostering awareness on the outcomes of individual activities and the need to monitor the aggregate outcomes of all ASHE activities, it is possible to achieve readiness to adapt to changes and improvements. Communication within ASHE is constantly improved by involving increased numbers of employees in joint projects, both within and outside of ASHE. The strategy was designed to encompass the needs of the whole organization oriented towards the quality of the output. Aware of the risks posed by the ASHE surroundings, the management encourages employees to identify them and neutralize their influence on the ASHE activities.

Strategic plan

This part of the ASHE strategy elaborates the general objectives in achieving the ASHE mission and vision until 2014.

The general objectives are divided into objectives with accompanying activities, indicators and monitoring mechanisms.

General objectives

I. ASSURING AND DEVELOPING THE QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Setting the strategic objective of quality assurance and development in science and higher education, ASHE plans to achieve long-term goals in creating policies, national guidelines and quality culture in science and higher education in the Republic of Croatia. In relation to this, ASHE finds it particularly relevant to improve its internal quality culture and continue with the development of the National Information System for Science and Higher Education, as well as establish national quality assurance network for the stakeholders.

II. NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RECOGNISABILITY AND RELIABILITY

Within the strategic objective of developing its national and international recognisability and reliability, ASHE seeks to achieve the long-term goals of connecting the national quality assurance network with the international QA networks in higher education, and develop and improve cooperation with similar agencies in Europe and globally. In relation to this, it is particularly important to join ENQA and EQAR as soon as possible, as a part of the continuous effort to enhance the reliability of ASHE.

I. Quality assurance and development of the systems of higher education and science

1.1. ENSURING THAT ALL HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, SCIENTIFIC ORGANISATIONS AND STUDY PROGRAMMES MEET THE MINIMAL QUALITY CRITERIA

Activities:

- initial accreditation on the basis of European and national standards
- reaccreditation on the basis of European and national standards.

Key indicators:

- percentage of positive accreditation recommendations out of the total number of the accreditations carried out.

Monitoring mechanisms:

- system-wide analyses.

1.2. ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, SCIENTIFIC ORGANISATIONS AND STUDY PROGRAMMES

Activities:

- re-accreditation with quality assessment, improvement recommendations and follow-up
- audit
- thematic evaluation.

Key indicators:

- percentage of the issued letters of expectation, out of the total number of the evaluation procedures carried out.
- percentage of the issued certificates of the degree of development of the internal QA system, out of the total number of the audits implemented.
- number of the thematic evaluations carried out, out of the total number of applications for thematic evaluations.

Monitoring mechanisms:

- follow-up procedure for higher education institutions and scientific organisations
- analysis of questionnaires on satisfaction with the evaluation procedure filled out by the HEIs and reviewers
- analysis of reviewers' self-evaluation questionnaires
- analysis of the outcomes of thematic evaluations.

1.3. SUPPORTING THE WORK OF STRATEGIC AND EXPERT BODIES IN SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Activities:

- organization of sessions of strategic and expert bodies in science and higher education
- completion of the procedures of external evaluation of HEIs and study programmes started in accordance with the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education that had been in effect in the field of quality assurance in science and HE before the adoption of the new Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Science.

Key indicators:

- number of sessions held
- number of documents produced (minutes, conclusions, decisions, recommendations)
- number of completed external evaluations of HEIs and study programmes started in accordance with the former legislation.

Monitoring mechanisms:

- analysis of the implementation of the annual plan.

1.4. PROVIDING IT SUPPORT TO KEY BUSINESS PROCESSES IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Activities:

- developing National Information System for Higher Education and Science
- developing IT support to procedures of external QA in science and higher education
- improving the Information System for Applications to Study Programmes
- creating a network of QA units.

Key indicators:

- establishment of a register of study programmes, teachers, students and scientists
- generating statistical reports
- number of study programmes added to the system after the it has been operative for a year
- ratio of QA units established and networked.

Monitoring mechanisms:

- analysis of user and administrators' satisfaction.

1.5. PROVIDING EXPERT SUPPORT AND TRAINING IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Activities:

- system-wide analysis
- expert support to strategic and expert bodies' decision making procedures
- knowledge transfer to stakeholders
- training of foreign experts and their participation in the ASHE activities.

Key indicators:

- number of experts for external QA compared to the annual evaluation plan
- ratio of foreign and national experts participating in the evaluations.

Monitoring mechanisms:

- analysis of the evaluations' user satisfaction questionnaires (filled out by HEIs, reviewers, members of the strategic bodies and other stakeholders)
- analysis of the workshop, seminar and training evaluation sheets, filled out by the participants.

1.6. FOSTERING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Activities:

- development of ranking lists of applicants to study programmes, on the basis of transparent criteria
- collecting and processing data submitted by the applicants not included in the *e-matica* (the information system which contains data on students in Croatian primary and secondary schools)
- disseminating information on study programmes, aimed at assisting students in choosing the right study programme
- improving NISpVU (National Information System for Applications to Higher Education Institutions).

Key indicators:

- number of applications to study programmes compared to the total number of eligible potential applicants
- number of successful applicants compared to the total number of applicants
- number of students leaving a study programme in order to apply for another
- number of applications that required manual data input or data verification.

Monitoring mechanisms:

- analyses of NISpVU data.

1.7. ENCOURAGING ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL MOBILITY

Activities:

- proposing changes and amendments to the legislation in order to make further adjustment to the good European practice
- encourage adoption of bilateral and multilateral agreements in the field of recognition of foreign higher education qualifications
- continuous informing of the public, including all stakeholders, on the ways in which the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications impacts mobility
- publishing information on the national system of higher education in foreign languages
- publishing information on the comparability of foreign higher education levels with Croatian levels of education
- networking in the field of recognition of professional qualifications.

Key indicators:

- number of requests for recognition of foreign higher education qualifications in Croatia
- number of agreements on the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications
- number of inquiries addressed to the National ENIC/NARIC office.

Monitoring mechanisms:

- client satisfaction questionnaires
- statistical analysis of requests for recognition of foreign higher education qualifications
- analysis of networking development
- annual report.

II National and international reputation and credibility of ASHE

2.1. IMPROVING INTERNAL QUALITY CULTURE

2.1.1. Increasing satisfaction of ASHE employees

Activities:

- strengthening interaction and teamwork of ASHE employees
- including employees into decision-making processes at all levels of ASHE
- continuous training of ASHE employees
- improving communication and motivation of employees.

Key indicators:

- employee satisfaction.

Monitoring mechanisms:

- management review in the QMS documents.

2.1.2. Improving the quality management system (QMS) in accordance with ISO 9001:2008

Activities:

- Handbook and all other QMS documents will be adjusted to the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education and its bylaws.

Key indicators:

- number of documents (work instructions, written procedures and forms) compared to procedures of external quality assurance in science and higher education.

Monitoring mechanisms:

- analysis of the coverage of external quality assurance procedures and the completeness grade of the documents
- internal audit report
- external audit report.

2.1.3. Development of the QA system

Activities:

- establishing monitoring mechanisms.

Key indicators:

- number of established monitoring mechanisms compared to the number of ASHE activities.

Monitoring mechanisms:

- analysis of the efficiency of the monitoring mechanisms
- annual report on ASHE activities
- internal audit in accordance with international standards (ESG, etc.)

2.2. FULL MEMBERSHIP IN INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED ORGANISATIONS

(ENQA, EQAR, ECA, ETC.)

Activities:

- drafting of all documents relevant to ASHE activities
- drafting of self-evaluation
- selecting coordinators for ASHE accreditation procedures.

Key indicators:

- full membership.

Monitoring mechanisms:

- external review of the agency (ASHE accreditation).

2.3. STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF ASHE AT THE NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Activities:

- organising national, regional and international conferences, seminars and workshops
- various cooperation agreements
- participation in international projects
- presentations at expert meetings
- exchange of experts
- good practice exchange (visits of experts from other agencies).

Key indicators:

- number of organised national, regional and international conferences, seminars and workshops
- number of cooperation agreements
- number of international projects involving ASHE
- number of foreign experts who participated in ASHE activities.

Monitoring mechanisms:

- analysis of the Agency position.

2.4. PRESERVATION OF THE PUBLIC TRUST IN ASHE

Activities:

- involving civil society organisations into ASHE activities
- involving all stakeholders in science and higher education into ASHE activities
- publishing reports and system-wide analyses and statistics
- regular publication of documents, newsletters, brochures and other information about Agency activities and the system of science and higher education
- strengthening cooperation with the relevant media
- regularly updating and improving ASHE website
- exchanging information with stakeholders, professional and general public
- designing promotional activities aimed at improving ASHE perception among the public.

Key indicators:

- growing dynamics of promotional activities
- ratio of positive vs. negative media reports
- positive public perception of ASHE.

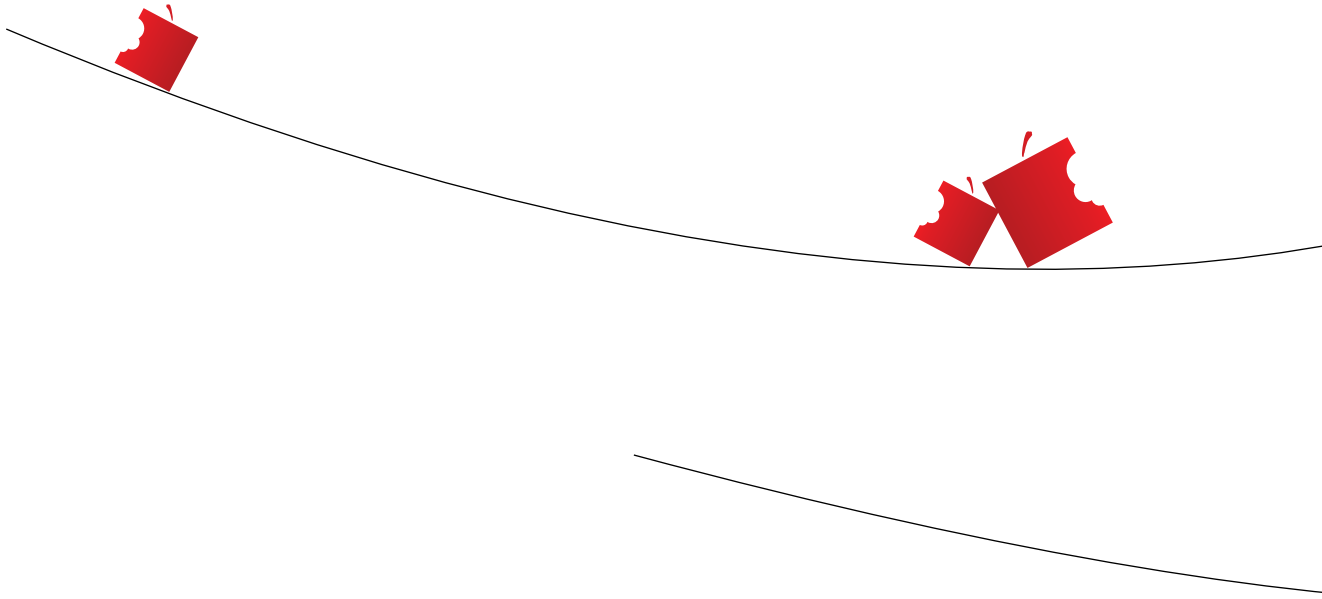
Monitoring mechanisms:

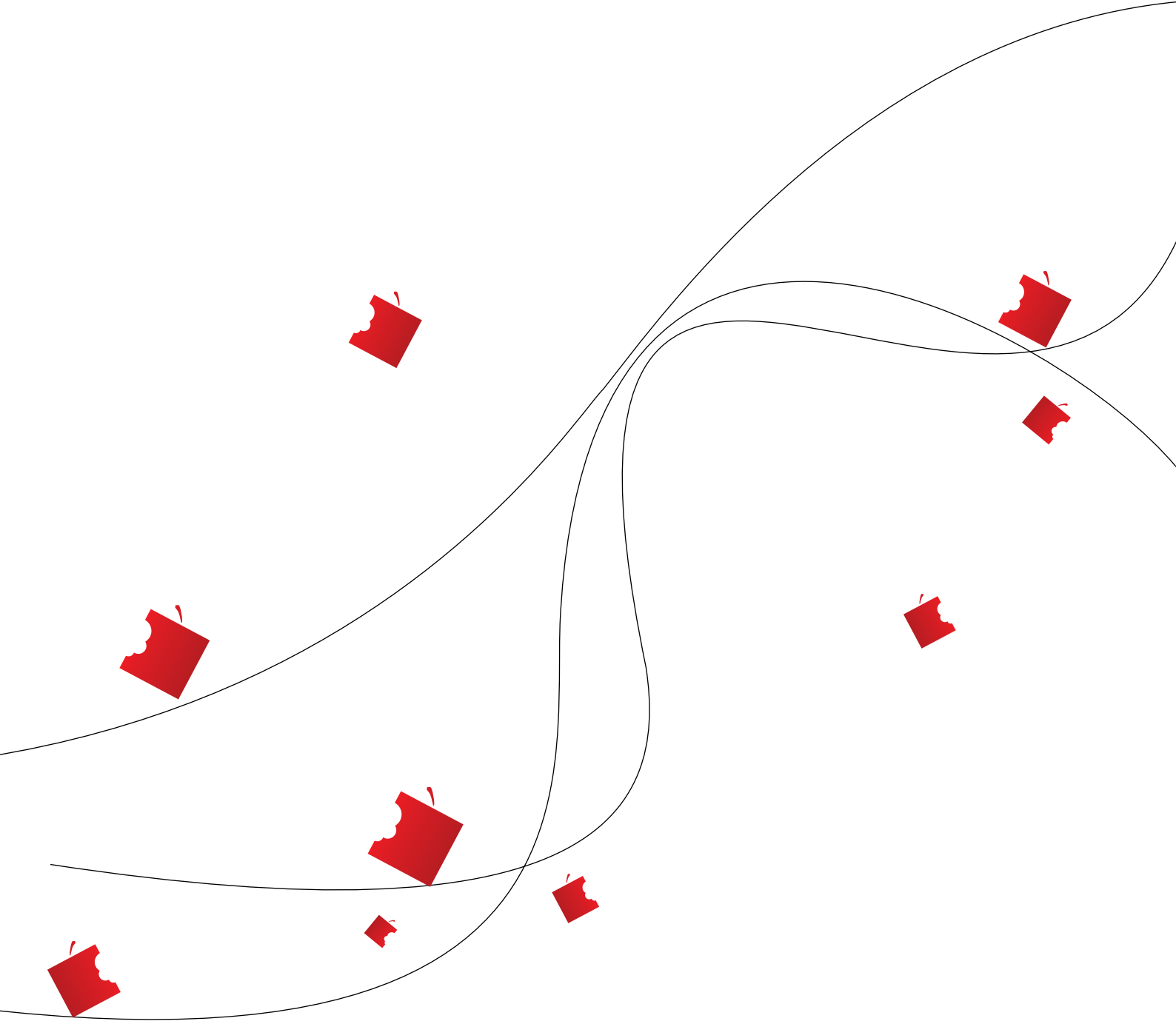
- online questionnaires about ASHE visibility
- archive and analysis of media reports about ASHE
- annual report.

Conclusion

In this document we have presented the concept of continuous quality assurance and improvement in all ASHE activities for the 2010-2014 period. Annual revisions of implementation of the activities connected with individual goals will serve to monitor the success of the whole strategy. The revisions will be based on the performed analyses and annual reports on all ASHE activities. The ASHE Director will appoint persons who will carry out the revision and present its findings to the ASHE Management Board and staff.

To achieve improved efficiency of the revision, the Director will appoint assistants who will monitor the implementation of the activities throughout the year and collect the documents necessary for the revision. The strategy will be subject to revision in case of unforeseen changes in the ASHE surroundings.





2010 Operational Plan

Objective	Specific objective	Activities	Expected output	Implementation period	Implementation team	Key indicators	Monitoring mechanisms
1.1. Ensuring that all higher education institutions, scientific organisations and study programmes meet the minimal quality criteria		initial accreditation on the basis of European and national standards (on demand)	accreditation recommendation	end of 2010	Accreditation Council/ Department of Accreditation in Higher Education/ Department of Accreditation in Science	percentage of positive accreditation recommendations out of the total number of the accreditations carried out	system-wide analyses
		reaccreditation on the basis of European and national standards (following the AC annual plan and on demand)	accreditation recommendation	during 2010	Accreditation Council/ Department of Accreditation in Higher Education Department of Accreditation in Science		
1.2. Enhancing the quality of higher education institutions, scientific organisations and study programmes		re-accreditation with quality assessment, improvement recommendations and follow-up	accreditation recommendation quality assessment of evaluation objects	during 2010	Accreditation Council// Department of Accreditation in Higher Education / Department of Accreditation in Science	percentage of the issued letters of expectation, out of the total number of the evaluation procedures carried out	follow-up procedure for higher education institutions and scientific organisations
		audit	first two phases of the external audit of HEIs finalised (in line with the annual plan)	end of 2010	Accreditation Council/ External Audit Department	percentage of the issued certificates of the degree of development of the internal QA system, out of the total number of the audits implemented	analysis of questionnaires on satisfaction with the evaluation procedure, filled out by the HEIs and reviewers analysis of reviewers' self-evaluation questionnaires
		thematic evaluation	assessment of the evaluated topic	during 2010	Accreditation Council/ Department of Accreditation in Higher Education/ Department of Accreditation in Science	number of the thematic evaluations carried out, out of the total number of applications for thematic evaluations	analysis of the outcomes of thematic evaluations

Objective	Specific objective	Activities	Expected output	Implementation period	Implementation team	Key indicators	Monitoring mechanisms
1.3 Supporting the work of strategic and expert bodies in science and higher education		organization of sessions of strategic and expert bodies in science and higher education	all sessions foreseen by the annual plan held and all the concluding documents drafted	end of 2010	Department of Higher Education/ NCHE	number of sessions held number of documents produced (minutes, conclusions, decisions, recommendations)	analysis of the implementation of the annual plan
		completion of the procedures of external evaluation of HEIs and study programmes started in accordance with the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education that had been in effect in the field of quality assurance in science and HE before the adoption of the new Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Science	all procedures of external evaluation of HEIs and study programmes started in accordance with the former legislation completed			number of completed external evaluations of HEIs and study programmes started in accordance with the former legislation	
1.4. Providing IT support to key business processes in higher education and science		developing the National Information System for Higher Education and Science	creation of the NISVOZ conceptual design	October 2010	Department of Analytics and Statistics	establishment of a register of study programmes, teachers, students and scientists	analysis of user and administrators' satisfaction
		developing IT support to procedures of external QA in science and higher education	MOZVAG reconstruction and upgrade enabling support to accreditation of HEIs	end of 2010	Directorate for Quality Assurance	generating statistical reports	
		improving the information system for applications to study programmes	satisfaction of all stakeholders in the application procedure	permanently	Central Applications Office	number of study programmes added to the system after it has been operative for a year	

Objective	Specific objective	Activities	Expected output	Implementation period	Implementation team	Key indicators	Monitoring mechanisms
1.5. Providing expert support and training in improving the quality of higher education and science		system-wide analysis	identification of the current state and improvement recommendations	end of 2010	Directorate for Quality Assurance	system-wide implementation of the improvement recommendations	analysis of the evaluation sheets filled out by the users of the expertise (HEIs, committees, councils, strategic bodies and other stakeholders)
		expert support to strategic and expert bodies' decision making procedures	completed studies and expert proposals for decisions of the expert bodies drafts of the NCHE and NCS annual reports basis for the development of a network of HEIs	during 2010	Department of Higher Education, Department of Science		
		knowledge transfer to stakeholders	workshop on drafting self-analysis reports	June 2010	Accreditation Council, Department of Accreditation in Higher Education	system-wide implementation of the improvement recommendations	analysis of the evaluation sheets filled out by the users of the expertise (HEIs, committees, councils, strategic bodies and other stakeholders)
			training the expert panels	October -December 2010		knowledge on the accreditation process in the Republic of Croatia	
		workshops for representatives of QA units	end of 2010	External Audit Department	percentage of the representatives of QA units participating at the workshops	analysis of the workshop evaluation sheets, filled out by the participants	
					seminars for external audit experts (representatives of business community, students, polytechnics and schools of professional higher education)		June 2010

Objective	Specific objective	Activities	Expected output	Implementation period	Implementation team	Key indicators	Monitoring mechanisms
		training of foreign experts and their participation in the ASHE activities	further training for external audit experts	December 2010	Directorate for Quality Assurance	ratio of the trainings' participants and the total number of external audit experts	analysis of the training evaluation sheets, filled out by the participants
	workshops for HEIs		December 2010	ratio of the trainings' participants and the total number of representatives of HEIs		analysis of the training evaluation sheets, filled out by the participants	
	training of expert panels		October-December 2010	Accreditation Council, Department of Accreditation in Higher Education	analysis of the training evaluation sheets, filled out by the participants		
	training of foreign external audit experts		October 2010	External Audit Department	knowledge of the external audit procedure in the Republic of Croatia	analysis of the training evaluation sheets, filled out by the participants	
1.6. Fostering equitable access to higher education		development of ranking lists of applicants to study programmes, on the basis of transparent criteria	transparent enrolment of applicants to HEIs	permanently	Central Applications Office	number of applications to study programmes compared to the total number of eligible potential applicants	analyses of NISpVU data
		collecting and processing data submitted by the applicants not included in the <i>e-matica</i> *	application process equal for those not included in <i>e-matica</i> and those who are	permanently	Central Applications Office	number of successful applicants compared to the total number of applicants	
		disseminating information on study programmes, aimed at assisting students in choosing the right study programme	choice of a study programme made easier	permanently	Central Applications Office	number of students leaving a study programme in order to apply for another	
		improving NISpVU [National Information System for Applications to HEIs].	number of elements processed in NISpVU increased	permanently	Central Applications Office	number of applications that required manual data input or data verification	

* the information system which contains data on students in Croatian primary and secondary schools

Objective	Specific objective	Activities	Expected output	Implementation period	Implementation team	Key indicators	Monitoring mechanisms
1.7. Encouraging academic and professional mobility		proposing changes and additions to the legislation in order to make further adjustment with the good European practice	drafting a proposal of a new act regulating recognition of foreign HE qualifications	end of 2010	National ENIC/NARIC Office in cooperation with the Section for Legal Issues	number of applications for recognition of foreign HE qualifications in the Republic of Croatia	evaluation sheets filled out by users
		encourage adoption of bilateral and multilateral agreements in the field of recognition of foreign higher education qualifications	initiating negotiations with the countries from the region aimed at agreements in the field of recognition of foreign HE qualifications	during 2010	National ENIC/NARIC Office in cooperation with the Section for Legal Issues	number of signed agreements in the field of recognition of foreign HE qualifications	statistical analysis of applications for recognition of foreign HE qualifications
		continuously informing the public, especially all the stakeholders in the systems, on the effects of recognition of foreign higher education qualifications on mobility	issuing a new leaflet on recognition on foreign HE qualifications participation in relevant events, continuous publishing of information related to recognition of foreign HE qualifications on the ASHE website	during 2010	National ENIC/NARIC Office in cooperation with the Spokesperson	number of inquiries received by the National ENIC/NARIC Office	analysis of inquiries received by the National ENIC/NARIC Office
		publishing information on the national system of higher education in foreign languages	directory of study programs in English	May 2010	Department of Analytics and Statistics	number of international networks using ASHE data on study programmes	analysis of user and administrator satisfaction
			regular updating of the available information on the national HE system, issuing a new booklet on the national HE system	during 2010	National ENIC/NARIC Office in cooperation with the Department for Higher Education and the Spokesperson	number of inquiries received by the National ENIC/NARIC Office	analysis of the number of inquiries received by the National ENIC/NARIC Office

Objective	Specific objective	Activities	Expected output	Implementation period	Implementation team	Key indicators	Monitoring mechanisms
		publishing information on the comparability of foreign higher education levels with Croatian levels of education	a document on comparability of foreign higher education levels with Croatian levels of education published on the ASHE website	during 2010	National ENIC/ NARIC Office	number of inquiries addressed to the National ENIC/ NARIC office	analysis of the number of inquiries received by the National ENIC/NARIC Office
		performing tasks of the National Contact Point as foreseen by the Directive 2005/36EC and the Act on Regulated Professions and Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications (Official Gazette 124/2009)	<p>manual for the National Database for Recognition of Professional Qualifications</p> <p>creation of the National Database for Professional Recognition of Foreign Qualifications and regular updating of the database in line with the provisions of the law</p>	<p>August 1st 2010</p> <p>October 1st 2010 on the condition that the Government of the Republic of Croatia issues a list of regulated professions by the deadline set by the relevant Act</p>	National ENIC/ NARIC Office	all tasks performed	assessment of the compliance with the Directive 2005/36EC and the Act on Regulated Professions and Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications (Official Gazette 124/2009)

Objective	Specific objective	Activities	Expected output	Implementation period	Implementation team	Key indicators	Monitoring mechanisms
		establishment of a network of contacts relevant for professional recognition	call for cooperation on professional recognition as foreseen by the Directive 2005/36 EC sent to relevant institutions	end of 2010	National ENIC/NARIC Office	number of events organized that deal with the topic	analysis of the development of the contact network
2.1.Improving internal quality culture	2.1.1. Increasing the satisfaction of ASHE employees	strengthening interaction and teamwork of ASHE employees	involvement of ASHE coordinators in the procedures of reaccreditation of HEIs	March - December 2010	Department of Accreditation in Higher Education	employee satisfaction index increased in comparison with the previous year	analysis of the results of the Employee Satisfaction Survey
			participation of ASHE employees in decision-making at all institutional levels	during 2010	ASHE management		
		continuous training of ASHE employees	improved competences of employees	permanently	ASHE employees		
	improving communication and motivation of employees	meetings of coordinators for reaccreditation of HEIs	during 2010	ASHE management			
		meetings of Heads of Departments	weekly				
	2.1.2. Improving the quality management system (QMS) in accordance with ISO 9001:2008	Handbook and all other QMS documents will be adjusted with the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education and its bylaws	Handbook and all other QMS documents adjusted with the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education and its bylaws	until June 2010	adviser for Internal Quality		
internal audit of the QMS		QMS improvement recommendation	June 2010	ASHE management		management grade of the QMS efficiency	

Objective	Specific objective	Activities	Expected output	Implementation period	Implementation team	Key indicators	Monitoring mechanisms
	2.1.3. Development of the QA system	external audit of the QMS establishing monitoring mechanisms	assessment of the QMS development Efficient QA system established	October 2010 December 2010	 ASHE management	Areas for improvement and the number of positive indicators in the External Audit Report by DNV number of established monitoring mechanisms compared to the number of ASHE activities	Report to DNV on improvements carried out analysis of the efficiency of the monitoring mechanisms annual report on ASHE activities internal audit in accordance with international standards (ESG, etc.)
2.2. Full membership in internationally recognised organisations (ENQA, ECA, etc.)		drafting of all documents relevant to ASHE activities drafting of self-evaluation selecting coordinator for ASHE accreditation procedures	membership application forms sent	by the end of 2010 September 2010 June 2010	Accreditation Council Directorate for Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education ASHE management	adherence to the part 2 of the ESG Annexes	analysis of compliance of ASHE documentation with the requirements for membership in international organizations
2.3. Strengthening the role of ASHE at national, regional and international level		organising national, regional and international conferences, seminars and workshops	ASHE anniversary conference Tempus Info Days HERE national seminars HERE EU seminars	October 2010 February and December 2010 April 2010 June 2010 November 2010	ASHE management National TEMPUS Office	number of organised national, regional and international conferences, seminars, workshops	analysis of the ASHE position

Objective	Specific objective	Activities	Expected output	Implementation period	Implementation team	Key indicators	Monitoring mechanisms
			Tempus regional seminars	April 2010			
		participation in international programs	project accepted for funding	during 2010	ASHE management	number of international projects involving ASHE	
		participation in international programs	presentations held, posters made	during 2010	ASHE management	participants' evaluation forms	
		exchange of experts	ASHE initiative for creation of an European database of QA experts accepted	during 2010	ASHE management National ENIC/ NARIC Office	number of visits of experts to the National ENIC/ NARIC Office and the number of visits of the National ENIC/ NARIC Office experts to other ENIC/NARIC offices	
			exchange of experts on recognition of foreign professional qualifications				
			participation of national HERE experts in international seminars	during 2010	National ENIC/ NARIC Office	at least 1 participant from Croatia at every HERE seminar	

Objective	Specific objective	Activities	Expected output	Implementation period	Implementation team	Key indicators	Monitoring mechanisms
			participation of foreign experts in seminars organized by ASHE	April 2010	National TEMPUS Office	percentage of foreign experts invited to participate at HERE seminars who accepted the invitation	
		visits of experts from other agencies	exchange of experience and good practice examples	during 2010	ASHE management	number of foreign experts visiting ASHE	
2.4. Preservation of public trust in ASHE		involving representatives of civil society organisations into ASHE activities	appointment of AC adjunct members	March/April 2010	ASHE management, Accreditation Council	ratio of participation of representatives of civil society organisations at the AC session and the number of the sessions held active participation in the discussions (comments, opinions, proposals etc.)	
		involving all stakeholders in science and higher education into ASHE activities	appointment of stakeholders to expert panels	during 2010	ASHE management, Accreditation Council	growing dynamics of promotional activities	online questionnaires about ASHE visibility
			day-to-day cooperation with stakeholders	during 2010	ASHE management		
			cooperation with representatives of students and HEIs on the work of HERE team	during 2010	National Tempus Office		
		publishing reports and system-wide analyses and statistics	publishing statistical data on ASHE website	during 2010	Department of Analytics and Statistics	positive public perception of ASHE	archive and analysis of media reports about ASHE
publishing reports and analysis of past evaluations	during 2010		Directorate for Quality Assurance				

Objective	Specific objective	Activities	Expected output	Implementation period	Implementation team	Key indicators	Monitoring mechanisms
		regular publication of documents, newsletters, brochures and other information about Agency activities and the system of science and higher education	Annual Reports, 5th Anniversary Report, brochure on applications to study programs, newsletters	during 2010	ASHE management, spokesperson, CAO		
			Tempus country fiche for Eurydice	February 2010	National TEMPUS Office		
			Publication on papers on the Bologna Reform in Croatia	May 2010			
			Publication on implemented Tempus IV projects in Croatia	November 2010			
		strengthening cooperation with the relevant media	regular informing of the public via public statements and communications, press conferences etc.	occasionally	ASHE management, spokesperson		
		regularly updating and improving ASHE website	directory of study programmes	permanently	Department of Analytics and Statistics		
			redesign of the ASHE website	until June 2010	ASHE management, spokesperson and IT Department		
		designing promotional activities aimed at improving ASHE perception among the public	growing dynamics of promotional activities	continuously	ASHE management and the spokesperson		

Acronyms

AC	Accreditation Council
ASHE	Agency for Science and Higher Education
CAO	Central Applications Office
ECA	European Consortium for Accreditation
ENIC/NARIC	European Network of National Information Centres on academic recognition and mobility / National Academic Recognition Information Centres
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ERA	European Research Area
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
HERE	Higher Education Reform Experts
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
NCHE	National Council for Higher Education
NCS	National Council for Science
NSHO	National system of higher education
NISpVU	National Information System for Applications to Higher Education Institutions
NISVOZ	National Information System for Higher Education and Science
QMS	Quality Management System

