

# **CARDS 2002 Project “Higher Education Mobility: Diploma Recognition Policy and Legislation”**



This project is funded by the  
European Commission

## **Completion Report**

25<sup>th</sup> April 2006

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## List of abbreviations

<b>CFCU</b>	<b>Central Financing and Coordination Unit</b>
<b>PIU</b>	<b>Project Implementation Unit</b>
<b>SC</b>	<b>Steering Committee</b>
<b>SPO</b>	<b>Senior Programme Officer</b>
<b>TA</b>	<b>Technical Assistance</b>
<b>TAT</b>	<b>Technical Assistance Team</b>
<b>TL</b>	<b>Team Leader</b>
<b>KE</b>	<b>Key Expert</b>
<b>STE</b>	<b>Short Term Expert</b>
<b>EC</b>	<b>European Commission</b>
<b>EU</b>	<b>European Union</b>
<b>CARDS</b>	<b>Community Assistance for Reconstruction Development and Stabilisation</b>
<b>ENQA</b>	<b>European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education</b>
<b>EUA</b>	<b>European University Association</b>
<b>HEI(s)</b>	<b>Higher Education Institution(s)</b>
<b>HEMIS</b>	<b>Higher Education Management Information System</b>
<b>ISVU</b>	<b>Informacijski Sustav Visokih Učilišta (Information System for HEIs)</b>
<b>MOZVAG</b>	<b>MODul Za Visoka učilišta i AGencija (Modul for HEIs and Agency)</b>
<b>SAP</b>	<b>System Analysis and Product</b>
<b>MZOŠ</b>	<b>Ministarstvo Znanosti, Obrazovanja i Športa (Ministry of Science, Education and Sports)</b>
<b>NVVO</b>	<b>Nacionalno Vijeće za Visoko Obrazovanje (National Council for Higher Education)</b>
<b>NVZ</b>	<b>Nacionalno Vijeće za Znanost (National Council for Science)</b>
<b>AZVO</b>	<b>Agencija za Znanost i Visoko Obrazovanje (Agency for Science and Higher Education)</b>
<b>NZZ</b>	<b>Nacionalna Zaklada za Znanost i Tehnološki Razvitak (National Foundation for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development)</b>
<b>QA</b>	<b>Quality Assurance</b>
<b>SGQA</b>	<b>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in EHEA</b>
<b>EHEA</b>	<b>European Higher Education Area</b>
<b>ECTS</b>	<b>European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System</b>
<b>ENIC</b>	<b>European Network of Information Centres</b>
<b>NARIC</b>	<b>National Recognition and Information Centres</b>
<b>HE</b>	<b>Higher Education</b>
<b>ToR(s)</b>	<b>Terms of Reference(s)</b>
<b>VAT</b>	<b>Value Added Tax</b>
<b>VET</b>	<b>Vocational Education and Training</b>
<b>NQF</b>	<b>National Qualification Framework</b>
<b>IT</b>	<b>Information Technology</b>
<b>OECD</b>	<b>Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development</b>
<b>TEMPUS</b>	<b>Trans-European Mobility Scheme for University Studies</b>
<b>NUFFIC</b>	<b>Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Cooperation (Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education)</b>

## 1. Introduction

*Name of the Project:* Higher Education Mobility: Diploma Recognition Policy and Legislation.

*Programme:* CARDS 2002

*Partner country:* Croatia

*Area of Cooperation:* Economic and social development. Social cohesion

*Project budget:* €600,000

*Contracting authority:* Ministry of Finance (Central Finance and Contracting Unit – CFCU)

*Beneficiary:* Ministry of Science, Education and Sport

*Duration:* September, 2004 – March 2006

*Purpose:* The harmonization of the Croatian higher Education system with the standards and practices of the EU member states is furthered, thus opening the way to diploma recognition and facilitating Croatia’s European integration process.

*Key targets to be achieved:*

- amendments to the legislation that relates to higher education, recognition and student mobility;
- additional development of the Croatian ENIC/NARIC office in regards to the EU standards;
- development and implementation of the quality control systems that are required by the Lisbon Convention;
- the raising of awareness about higher education harmonization, student mobility and recognition of diplomas and other academic and/or professional achievements;
- development of a higher education management information system (HEMIS);
- further refinement of the ECTS.

*Status of project at the time of reporting:* Completed

*Report prepared by:* Peter Debreczeni, Team Leader and Key Expert 1  
Hugh Glanville, Key Expert 3

## 2. Executive summary and recommendations

The overall purpose of this project has been to assist in managing the structural harmonization between the reform-driven Croatian Higher Education (HE) system and the standards now commonly being observed within the European Higher Education Area<sup>1</sup> (EHEA). Specifically it has been so that diploma recognition processes will be facilitated as an aid to student and graduate mobility, this being part of Croatia’s integration with the rest of Europe.

The legal framework was considered to be one of the fundamental factors that could affect the recognition process, and, in examining the compatibility of the national legal framework with the international regulations a number of problems associated with the implementation of the new Recognition Law were identified (see Section 3.1). It was hoped that the problems were capable of rapid resolution, particularly when a Commission was established for the amendment of the Law, but, disappointingly, by the end of the project the legal problems<sup>2</sup> had not yet been fully resolved. The Croatian ENIC Office had, however, developed as a very efficient unit, and was being as effective as possible in the circumstances.

Croatian recognition of foreign qualifications is only one aspect of the recognition necessary for mobility; the other aspect is a transparent and secure basis for the recognition of Croatian qualifications in other countries. An important element in the latter, also important to secure the quality of HE necessary for Croatia itself, is a national Quality Assurance (QA) system which conforms to the “Standards and Guidelines” endorsed by the Bergen Conference of European Ministers. The project has had a limited opportunity to influence the development of such a system in Croatia, but it is hoped that its development will be further assisted both by the QA Handbook which is a final project output and by the forthcoming CARDS 2003 project “Furtherance of the Agency for Science and Higher Education in its Quality Assurance role”.

The success of the Agency for Science and Higher Education (AZVO) in demonstrating the value of Croatian qualifications will depend upon an appropriate balance of responsibilities. To this end, there should be a clear recognition of where the boundary lies between the State and its responsibilities and the HE system itself and its responsibilities. The latter responsibilities need to be exercised in the context of the HEIs being autonomous, as is emphasised by the Bologna Declaration and in all subsequent stages of the Bologna process. There should be more self-regulation by the HEIs conjointly, which might be encouraged by the State but not controlled by it. AZVO, and the Councils which it supports, should be seen as part of the HE system’s own self-regulation, while being demonstrably impartial as between individual HEIs.

The integration of HEIs should emphasise their corporate responsibility for the quality of what they provide, encouraged and confirmed by the national QA system. Corporate responsibility is an imperative for ‘lump sum’ funding, but it should also realise the following important principles:

- an understanding of the concept of ‘learning outcomes’, with an appreciation that these can be achieved in different ways, and that the best means of doing so will depend on the circumstances within which an HEI is working;
- an understanding that the ‘Bologna cycles’ represent the achievement of educational levels (expressed as appropriate learning outcomes) each of which is of recognisable value, and is

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<sup>1</sup> I.e. the countries which are signatories to the Bologna Declaration, including Croatia.

<sup>2</sup> See Section 3

based upon a general agreement within the relevant academic community, both nationally and ultimately internationally;

- through this, the development of, in terms of HE but related to the rest of Croatian Education, a National Qualification Framework (NQF);
- a correct use<sup>3</sup> of ECTS credits in the specification of the curriculum;
- a means of assessing students which is appropriate for the learning outcomes concerned, and which has, as a process and in the certification of students, a transparent integrity.<sup>4</sup>

The re-structuring and accreditation of programmes of study in 2005 was undertaken before an appropriate QA system had been developed and on a timescale that no country might have attempted successfully. It is important that this procedure is not considered to have completed the process of developing the quality of Croatian higher education in terms of the Bologna expectations for reform in the EHEA.

The reform of HE in Croatia, as elsewhere, requires a coherent national strategy which has obtained the consensus agreement of the HE system, and which represents not only goals but the stages and actions through which the goals are to be achieved. Such a strategic plan needs to recognise that HEIs are autonomous and can properly have different missions, and that there is a line to be drawn between this self-regulating system and those things which should be regulated by the State through its legal framework. The latter should be seen as not only a consistent framework within which HEIs can plan and operate but also one which empowers the HEIs to exercise their responsibilities.

The Croatian State has demonstrated a commitment to the Bologna reforms, but, in addition to the above considerations, a need for additional financial support from the State is expressed by the HEIs as a prerequisite for their implementation<sup>5</sup>. Restructured programmes based on learning outcomes need an approach to teaching and assessment which in its turn will require more student involvement. Seemingly MZOŠ has not yet attempted to meet the additional costs that will be incurred, relating especially to staff training and development. If the changes have to be financed by the institutions from their own budgets the outcome in relation to the quality of provision will be doubtful, while other elements of the system or institutions may be neglected.

One aspect is the need for HEIs progressively to develop a more effective internal support structure for their educational and research activities, including the development of professional academic administration significantly beyond the level of clerical work<sup>6</sup>. The burden of the latter can be reduced through a HEMIS system, but the HEIs have expressed concern about the introduction of the new financial system based on the SAP. The perception is that the Ministry’s wish to introduce SAP is a wish to have the capacity to exercise continuing control over all aspects of the HE provision and not as a tool for strategic decisions<sup>7</sup> on a system or institutional level.

It is, however, not clear how far the HEIs see a distinction between the use of an MIS as simply the management of information for purely administrative purposes (finance, personnel, student data, educational and research facilities, income and expenditure etc.) or for the provision of

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<sup>3</sup> See the ECTS Users’ Guide

<sup>4</sup> See Chapters 3 and 6 of ‘Quality Assurance in Higher Education: a Manual, (Project output 27)

<sup>5</sup> This is additional to the significant special investments made over the past two years: special funds for campus building, IT infrastructure, hiring of new staff (800 assistants, 400 teachers) and also the increase in the overall budget by 15%.

<sup>6</sup> See ‘Academic Administration as a Support to the Academic Process, (Project Output 24)

<sup>7</sup> Including as an input for the determination of need and the evaluation and improvement of quality.

information for the purpose of institutional management (tactical and strategic as well as operational). These issues need to be resolved in defining a clear overall strategy for a general HEMIS in Croatia.

### **Recommendations:**

- The legal and organisational obstacles to the establishment of a transparent and secure basis for the recognition of foreign qualifications in Croatia should be further developed.
- There should be a clear recognition of where the boundary lies between the State and its responsibilities and the HE system itself and its responsibilities.
- The latter responsibilities need to be exercised in the context of the HEIs being autonomous, as is emphasised by the Bologna Declaration and in all subsequent stages of the Bologna process.
- There should be more self-regulation by the HEIs conjointly, which might be encouraged by the State but not controlled by it. AZVO, and the Councils which it supports, should be seen as part of the HE system’s own self-regulation, while being demonstrably impartial as between individual HEIs.
- The integration of HEIs should emphasise their corporate responsibility for the quality of what they provide, encouraged and confirmed by the national QA system.
- This involves also among other things to develop a more effective internal support structure for their educational and research activities, including the development of professional academic administration significantly beyond the level of clerical work.
- To secure the quality of HE necessary for Croatia itself, there is an urgent need for an effective and efficient national Quality Assurance (QA) system which conforms to the “Standards and Guidelines” endorsed by the Bergen Conference of European Ministers. Such a system would be broadly based on the following principles:
  - The ‘learning outcomes’, with an appreciation that these can be achieved in different ways, and that the best means of doing so will depend on the circumstances within which an HEI is working
  - understanding that ‘Bologna cycles’ represent the achievement of educational levels (expressed as appropriate learning outcomes) each of which is of recognisable value, and is based upon a general agreement within the relevant academic community, both nationally and ultimately internationally
  - Translation of the curriculum into ECTS credits with a proper attention to student learning needs and capabilities
  - The development of a national qualifications’ framework that incorporates the basic concepts and achievements of the European Qualifications’ Framework (EQF).

### **3. Review of Progress and Performance at completion (comparing against plan – efficiency, effectiveness and impact)**

#### ***3.1 Policy and programme context, including linkage to other ongoing operations/activities***

Croatia was one of the original signatories of the Lisbon Convention, in April 1997. The Convention was ratified by Croatia in October 2000, to come into force from the following December. In the next year, 2001, Croatia signed both the Bologna Declaration and the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union.

In 2003, a new Law for Science and Higher Education and a new Law on the Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications were introduced. In 2004 the Ministry of Science and Technology (which had been responsible for HE) was merged with the former Ministry of Education and Sport to form a single Ministry of Education, Science and Sports (MZOŠ). The new Law on Science and Higher Education provided for an Agency for Science and Higher Education (AZVO) which would support a revised National Council for Higher Education (NVVO) and a new National Council for Science (NVZ). The Croatian ENIC Office<sup>8</sup> was to be located within this Agency, but when the project began (September 2004) the Agency had yet to be established and the Ministry had appointed a temporary head of an ENIC office, located within the Ministry itself, to deal with the large number of applications for recognition under the new Law which had accumulated since its promulgation.

The Project Inception Report pointed to a lack of appreciation that European trends in Recognition processes, as expressed through the Lisbon Convention, represented a change of attitude toward recognition. Instead of making detailed comparisons of reading lists and curricula, the assessment of foreign qualifications now seeks to determine whether applicants have demonstrated skills and competence which are of a level comparable to that which they would have achieved had they obtained a degree in the country where the degree is to be recognised.

It was also pointed out in the Inception Report that the recognition of the skills and competences represented by an academic award at a particular level (i.e. the “learning outcomes”) had become a key concept for the Bologna Process but was not yet sufficiently understood in Croatia. Apart from being essential for the correct interpretation of the Lisbon Convention, the concept is essential for curriculum design (including the use of ECTS and the Diploma Supplement), for Quality Assurance and for the development of a national qualifications framework. The language of “learning outcomes” represents a change in emphasis from “teaching” to “learning” typified by the adoption of a “student centred” approach as against the traditional “teacher centred” approach or viewpoint.

The adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees facilitating mutual recognition and thus mobility requires commonly understood learning outcomes at the different levels (e.g. the so-called Dublin and Copenhagen “level descriptors”) as well as descriptors for projected learning time, such as the ECTS system of credits. These then provide a basis for a national framework of qualifications (NQF). The development of an NQF can act as a driving force of change, in that it (i) promotes the attainment of qualifications by indicating their role and benefits for employers and generally all members of a society; (ii) raises the awareness of employers and citizens in relation to qualifications through clarification of the various national

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<sup>8</sup> Incorrectly referred to as an 'ENIC/NARIC Office', incorrectly since the term 'NARIC' is only used within the EU.

roles and relationships between qualifications and opportunities; (iii) improves access and social inclusion by creating a variety of different learning paths; and, (iv) influences the reform of awards to reflect changing societal needs (e.g. labour market demands), as well as, (v) facilitating intra-national recognition and mobility.

For these reasons it was agreed to add “the development and review process of establishing a National Framework of Qualifications” to the original ToR (in Cluster 6)<sup>9</sup> and to emphasise the “learning outcome approach” within Clusters 2, 3 and 6.

The appropriateness of these changes to the TOR was reinforced in May 2005 when the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education in Bergen expressed the intermediate priorities for the development of the Bologna Process until the next such conference (in 2007)<sup>10</sup>. These included the implementation of national frameworks for qualifications as well as the creation of opportunities for flexible learning pathways, the latter to include the recognition of learning outcomes achieved outside formal educational structures (“prior experiential learning”). Equally importantly, the Bergen Conference also supported the implementation of the “Standards and Guidelines” for Quality Assurance which had been proposed by the European Network of Quality Agencies (ENQA)<sup>11</sup>. Apart from the principles for Quality Assurance which are now advocated for the whole European Higher Education Area (EHEA), it was agreed that Quality Agencies should themselves be subject to a QA process, and that a Register of acceptable agencies should be maintained. This has critical implications, not just for the development of QA in Croatian HE but also, ultimately, for the recognition of Croatian degree awards.

The 2003 Law on Science and Higher Education had projected that by the academic year 2005-6 all programmes of study, other than at the doctoral level, should conform to the first two Bologna cycles (Bachelor and Master levels) and be structured according to ECTS; in very few cases had this happened by the end of 2004. The Ministry, however, insisted on the reforms being carried through, on what had by then become a very short timescale for curriculum design and accreditation, using internet communication for their evaluation by selected experts<sup>12</sup>. This procedure was instigated through NVVO, using a specially developed information system (Mozvag).

AZVO had not, at this point, been fully established. An Acting General Secretary had been nominated in December 2004, who had coordinated the preparation of the Agency’s Statutes. The President and members of the NVVO had been appointed on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, and on 14<sup>th</sup> December had nominated two of its members as members of AZVO’s Management Board, which, under the Statutes, was to be chaired by a Ministry nominee. On 28<sup>th</sup> December the Council approved “Rules of Procedure on Standards and Criteria for Establishing New Higher Education Institutions” as well as the “Rules of Procedure on Standards and Criteria for Assessment of Quality and

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<sup>9</sup> A Commission for drafting a new Act on Academic Degrees was established in January 2005. This might have had implications for a Croatian NQF but, contrary to expectations, the TAT has not been involved in its work. There have been activities in the VET sector related to the NQF, but these have not been coordinated at the level of the Ministry in terms of the whole education sector. Within the framework of the activities for an NQF in VET, a seminar was organized in Pula by the European Training Foundation together with the National Observatory at which the TL took part and agreed on the need for closer co-operation and synergy between the different CARDS project related to NQF.

<sup>10</sup> A National Report was prepared by MZOS the previous January taking stock of the latest developments in Croatia in relation to the Bologna process.

<sup>11</sup> The Bergen Communiqué also advocated more attention to the award and recognition of joint degrees, including at doctorate level (this was not foreseen as an activity in the CARDS 2002 project).

<sup>12</sup> The project TA Team was not consulted in advance about what was being planned; they were, however, subsequently asked to nominate possible international experts who could act as evaluators.

Efficiency of Higher Education Institutions and Programmes”, the latter providing the requirements for the design and evaluation of the revised programmes of study. It had been expected that the Agency itself would be operational by the following March, when the revised programmes were due to be submitted, but the expectations for its establishment were not realised other than technically.

The third Progress Report pointed to the absence of a coherent strategic plan for the development of Croatian HE. While there were strategic statements concerning system level reforms for the whole education sector<sup>13</sup> in Croatia which included references to HE, as well as other documents with elements of strategic thinking, such as “country reports”<sup>14</sup>, these did not express a single coherent strategy with consensus agreement on how the ends were to be achieved. Nor could a coherent and agreed strategic position be found in the legal texts regulating HE<sup>15</sup>. This apparent absence of an agreed strategic framework made it difficult to understand how the various elements of the system level reforms in Croatian HE fitted together as a coherent whole with agreed and related timelines.

The projected system level changes have included funding and steering mechanisms, the integration of what have been loosely coupled but independent Faculties into universities (including the redistribution of responsibilities within the institutions), articulation between the different types of HEI, and changes in the academic and research career conditions (e.g. the new regulations for academic titles). The project has noted that while most of the universities have not yet formulated a coherent institutional strategy, some have included or tried to assimilate the Bologna reforms into their own institutional development: for example Zagreb, Rijeka and Split. At other institutions these trends appear at Faculty level, although rather sporadically.

The 2003 Law on HE stipulated a new structure for the institutional leadership of HEIs in Croatia, but the law is not consistent in that, for example, Faculties are also considered to be HEIs in their own right. This militates against effective institutional leadership and thus hinders institutions from incorporating the structural reforms (and the Bologna elements) into their institutional strategy in a pro-active way.

It is not clear who, in practice, represents the corporate position of a university (as distinct from a “Rectorate”). Seemingly a Rector is not really in that position, while even Deans sometimes seem not to be in a position to speak on behalf of their Faculties. While in most signatory states the Bologna process has served as a welcome opportunity to strengthen and enhance institutional collaboration as well as the communication channels between the centre and the other parts of the institution, our perception during the seminars held at the universities was that this has not been the case in Croatia. For example, most of those we met in the universities towards the end of the process of curriculum re-structuring and accreditation complained of having felt isolated and having had to work without adequate information or support.

Moreover, while elsewhere the Bologna process has fostered horizontal communication between the country’s universities, especially at Faculty level, e.g. through jointly defining the general structure and intended learning outcomes for the relevant subject disciplines (“benchmark statements”) before introducing the 2-tier system, this has not happened to any great extent in

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<sup>13</sup> Strategy for the Development of the Republic of Croatia – Croatia in 21st century: Education (2001); Science (26 lipnja 2003, Zaključak of the Parliament); Education Sector Development Plan 2005-2010 (May 30, 2005); Green Paper on VET (June 2004)

<sup>14</sup> MZOŠ-Institute for Educational Development: Croatian Education System (June 2000); Bologna Process – National Reports (2003, 2004-2005); OECD Country Report (draft version)

<sup>15</sup> E.g. on the role and functions of AZVO.

Croatia. The Third Progress Report warned that the lack of commonly agreed benchmark statements for the study fields and disciplines, and the lack of a National Qualification Framework agreed upon for the whole education sector, would not only hinder international comparability and mobility but also comparability and mobility within Croatia itself.

One aspect of this problem was seen to be a failure to recognise where the boundary should lie between the State and its responsibilities and the HE system itself and its responsibilities. The latter responsibilities need to be exercised in the context of the HEIs being autonomous, as is emphasised by the Bologna Declaration<sup>16</sup> and in all subsequent stages of the Bologna process. Such autonomy is asserted in the Croatian Law on HE but is then nullified in subsequent clauses (e.g. on staff management, staff recruitment, financial responsibilities, etc).

These considerations led the third Progress Report to suggest that there was “unnecessary administrative overregulation at national level” meaning that there should be more self-regulation by the HEIs conjointly, which might be encouraged by the State but not controlled by it. The perception that too little emphasis was being placed on self-regulation by the HE system itself was subsequently reinforced by discussions in October 2005, when the TAT sought clarification on where NVVO, NVZ and AZVO are intended to stand in relation to each other and to the Ministry, Government and Parliament and the HEIs, and by the lack of a prompt, clear and committed response to the queries we had raised.

On the other hand, as was recorded in the fourth Progress Report, there is little evidence of a general welcome within the universities for the strengthening of their autonomy which should result from the provision of “lump-sum” funding presaged in the 2003 Law on Science and Higher Education. This may reflect a natural human tendency to feel safer in a context which is familiar rather than to look for opportunities in a new situation, but there is also a detectable apprehension that a more autonomous HE system could become a network dominated by the University of Zagreb.

It is, nonetheless, important that the HE system should become a unified and self-regulating network of HEIs (but one whose members are themselves autonomous) particularly as the many problems which can be expected in the implementation of “lump-sum” funding are worked through in terms of integrated, self-regulating and self-planned institutions.

The role and position of the AZVO had not been clarified by the time the project had concluded, but the staffing was sufficiently resolved by January 2006 for the TAT to provide training in Quality Assurance issues, based on the “Standards and Guidelines” for Quality Assurance which had been endorsed by the Ministers’ Conference in Bergen. It had been hoped that the CARDS 2002 project could build upon the outcome of the TEMPUS Quality Assurance project<sup>17</sup>, but although background papers had been received through MZOS previously, the TAT did not receive what proved to be the final form to be taken by the Handbook until the end of January 2006, when it was not found to be a useful input.

It was also intended that the CARDS 2002 project should undertake its work in relation to QA in conjunction with the CARDS 2003 Quality Assurance project, but the implementation of the latter was repeatedly delayed so that there was, in practice, no overlapping of the two.

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<sup>16</sup> “Universities' independence and autonomy ensure that higher education and research systems continuously adapt to changing needs, society's demands and advances in scientific knowledge” (The Bologna Declaration)

<sup>17</sup> There have been more than twenty-five TEMPUS projects co-ordinated by the universities which relate directly or indirectly to the Bologna process.

Early in 2005 the Minister appointed a National Bologna Promoters Team. The first CroBologna seminar, in Opatija early in March 2005, was attended by two of the project's Key Experts, while a second, in Split the following June, was attended by an international project STE (Dr Patricia Georgieva). The fourth, held in Varaždin, was attended by the TL.

The Ministry also published a series of articles on the Bologna process as two special editions of the Vjesnik newspaper, the TL contributing an article on university autonomy and accountability to the second edition.

The Minister, with the Rector's Conference, invited the Association of European Universities (EUA) to report on the implementation of European oriented reforms in Croatia. An EUA team met the Minister and his advisors, and had discussions at the Universities of Zagreb and Rijeka (4-7 May 2005). The TAT was not involved in this visit in any way.

The most successful institutional development within the project period has been the ENIC office. It was re-located to share offices within the Agency, with a new office Head and stable staffing, and developed in its efficiency to a marked degree. The framework which it was working within remained, however, unsatisfactory. Firstly, the office continued to be inundated by a large number of applications based upon a misinterpretation of the Croatian laws: assuming that the use of foreign qualifications for any employment in Croatia required these qualifications to be entered in the person's “Work Book” following a formal process of “Recognition” (a misunderstanding of *de facto* professional recognition and probably also Croatian labour law). Secondly, the new Law on Recognition failed to take account of legislation governing the practice of certain professions in Croatia (a misunderstanding of *de jure* professional recognition). Thirdly, the new Law failed to take account of the autonomy of HEIs (a misunderstanding of academic recognition).

The Ministry's strategy for dealing with the flood of applications for recognition was to get the Rectors' Conference to nominate a group of academics to process the applications as a central part of a seven-stage procedure. The TAT believed that the whole process was based on a misreading of the law, but welcomed the parallel establishment of a Commission for the amendment of the Recognition Law itself, with the TL as one of its members.

This Commission had an initial meeting in January 2005, but unfortunately it did not meet again until the following December. There were then four further meetings within the project period. At the first of these a legal expert, who was both Chairman of the group of academics nominated by the Rectors' Conference (see above) and a member of the Commission for the Law's amendment, proposed that the principles of recognition should be clarified before the form of Law required was considered. This view was expressed in a memorandum which was equally in the name of the recognition group's Vice-Chair, and, it was understood, had been supported by the Rectors' Conference itself, and was also shared by another legal expert on the Commission. The TL, as another Commission member, proposed that the current Law be suspended, as the others had proposed, and that any basic and necessary procedures be defined in an interim Government Decree of Ministerial Order, before a revised Law was drafted, should one be necessary at all. He also pointed to the need for other legal texts to be made consistent with the Lisbon Convention and the EU Directives on regulated professions.

The TL was unable to be present for the fifth meeting of the Commission, held on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2006, but it is understood that the issues remain unresolved.

### 3.2 Objectives achieved (Overall Objective, purpose, results)

The **overall objective** of the project, as expressed in the ToR, has been the harmonisation of the Croatian Higher Education system with the standards and practices of the EU member states, thus opening the way to diploma recognition and student mobility thus facilitating Croatia’s European integration process.

The **purpose** of the project has been that of supporting and structuring an ongoing ‘Europeanisation’ process within sub-sectors of a functional system of higher education sector, to implement the existing legal regulations and their draft amendments in accordance with the European framework as it is defined by the Bologna process at system level, and by the Lisbon Convention at sub-sectors level.

The envisaged **results** in accordance to the targeted general objective and the specific purpose were the following:

- Preparing amendments of existing legislation related to higher education, recognition and student mobility;
- Promoting the establishment of the National Information Centre for Academic Mobility and Recognition (including staff training);
- The development and implementation of the quality assurance system assisting the recognition process in accordance with the framework requirements of the Lisbon Convention;
- Public awareness raising campaign for the stakeholders and publications concerning HE harmonization processes, student mobility and recognition of diplomas;
- Development of HE Management Information System as a tool to help the ENIC/NARIC office in its efficient functioning;
- Further development of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) by bilateral agreements between at least two Croatian universities; production and promotion of new guidelines of good practices of ECTS system; development and review process for setting up a National Qualification Framework.

Anticipated results	Comments
Preparation of amendments of existing legislation related to HE, recognition and student mobility	Several project documents were prepared and numerous meeting were organized to prepare and discuss the necessary amendments. A committee was set up with the specific task for the amendments of the Law on recognition. The Committee’s work was suspended after its first meeting and 11 month later its work continued. Its work was not based on an agreed upon strategy, however its constitution guaranteed a proper work.
Promoting the establishment of the National Information Centre for Academic Mobility and Recognition (including staff training)	The ENIC office is now functional, but within the restrictions of an inadequate legal framework.
The development and implementation of the quality assurance system assisting the recognition process in accordance with the framework requirements of the Lisbon	The awareness and understanding of the need for a QA system in connection with the framework requirements of the Lisbon Convention has been achieved through

<p>Convention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- integrated seminars</li> <li>- TA for ENIC staff</li> <li>- a seminar on recognition</li> <li>- visits by ENIC staff to other countries</li> <li>- project documents on recognition, etc</li> </ul> <p>Implementation of a QA system was impeded by the late setting up of AZVO and its staffing and the ambiguities of national policy. What was possible was done through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- project documents:</li> <li>- induction of staff in QA principles</li> <li>-</li> </ul>
<p>Public awareness raising campaign for the stakeholders and publications concerning HE harmonization processes, student mobility and recognition of diplomas</p>	<p>Integrated seminars were held at all the universities; a special seminar was organized for the media people and one also for the students. The project documents related to the seminars were displayed on the website of MZOS. A Final Conference was planned as a National Higher Education Forum, where all the stakeholders for HE were invited.</p>
<p>Development of HE Management Information System as a tool to help the ENIC/NARIC office in its efficient functioning</p>	<p>Technical specifications and TA were provided for ENIC, also</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a technical proposal for relating the different existing systems to each other, and technical specifications and pricing for an archiving system and its connection to existing systems</li> </ul>
<p>Further development of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) by bilateral agreements between at least two Croatian universities;</p> <p>production and promotion of new guidelines of good practices of ECTS system;</p> <p>development and review process for setting up a National Qualification Framework</p>	<p>The following bilateral agreements were initiated by the project’s TAT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Croatian Military Institute and the Hungarian Miklós Zrínyi University of National Defence, not yet formalized but initial contacts made</i></li> <li>- <i>Strossmayer University of Osijek: signed agreement for a TEMPUS project with University of Pécs Hungary</i></li> <li>- <i>University of Zadar: first contacts made for European Studies with UK, HU and DK universities</i></li> <li>- <i>University of Zagreb- Faculty of Fine Arts with University of Applied Arts and Design in Hungary: action plan prepared by the Hungarian side , but no response yet from University of Zagreb’s Faculty</i></li> </ul> <p>The following publications were financially supported by the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>ECTS Handbook (EC)</i></li> <li>- <i>Student participation in QA (CoE)</i></li> <li>- <i>ESIB Handbook on QA</i></li> </ul> <p>The project documents related to this anticipated result:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Document on ECTS,</i></li> <li>- <i>Document on learning outcomes and curriculum design</i></li> <li>- <i>Handbook on QA</i></li> <li>- <i>Other background documents on certifications, university autonomy, universities in the XXIst century, university management, etc</i></li> </ul>
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### **3.3 Activities undertaken**

The project TOR (*q.v.*) divided its activities into six related clusters, as follows:

Cluster 1: Legislation that relates to higher education, recognition and student mobility

Cluster 2: Institutional capacity for the Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office.

Cluster 3: Development and implementation of the external quality control systems.

Cluster 4: Awareness campaign and publications.

Cluster 5: Technical specification of a management information system and its development.

Cluster 6: Advice and assistance on the further refinement of the ECTS.

As proposed in the Inception Report, a further item was added to Cluster 6, as 6.5: ‘Development and review process for setting up a National Qualification Framework’. Subsequently it was agreed that the activities related to ‘the Mobile Student’ (items 4.2 – 4.4) would be excluded from Cluster 4, and that the other activities in this cluster would be deferred until the final phase of the project. These changes were approved by the PIU, SPO and CFCU.

Advice and assistance in “the development and establishment of appropriate codification mechanisms for credential evaluation” (cluster 6, item 6.1) was included in the activities under Cluster 2.

Some activities were undertaken outside a strict interpretation of the project’s TOR, but with the support of the SPO.

The TL participated in a World Bank conference in Dubrovnik at the request of the EC Delegation, where he agreed the TAT would advise the team working on a ‘country background’ report for the OECD. This advice was given by the TL and the KE3 in Rijeka at the end of November 2005.

Following a meeting requested by the Rector of the Joint Education and Training Command “Petar Zrinsky” in September 2005 the TAT supported the beginning of a process intended to lead to its inclusion within the mainstream civil HE. The Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs of the Zrínyi Miklós University of National Defence and Security in Budapest visited Zagreb as a project STE and described how this objective had been achieved in Hungary. (See also under Cluster 6, below.)

#### **Cluster 1: Legislation that relates to higher education, recognition and student mobility.**

The TAT gave repeated advice regarding the legal problems of existing legislation relating to the recognition of foreign diplomas and periods of study abroad (see 3.1, above), and also that the interpretation of the new Law on Recognition was also being misinterpreted on the basis of outdated notions of “nostrification”. Several presentations were given on the structure of the law, on

what it stipulates and what not, as well as why the great majority of applications for the recognition of foreign qualifications were unnecessary under the Law.

Documentation was prepared and provided for the ENIC on (a) academic recognition, (b) professional recognition, (c) recognition procedures and (d) the role of ENIC/NARIC offices. These were provided in both English and Croatian. A presentation on the Lisbon Convention was made to a working party on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2004, and a briefing note was prepared for Ministers later in the same month.

The project commissioned a study on the legal regulations for the regulated professions in Croatia and the relationship between these and the new Law on Recognition. The completion of this study was deferred due to other assignments of the local STE, but was revived in the project's final phase. (The project has found that other legal texts need to be changed in parallel to changes in the Law on Recognition.)

A committee was set up by MZOS early in 2005 to consider amendments of the Recognition Law with KE1 as a member. He and KE3 took part in the first meeting and gave a presentation on the intentions of the Lisbon Convention.

The project organized a five day workshop on recognition in September 2005 which was conducted by NUFFIC experts from the Netherlands (see below, under Cluster 2). This was open to the members of the committee for recognition which the Ministry had established with members nominated by the Rectors' Conference (see under Cluster 2, below) as well as to others. After the workshop these members prepared a special Note to the Ministry (MZOŠ) explaining the urgent need to carry out the amendments in the Law on Recognition. MZOŠ promised to re-launch the work of the Committee on Amendments to the Law on Recognition and it was re-convened in December 2005.

At an early stage a local STE was commissioned to clarify the historical background of the present legal status of the Croatian HEIs. This study could not be finalised due to the STE's other assignments. As was reported in the second Progress Report, advice on and drafting of amendments for laws and regulations on HE was then postponed following a discussion with the SPO. In fact, all the activities of Cluster 1 were postponed until the Autumn 2005 at the request of the PIU and SPO and in agreement with them. From January 2006 another local legal experts have worked on the overall analysis of the Croatian legal texts related to HE, concentrating on different aspects (historical background, students' rights, autonomy, financial issues, staffing, etc). This was finalised at the end of February and is available in Croatian.

In the course of the series of training seminars and workshops starting in May 2005 (see below, under Cluster 6) several new issues relating to the Law on Higher Education were raised. Most of these questions related to the responsibilities and relationships of AZVO, especially in relation to the evaluation and accreditation of programmes of study. For most of the academic staff the role of the Agency was not at all clear. This coincided with doubts which the TAT had felt, and the TAT prepared an analysis of the existing legal texts and background documents on AZVO and its relationship with the HEIs ((including their QA units) and with other bodies in the HE system. Based on the results of these findings, as well as a paper on the standard pattern of national QA in the EHEA, there was a meeting with decision makers in October 2005 where the TAT sought clarification on where AZVO was thought to stand in terms of QA within HE overall. No definitive resolution of the issues resulted from this meeting, either in discussion or subsequently.

### ***Cluster 2: Institutional capacity for the Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office.***

Throughout the initial project period Technical Assistance was provided to the ENIC Office that had been provisionally located in the Ministry. Guidance was given to the head of the unit on the principles of recognition under the Lisbon Convention. Additionally, documentation was prepared and provided for the ENIC Office and MZOŠ on (a) academic recognition, (b) professional recognition, (c) recognition procedures and (d) the role of ENIC/NARIC offices. These were provided in both English and Croatian.

There had been a tendency to assume, wrongly, that the role of the Croatian ENIC Office was simply to implement the Croatian Law on the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications. Comparative studies were therefore presented on the work of three different ENIC/NARIC Offices in Europe (Hungary, UK and Norway) with notes on nineteen others. This material demonstrated that, while there are national variations in the role of ENIC/NARIC offices in relation to procedures for recognition, what is both common and essential is that such offices are centres for information and authoritative advice on HE qualifications across Europe (and, as NARIC centres, advice on EU Directives on the requirements of regulated professions).

Technical Assistance continued to be provided to the ENIC Office when it was re-located in what were to be the AZVO offices under a new head of the unit.

At an early project stage TA was provided on the design of an electronic database to record cases which were going through the recognition procedure. It was recommended that, given the doubtful value of precedents set under the old system of “nostrification”, it would not be cost-effective to include recognition carried out over the last 10 years in such a database, and that the records of these decisions should be retained in hard-copy.

In order to cope with the backlog of applications for the recognition of foreign qualifications the Ministry established a committee with members nominated by the Rectors’ Conference. An international STE (the Director of the Hungarian ENIC/NARIC Office) and KE3 met this committee on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2005 and responded to the members’ queries about practice elsewhere.

The project ToR referred to training for credential evaluators in the HEIs, but it did not appear that any such evaluators had been identified within the institutions. The integrated seminars which the project held at the universities (see under Cluster 6, below) did however provide the background understanding which such evaluators would need.

The project organized a five day training workshop from 19<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2005 with the assistance of NUFFIC experts from the Netherlands. This was in two parts: three days training on professional recognition and two days consultation for the ENIC Office on problem cases. The first three days were open to any credential evaluators nominated by the universities, to the members of the Rectors’ Conference Working Group for Evaluation, to representatives of professional organizations and to Ministries, as well as to the ENIC staff.

The project provided financial support for special training visits abroad for the ENIC Office’s personnel. These were (a) a seminar on professional recognition and the new related EU Directives in Maastricht, (b) a visit to NUFFIC in the Netherlands, (c) a visit to the ENIC/NARIC office in Finland and (d) a visit to the ENIC/NARIC office in Hungary.

### ***Cluster 3: Development and implementation of the external quality control systems.***

The assumptions on which the activities of Cluster 3 were projected were not realised in the lifetime of the project. It had been intended that liaison with the CARDS 2003 Quality Assurance project would 'significantly determine the implementation of' Cluster 3 (item 3.1), while 'Advice on documentation necessary to implement quality assurance into universities' (item 3.2) would 'relate to, and to an extent be determined by whatever has been achieved through the production of a handbook resulting from the TEMPUS 'Development of Quality Assurance in HE' project (initiated 2001)'. In the event there was no conjunction of the two CARDS projects, the implementation of the CARDS 2003 project being repeatedly deferred, while the completed handbook resulting from the TEMPUS QA project was not received by the TAT until the end of January 2006, when it did not prove to be a useful input.

Moreover, national systems for QA can take different forms, and, subject to the principles endorsed by the Bergen Ministers' Conference (see 3.1, above) it is for each country to determine the appropriate structures. One problem faced by the project has been the difficulty in identifying what “external quality control systems” were intended for Croatia. One aspect of this difficulty was the lack of consistency in the laws and other quasi-authoritative documents (see Cluster 1 above), another was the substantial delay in establishing AZVO in any fully functional form, and a third was the precedent set by the procedures employed in order to evaluate and accredit a very large number of re-structured study programmes in April/May 2005, in advance of the proper establishment of AZVO.

The TAT was not consulted on the “Criteria for the Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions and Programmes of Study in Higher Education” which were promulgated by MZOŠ on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2005<sup>18</sup>. Nor was the TAT consulted on the most appropriate approach to the requirement in the Law on Science and Higher Education that by the academic year 2005-6 programmes of study should conform to the Bologna cycles and be structured according to ECTS.

Despite the constraints noted above, many of the project's activities did provide a necessary foundation for a national QA system. At an early stage in the project a paper was prepared on ECTS, learning outcomes and curriculum design (in Croatian as well as in English) which provided initial guidance on programme evaluation. The project also produced guidelines on institutional planning (such planning by HEIs should be a significant consideration in institutional evaluation). These papers were made available on the internet, and were distributed for seminars at all Croatian universities (see below under Cluster 6).

These seminars were planned to provide, *inter alia*, an understanding of the elements of good programme design and thereby the principles underpinning programme evaluation. QA featured explicitly in a number of presentations, and the first four seminars were planned to include an exercise in programme evaluation.

The series also included a one-day seminar at each university on Quality Management, thus providing a basis for the development of institutional evaluation.

By January 2006 the staffing of AZVO was judged to be sufficiently established to undertake some training. Eventually it proved possible to hold nine one-hour sessions with them on the basic principles underlying systems of HE and the related QA processes and procedures. The TAT also briefed the Agency staff in preparation for their visit<sup>19</sup> to the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) in the week beginning 6<sup>th</sup> March.

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<sup>18</sup> The project only became aware of this document through the EC Delegation on 26<sup>th</sup> January.

<sup>19</sup> Paid for and arranged by AZVO itself.

It was only at the end of November 2005 that the TAT became aware of the National Foundation for Science, HE and Technological Development (NZZ)’s support for eight projects in “The Development of Quality Assurance Units”. Four of these projects were at the University of Rijeka, and a visit was made there in January 2005 to discuss the progress which these were making. The TAT also had meetings with the project leaders of the three projects at the University of Zagreb, and visited Osijek for meetings with the NZZ project team at those universities.

The TAT was invited to participate in a seminar to be organised by the University of Zagreb NZZ project (‘The Establishment of a Quality Management system at the University of Zagreb’) but unfortunately this was then postponed until after the CARDS project's completion.

The TAT finally decided to produce its own “Quality Assurance Manual” to mark the completion of the project.

#### ***Cluster 4: Awareness campaign and publications.***

The activities of this cluster were reconsidered during the realisation of the project.

The activities related to the re-launching of the journal “Mobile Student” was removed from the TOR, the TAT believing that the publication of a new free-standing newsletter would not contribute anything additional to the sources of information which had become available to students. It was agreed it was better to exploit the existing newsletters, journals and websites at the universities, and open a special column in these to deal with opportunities for mobility. In order to further this end, a joint seminar was organized for the media and the PR officers of the universities in the penultimate phase of the project.

The seminar was attended by nineteen people, but these were mainly from the HEIs and AZVO, and only one journalist was present, who did not herself participate in the discussions. Attention was focused on the role of Media Relations as part of an overall, integrated marketing strategy, and discussion and working groups considered (a) the identification of issues that deter Higher Education from achieving effective PR and media relations in Croatia and (b) the development of proposals to address them.

The issues which were identified included: (i) a lack of PR skills and personnel within the sector together with a lack of interest and expertise in HE on the part of the Media, (ii) weak links between HE and the labour market, especially small companies, resulting in a lack of adequate knowledge about HE qualifications, particularly the new qualifications resulting from the Bologna Process, and (iii) a lack of information centres where students could have access to information.

Supported by case study materials, and through further discussion and consideration of these issues, participants made strong recommendations on ways of addressing the issues, identifying the following as priorities:

- State funded research on HE and its problems in relation to the various target groups;
- The development of an effective PR strategy for the sector, developed in partnership with other Croatian organisations well-placed to support such activity, e.g. NGOs, the professional education sector, etc.
- A PR round table/forum including representatives of the HEIs, MZOS, AZVO, student and employers' organisations and other partner organisations.

- The development of management and leadership skills within the Public Sector as part of an overall Lifelong Learning strategy.
- Partnerships between HEIs and the Media, supporting the training of media personnel in educational journalism and of HEI personnel in PR.

The main resources required to take these issues forward were identified as those within HE and the Media with appropriate skills as well as access to information and funding, possibly through EU Accession funds. To support successful applications to potential donors, training in writing project proposals was also felt to be necessary.

The project’s marketing specialist (KE4) considered the major challenge facing the HE sector in Croatia to be the communication gap within the sector, and between it and its various target audiences. The sector should see closing this gap to be an urgent priority. She strongly recommended that the proposed Forum be established to support:

- Research into the needs of the HE target markets.
- Awareness-raising of the quality and opportunities provided by the sector – aimed at students and potential students, staff, industry and commerce, the general public and the wider European community.
- Training of PR Officers for the HE sector.
- Training in educational journalism.
- Further promotional activity on the Bologna Process and its implications, including for the free movement of students.
- The development of a strategic marketing plan for the sector.

Rather than the originally planned leaflets, the project has prepared publications on Quality Assurance, including for programmes using ECTS and orientated to learning outcomes. Additionally, the project has funded the publication of translations of the ECTS Users’ Guide and publications of the Council of Europe, OECD, Directorates General of EU and ESIB.

In March 2006, the project sponsored a seminar for students, in conjunction with the National Council of Students.

#### ***Cluster 5: Technical specification of a management information system and its development.***

At the request of the SPO and the interim Director of the ENIC Office activities under Cluster 5, which had been intended to start with the setting up and operational running of the AZVO, were included in the first project phase. The project’s IT expert (KE2) therefore arrived in a rather turbulent period, with the ENIC Office and the staff of the Office for European Integration working to clear the backlog of recognition cases (see under Cluster 2, above). The TL consequently gave KE2 the task of beginning a fact finding mission under activity 5.1, related to the general academic MIS. This resulted mainly in technical questions relating to how the already developed ISVU system could be used for the purposes of AZVO, once its needs had been defined.

An ACCES database had been set up at the interim ENIC Office by one of the temporary students working there, and it was found that with only slight tuning it was capable of serving that Office’s needs. The missing element was an archived electronic data base for the recognition documents, and there were discussions of the technical question of how to link the present ISVU database to the ENIC Office database, and how it could be made functional for both a general academic MIS for use by AZVO and the more specific needs of the ENIC Office.

During the third phase of the project a proposal was agreed by the Steering Committee, with the approval of the SPO, to re-allocate the expert days originally planned for this cluster. The reasons were firstly that the situation was not yet sufficiently developed for the project to deal with a general HEMIS, and, secondly, that the forthcoming CARDS 2003 project would be much more timely and substantial in this respect.

In the fourth project phase technical specifications were prepared for an MIS for ENIC and for AZVO, and further fact finding work was done to investigate the most feasible use of the existing information systems for HE. The project made several proposals for the further development of the existing systems and their possible future use in a harmonized HEMIS. Contacts were also made with the Zagreb Faculty of Organisation and Informatics to define the outline of a possible strategy for management information systems at HEIs in Croatia. However, in order to prepare a fully operational system plan (as a feasibility study) the project still needed to know what the overall MZOŠ strategy was concerning an MIS in education in general and HE in particular.

In the last phase of the project, at the request of the head of the ENIC Office, the technical specifications of an archiving data system for recognition cases were developed together with a costing. The technical aspects of possible interrelations between the ISVU and MOZVAG systems and the planned introduction of a complete and unified financial management system based on SAP were also explored.

#### ***Cluster 6: Advice and assistance on the further refinement of the ECTS.***

The project TOR for Cluster 6 included, as item 6.2, ‘Develop the transcript for the Diploma Supplement’ and as item 6.4 ‘Production and promotion of new guidelines/codes of good practice for the ECTS implementation’. As was pointed out in the Inception Report the Diploma Supplement is essentially a document whose value lies in having been standardised for the whole EHEA, while the ECTS guidelines had been recently revised. The ECTS ‘Users Guide’ published by the EC Directorate-General for Education and Culture contains a section on the standard Diploma Supplement as it is used throughout Europe. This 2004 version of this document was translated by the project into the Croatian language at an early stage, and made available on the internet, and was supplemented by a project document entitled ‘ECTS, learning outcomes and curriculum design’, also translated into Croatian and made available on the internet. Subsequently the ECTS Users Guide was updated, and this 2005 document has also been translated into Croatian and published by the project.

The project, at an early stage, commissioned a study which was to include an assessment of the extent to which the use of the Diploma Supplement was being introduced or was actively planned for introduction in the HEIs, and any associated problems. The TAT has believed that the main problem is an administrative one which would be relieved through the introduction of a HEMIS system (it was understood that the ISVU system was capable of generating Diploma Supplements without difficulty).

The study was principally to report on (a) the extent to which the Croatian HEIs had introduced ECTS, with appropriate curriculum structures, (b) the extent to which this was being actively planned by other HEIs, (c) the extent to which the introduction/planning of ECTS was within a commonly agreed national qualification framework following the Bologna principles and (d) any particular difficulties or misconceptions involved. (The study was also to include an enquiry whether the potential which ECTS carries for the planning of part-time study was being exploited.)

As was reported in the third Progress Report, a satisfactory report of this study had not been received, but, in relation to the ECTS items (a) to (c), had by then been made redundant by the general re-structuring of the programmes of study. On item (d) the TAT had been persuaded on anecdotal evidence that the allocation of ECTS credits was frequently based on inappropriate criteria. The use of appropriate criteria had, however, been covered in detail in the project paper on ‘ECTS, learning outcomes and curriculum design’ and the principles were also a matter for discussion at the seminars (see below).

The project was committed to training in the design and evaluation of programmes of study on the principles underlying ECTS (ToR Cluster 6, item 6.4). The TAT was keen to begin its support for a national QA system as soon as possible, but AZVO was not sufficiently developed to make this feasible. It was therefore decided to give greater emphasis to working with the HEIs themselves, and seminars were planned, initially to take place in four universities (Rijeka, Zadar, Split and Dubrovnik). These seminars were intended to bring together a number of related concepts (learning outcomes, level descriptors, ECTS credits and recognition), using curriculum design and evaluation as a general approach, with a further day devoted to Quality Management. The plans, including content, were discussed with the Rectors collectively<sup>20</sup> and at three<sup>21</sup> of the universities where the seminars were to take place.

These first four seminars were planned to take place in May and June 2005. While the planning was underway the TAT learned that the great majority of programmes of study were in process of being re-structured for accreditation, but understood that the revised programmes were to be submitted by the beginning of April. No university suggested that the seminars should be cancelled or postponed.<sup>22</sup>

One purpose of the integrated seminars was the creation of a sense of ownership for the reforms being assisted and supported by the project, but the participation in the first set of seminars was very disappointing. While an average of nearly 38 people took part in three of the combined seminars, the attendance was very intermittent over the four days, with very little continuity, and it became impossible to maintain the planned programme. This frequently meant a decision in the morning of each day in consultation with the people who were present as to what parts of the programme they were interested in. The unstable attendance pattern meant that in only two cases was it possible to include the practical exercise planned, and in no case was it carried through to the full. There was very little involvement of senior staff, even for the final one-day seminar on Quality Management which had been planned specifically for them. In one case, the University of Zadar, only two participants appeared, one on each of two successive days, before the seminars were abandoned.

The second set of seminars, which took place in October 2005, was re-planned. Four of these were in Zagreb, three for Faculties (divided into ‘library-based’, ‘laboratory-based’ and ‘studio-based’); these were focussed more on the specific problem of learning outcomes and how to achieve them. Faculties were visited in advance by the TAT and in the week of the seminar by visiting international STEs. The fourth was a one one-day seminar on Quality Management for members of the Rectorate and Deans.

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<sup>20</sup> But in the absence of the Rector of the University of Zadar.

<sup>21</sup> The exception, for logistical reasons, being Dubrovnik.

<sup>22</sup> It may have been a mistake to leave much of the communication of the planning period to our Office Manager and each university’s respective International Officer.

Our perception, also reflected in the participants’ evaluations<sup>23</sup>, was that these seminars were welcomed with some enthusiasm, although many participants expressed regret that the participation rate was not much higher.

The final seminars were in the University of Osijek, and comprised a two-day seminar at the programme level and a one-day seminar on Quality Management. The university received a planning visit the previous June, but the first part of the programme was reduced to two days at the request of the university shortly before it was to take place. The visiting experts spent two days visiting Faculties in the time thus made available.

In total 246 people participated in the two series of seminars, excluding presenters - a significantly greater penetration than the seminar provision for 60 participants anticipated in the TOR and Technical Proposal.

It was agreed with the Vice-Rector of the University of Zadar that the TAT would return to the university for discussion of the seminar topics of the workshop, and Key Experts 1 and 3 visited the university for this purpose on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> February 2006. Meetings took place with the Rector and Vice-Rector as well as with other staff and with students.

A series of short seminars were conducted in Zagreb for the Joint Education and Training Command “Petar Zrinsky” and members of the Ministry for Defence, at their request.

Item 6.3 in the TOR for Cluster 6 referred to ‘assistance with the development of a series of bilateral agreements between Croatian universities and EU counterpart universities’. This was raised on the TAT’s visits to universities beginning in the Inception Phase, and were followed up in the preparations for the seminars (see above) and in the course of the seminars themselves. For the University of Rijeka the TAT supported a link with a Hungarian Co-operative Research Centre in the field of Biotechnology(*not yet formalized*), and at the University of Zadar a number of different universities in the EU were proposed for collaboration in European Studies(*not yet formalized*). The Faculty of Medicine in Osijek asked for a help in finding a partner for a TEMPUS project in curriculum design and management, and the University of Pécs in Hungary, whose Medical School has an established record in such projects, was proposed. The latter university was contacted, and a formal agreement was signed. A second bilateral agreement was set up between the Hungarian Miklós Zrínyi University of National Defence and Security and the Croatian Joint Education and Training Command “Petar Zrinski” following a meeting with the Rector of the Croatian institution (initial contacts made, agreement not yet formalized). The University of Zagreb’s Academy of Fine Art was put in touch with the University of Applied Arts and Design in Hungary (*an action plan has been prepared by the Hungarian side, but no response yet from University of Zagreb’s Faculty*)

An intended ‘mapping’ of all the international relationships the Croatian universities currently have (i.e. the main partner countries and universities and also the different study fields and research thrusts) could not be completed due to other demands.<sup>24</sup>

In the first phase of the project a number of contacts were made with other sub-sectors of education in Croatia with the intention of developing co-operation in defining an NQF. Meetings

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<sup>23</sup> An evaluation of the seminars by the participants was part of the originally planned programme for the first set of seminars, but under the circumstances it was decided that it was not feasible for this to be implemented.

<sup>24</sup> Not in the project ToR.

took place with the Institute for Education, the VET Agency, and the Croatian National Observatory and also with professional organizations and different chambers, and KE1 took part in a seminar on NQF organized by ETF. During the seminars (above) the TAT explained the important role of an NQF in establishing the new ‘Bologna cycle’ study programmes. Those participants who believed that the design of the programmes for accreditation was not the final stage of development acknowledged this to be a future necessity, but to the surprise of the TAT almost all considered the definition of NQF ‘level descriptors’ to be a task for MZOS. This is not usually the case in other countries, where the Rector’s Conferences or the Bologna Committees take the initiative.

At the request of the Chairman of the Commission considering amendments to the Law on Recognition, Key Expert 1 prepared an ‘Action and Implementation’ plan for the elaboration of an NQF for Croatia.

### **3.4 Resources and budget used**

*Human and physical resources.* The assignment of the project has been undertaken by an experienced team of international experts from eligible countries as well as local experts from Croatia. The team has basically consisted of 4 key experts, and 12 short term international experts and 25 short term local experts.

The responsibility for choosing the local STEs in cooperation with MZOŠ was delegated to the Key Expert 1/Team Leader by the consortium leader HCG. The list of such experts was then submitted to the CFCU for approval. The international STEs were nominated by the Internal Advisory Board established by the Consultant and approved by the CFCU.

An Office Manager was appointed by Team Leader in consultation with the Project Director and the PIU. He started work in the second week of the inception period. It had initially been envisaged that it might be necessary for the Office Manager to be supported by an assistant/secretary support staff later in the implementation of the project but this was not found to be required. Three students were hired for technical help to ensure the smooth running of seminars.

The project local office has been on premises allocated for that purpose by the MZOŠ under the ToR. Initially it was within the Ministry, but in April 2005 was re-located, with the ENIC Office, to the office suite intended for AZVO (the offices of the secretariat of the original NCHE). Telephonic and internet access were provided by MZOŠ.

MZOS also provided an interactive web-based project platform within its intranet, with access restricted to the TAT. This was later transferred to an intranet system which had been set up for the use of AZVO.

*Budget.* The maximum budget available to implement this project has been €600,000. There has been provision for incidental expenditure up to a maximum value of €90,000 to cover eligible expenditure incurred under the Service Contract. This incidental expenditure could not be used for costs that were to be covered by the consultant as part of its fee rates, as defined by the TOR, and thus transfer of funds from incidental expenditure to fees was not permitted.

### **3.5 Assumptions and risks – status/update**

The ‘Assumptions and Risks’ in the Inception Report and then as modified in the Third Progress Report were as follows:

Assumptions	Risks and Response
The Government has a strategy and clear policy position on HE reforms.	Lack of an agreed upon strategy of and a coherent policy on HE reforms will make all the changes within the sector ad-hoc and leaves a large playground for power centres to enforce their own interests and this may lead to unintended political power games. (See Section 3.1, above)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the Law on Higher Education and Scientific Research and its amendments;</li> <li>- the Law on Recognition of Foreign Educational Qualifications; and</li> <li>- the Gov. Decree on the foundation of the Agency for HE are in place.</li> </ul>	The legal framework exists, but for example the Law on HE still does not include clear ToR for NCHE, NCS and the Agency. Their relationship to MZOS is not clear in practical terms. The Agency is still not yet fully functional. There are uncertainties in the institutional map of the HE system. There is a need for <b>some</b> governmental decrees and/or ministerial ordinances for the full implementation of the framework regulations of the laws.
The Government has acknowledged the importance of establishing a centralized Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office and has provided an appropriate level of funding.	<i>The Croatian ENIC Office now is one of the units of the Agency for Science and HE. The Agency is set up, but still not adequately functional. The core personnel of the ENIC Office is in place. The recognition processes and institutional responsibilities must be further clarified and the role of the Agency and its relations to the NCHE must be further clarified.</i>
The Government supports and promotes the importance of mobility in the Academic Community	There is a strong sentiment among the Academic Community in the country that Croatian scholars and students have been unfairly excluded from EU mobility programs. It is therefore in the country’s best interest for the Government to support and promote mobility, but support for mobility must equally include support for the recognition of foreign qualifications without undue hindrance. Current impediments currently mainly affect Croatian citizens returning from abroad; obstacles will also need to be removed for non-Croatians.
Public communication and awareness campaigns have been launched to promote ECTS and educational mobility	Prompted by the Bologna Process, discussions about the 2 tier system, ECTS and academic mobility are ubiquitous, though <i>some important elements of it (Qualification Framework, benchmark statements for disciplines) not always well-conveyed to Croatian higher education institutions and, to a certain extent, to the media. The Project will try to add substance to the rhetoric.</i>
Resources have been made available, from either the Croatian Ministries or the European Union or other donor agencies, to fund the databases that are essential for the full and effective implementation of the Project	<i>These databases are likely to provide important evidence to the Croatian funding bodies enabling scarce public funds for higher education to be used more effectively and efficiently. Hence, providing resources for these databases should be seen as a worthwhile mid-term investment. MZOS should define an overall strategy for a general educational MIS and a special one for HE and research.</i>

In the Fourth Progress Report this table was changed to the following. The assumptions made related to the conditions necessary for the realization of the specific objectives of the CARDS

2002 project, but since it was impossible to collaborate with the CARDS 2003 QA project, the last four were seen to relate to the foundations upon which that project could be built.

Assumptions	Risks and Response
The Amendment of the Law on Recognition and the related legal regulations will be in place	The second meeting of the Committee had been deferred but it seemed probable that when it returned to work there would be a positive outcome, considering its composition and resolution.
There will be an overall coordination and cooperation for setting up the NQF	At the end of this reporting period there was no evidence of an NQF being developed on a coherent basis, but it was encouraging that impending VET project had this within its ToR, which should provide a useful basis with this CARDS project.
NVVO and NVZ will find a proper place within the HE system	This was discussed with key figures in October and this issue will be furthered in the next reporting period.
The relationship between AZVO and the two Councils on the one hand the HEIS on the other will clearly defined	As above. The project will provide documentary basis for quality assurance in the Croatian HE system which consequently be adapted to the standard model.
The AZVO will be functional and professionally staffed	By the end of this reporting period it seemed impossible that this assumption would be sufficiently realized for the project’s training for the staff (other than the staff of the ENIC Office).
The specific needs for MIS within HE will be clearly defined	This will depend upon the resolution of other issues, but the project will provide a general outline for the needs.

See Section 4.4, below.

### ***3.6 Management and coordination arrangements***

The basic responsibilities of the different implementing actors have been those defined in the Terms of Reference:

- The Steering Committee has been in overall control and responsible for technical supervision.
- The Project Implementation Unit (PIU) has ensured direct supervision over the Technical Assistance team, and in collaboration with the TAT, has ensured preparation of monitoring reports for the Project Steering Committee.
- The CFCU has overseen contracting and procurement aspects as well as financial management in accordance with the decentralised implementation system.

There has been a Senior Programme Officer (SPO) nominated by the Project Partner to be in charge of day-to-day management and supervision of the Contractor’s overall performance. This was initially the Secretary of State for Higher Education and Technology, but in December 2004 there was a re-organisation within MZOŠ and he was designated Secretary of State for Science and Technology and the former Secretary of State for Research was given responsibility for HE. As such the latter was nominated SPO. At the same time the Assistant Minister for International Cooperation, was nominated Deputy SPO and the Assistant Minister for Research and

Development was nominated as a second Deputy SPO. These changes appeared to replicate the position of the Assistant Minister for Higher Education who had been nominated as Deputy SPO in November 2004. However, any possible confusion was removed when the Assistant Minister for Higher Education resigned in January 2005.

The Head of the PIU left on maternity leave in May 2005 and a new Head of the PIU was appointed. The latter then left at the end of January 2006, and was replaced in her turn.

As the lead company of the Consortium, the overall responsibility for the efficient management of the project has been with Helsinki Consulting Group Ltd. (HCG). It has provided full home-office support with contract management, and supervision of the TAT through a Home Office Project Director. In order to ensure well-coordinated and necessary professional and logistical backstopping for the TAT, an Internal Advisory Board was established, representing the consortium partners.

### **3.7 Financing arrangements**

Payments have been made in euro in accordance with Article 28 of the General Conditions into the bank account notified by the Consultant to the Contracting Authority in accordance with Article 20.7 of the General Conditions.

The payments were made according to the following schedule, subject to the provisions of Articles 28 to 33 of the General Conditions:

<b>Month</b>		<b>EUR</b>
1	Pre-financing payment	273 900
7	Interim payment in Month 7	135 022
13	Interim payment in Month 13*	127 478
19	Forecast balance	59 600
	<b>Total</b>	<b>596 000</b>

\* Invoiced only –payment pending

The actual amounts paid have been based on the Consultant’s invoices, setting out the days actually worked for each category of expert and the incidental expenditure actually incurred during the period. The invoices were to be paid, subject to the approval of the corresponding progress report, until the sum of the amounts paid was 90% of the maximum contract value. No further payment were to be made until the payment of the balance, if any, which would be the difference between the total amounts already paid and the final certified value of the contract.

### **3.8 Key Quality/Sustainability issues**

The project has from, its inception<sup>25</sup>, committed itself to efficient management, organisation and communication, as well as a partnership with all the project stakeholders and collaboration with other projects in the sector.

For the sake of sustainability, emphasis has also been placed on the continuous development of sustainable project structures, for example: working in teams, involving local as well as

<sup>25</sup> See the Inception Report

international experts in every stage, and with a strong orientation towards building Croatian expertise by transferring skills from the latter to the former.

From the beginning of the project it was appreciated that there were already a significant number of Croatian academics who were well aware of European developments and the consequent need for reform in Croatian HE. Initially this seemed a relatively closed group with many of its members lacking executive authority, but as the project progressed it became evident that the numbers were even greater than had been supposed and that they quite frequently included Vice Rectors and Vice Deans, particularly in Zagreb. The enthusiasm shown by students for HE reform was also noted.

At first it appeared that what was necessary for the sustainability of the project’s objectives was the identification, moral support and, as far possible empowerment, of these ‘champions for change’, but by the third phase of project implementation it was recognised that the primary problem was that the commitment to reform, not only within Higher Education itself but also outside it, was not being converted into a functional system, for example by the Rectors’ Conference taking a pro-active initiative.<sup>26</sup>

In the early stages of the project the TAT was concerned that it was not being consulted, or even being kept adequately informed, on planned Ministerial initiatives which affected the realisation of the project’s terms of reference, or on related initiatives being taken within the sector itself. But progressively this situation improved, so that in the Fourth Progress Report it was possible to report that ‘The experts are usually kept informed of planned Ministerial initiatives and more frequently on initiatives of HEIs relating to the project’s terms of reference in formal (meetings, seminars) and informal ways (exchange of mails and CC-d mails) and are consulted before binding decisions are made (e.g. amendment of the Law on Recognition)’. Nonetheless the early difficulties did affect the project’s impact, and therefore its sustainability.

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<sup>26</sup> See the Fourth Progress Report.

## 4. Lessons learned

### *4.1 Policy and programme context – including institutional capacity*

The potential achievements of the project have been limited by a number of factors. The first of these is what is generally acknowledged within Croatia to be the inertia of the HE system. This can be more readily interpreted as the inertia of the academic community, certainly in regard to the reform of the educational process and its institutional context<sup>27</sup>. While there is compliance with the idea that certain system level reforms are required if Croatian HE is to conform to the ‘Bologna process’, many academics lack a deeply and personally felt commitment to the underlying rationale, or an understanding of how a genuine (rather than nominal) reform is essential for the resolution of many of the problems of which they complain. Problems are readily catalogued, and it is acknowledged that many of these generate and reinforce other problems, but there is little appreciation that many, if not all of the problems are capable of being resolved through the academic community itself taking the initiative. There is little sense of corporate responsibility, but even when individuals attain levels of authority this is often more an assumption of status rather than an acceptance of responsibility. While there are initiatives undertaken by individuals these are not sufficiently recognised to be part of any coordinated strategy and fail to effect any real change<sup>28</sup>. There is also a tendency to expect personal reward for individual initiatives, or even for any extra effort, rather than personal conviction being sufficient motivation.

Combined with a readiness to refer problems upwards, thus further reinforcing the inertia of the total system, institutional structures are not sufficiently well developed to provide for clear lines of communication, delegation and accountability, partially resulting from inconsistencies and ambiguities in the legal framework. Consequently, particularly in the absence of a clear ‘mapping’ of the HE system, institution building is characterised more by form than substance.

This situation may provide an explanation for why MZOŠ, while asserting the autonomy of the HE system, in practice directs it<sup>29</sup> rather than simply providing the context in which HE can effect its own reforms and be self-regulating. This in turn leads to dependency on the Ministry, which then reinforces the inertia in the system itself.

The impact which this has had on the project is that it has proved difficult, if not impossible to identify key actors within the system with whom the project could work in any expectation of a sustainable result.

### *4.2 Process of project planning/design*

Explanations for the general inertia of the Croatian HE system may be many, and may at least in part lie in a particular socio-political history, but one aspect is an underlying satisfaction with the

<sup>27</sup> This is not a comment on research activity.

<sup>28</sup> There are exceptions: for example initiatives taken within the University of Rijeka and in some Faculties elsewhere, while in national terms the initiative taken by the NZZ in QA could have a very positive outcome (the sponsored projects concerned have yet to reach the point of evaluation). These initiatives are not however within the recognised mainstream of projected reform.

<sup>29</sup> This is accomplished (a) through an over-detailed regulatory framework, (b) through acceptance of ad hoc requests from HEIs for MZOŠ to resolve local problems which should be for the HEIs themselves to resolve, and (c) through determining what is publicly to appear to be initiatives of compliant national bodies within the HE system itself.

quality of Croatian Higher Education itself (once certain problems can be resolved – e.g. the level of State funding). This satisfaction with the fundamental nature of Croatian HE seems to have led to a belief that the mobility of Croatian students and graduates within the EHEA only required the quality of the Croatian system to be made more transparent to the rest of the world, and that the only reforms needed for compliance with the ‘Bologna process’ was a change in the language used to describe the system<sup>30</sup>. Such a belief was at odds with a fundamental principle of Bologna, explicitly endorsed at the Bergen Conference of Ministers, that ‘the quality of academic programmes needs to be developed and improved for students and other beneficiaries of higher education across the EHEA’.

The CARDS 2002 project in support of mobility should have been introduced as part of an overall strategy for reform, grounded in an objective analysis of where reforms needed to be implemented and the order in which they could, realistically, be progressively achieved. In these terms the project’s start, despite being much later than originally intended, was naïve in the expectations for what could be reasonably achieved at that time.

It would have been preferable had the CARDS 2003 project in QA been planned to come before what was to be the CARDS 2002 project, or had the two been planned conjointly, but the CARDS 2003 project, as conceived, required institutional structures and relationships to be in place which are still in their infancy.

In retrospect, once the project had started, and was still in the Inception Phase, a stronger case should have been made for a more radical revision of the ToR, but a radical reappraisal was being discouraged and the problems which would be encountered, particularly the inertia, were underestimated by the TAT. As it was, activities of the predefined ‘clusters’ were re-allocated, and the need for an NQF added to the list.

The reallocation of items between the clusters allowed for integrated seminars to take place where the HEIs were located instead of having seminars in the capital on separate subjects. This was conceptually valid, and was an improvement upon the original plans for the project implementation. Their potential impact was however reduced by a lack of committed interest on the part of the beneficiaries, poor communication within the HEIs, and insufficient briefing to secure coordination with MZOS initiatives. Plans for presentations, with discussion and practical work, intended to demonstrate how the concepts in which the project was dealing come together as a coherent whole, and thereby generate the greater understanding needed for their implementation, had to be set aside in favour of responding to the declared interests of small groups of participants with little continuity in their membership.

This was one example where the TAT became frustrated by the need to react in an apparently ad hoc way. But there were other examples where the TAT had to react to circumstances which were created in an unplanned context, or on which they had not been adequately informed<sup>31</sup>. Flexibility was, however, the better option, and in the spirit of flexibility the TAT accepted some tasks outside a strict interpretation of the ToR. These included the investigation of a HEMIS strategy beyond the ToR for Cluster 5, the evaluation of R&D projects, extensive comments on a draft OECD country report and TA for the integration of military training into the civil HE system. There were however other issues on which they would have been happy for their advice to be

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<sup>30</sup> The obverse of this in respect of foreign qualifications being the question whether the latter match up to Croatian standards – hence a continuing attachment to the notion of ‘nostrification’.

<sup>31</sup> The TAT suffered from inadequate briefing in the first months in particular, but there was a significant improvement from the 7<sup>th</sup> month of implementation.

sought at an early stage: such as the strategy employed for the re-modelling, evaluation and accreditation of programmes of study.

There were also frustrations caused by, e.g. advice on the necessity of urgent amendments to the legal framework having to be related to a local timescale of meetings, particularly when these were suspended due to new-found priorities or did not take place as scheduled and were reconvened for times which were no longer convenient for the project.

As has been noted elsewhere, the project had difficulty in following through ‘The development and implementation of the quality assurance system assisting the recognition process in accordance with the framework requirements of the Lisbon Convention’ when it remained unclear what form Croatia wished this QA system to take, and when the establishment of the Agency in any workable form was so delayed.

#### ***4.3 Project scope (objectives, resources, budget, etc)***

The overall project context remained valid, given that Croatia, in signing the Bologna Declaration, had declared its membership of the EHEA. It is however arguable that the way in which the project itself was defined was misconceived for the stage in the realisation of Croatia’s integration into the Bologna process at which the project was introduced (see 4.2, above).

Apart from the key experts, the main human resources were the short term experts (STEs). With the international STEs the chief difficulty was to harmonise their availability, which required long-term planning, with the short-term flexibility demanded by local circumstances. This need for long-term planning was exacerbated by cumbersome and unnecessary procedures for the local approval of the international STEs. In the view of the TAT their appointment should be the responsibility of the Consultant, given especially that there is ongoing project monitoring.

In terms of locally recruited STEs, what was striking was that, apart from one or two exceptions, there was a reluctance to take part in the project, particularly for assignments of more than one or two days<sup>32</sup>. It also appeared that some local STEs were more interested in their fee than in the assignment.

Initially it appeared that the incidentals budget would not be sufficient for project events, including the integrated seminars outside Zagreb. Savings were therefore made (a) by using the national per diem rate<sup>33</sup> for international experts working outside Zagreb, rather than the flat rate per diem defined by the EC, and (b) by the TL’s own car being used for transport. The poor participation in the project events, however, meant that these savings did not prove to have been necessary.

#### ***4.4 Assumptions and risks***

The originally defined ‘assumptions and risks’ were redefined in the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase to make them more specific to the vagaries of local circumstances (see section 3.5, above). In the following the ‘risks and response’ included at that point are brought up to date.

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<sup>32</sup> Most of the longer term assignments took place in the last phase of the project

<sup>33</sup> With hotel costs paid.

Assumptions	Risks and Response
The Amendment of the Law on Recognition and the related legal regulations will be in place	The second meeting of the Committee in the early phase of the project had been deferred but it seemed probable that when it returned to work there would be a positive outcome, considering its composition and resolution. Until the end of the project the Committee had 5 meetings. If the amendment will not be approached on a clearly defined needs and strategy its work will conserve the present situation.
There will be an overall coordination and cooperation for setting up the NQF	At the end of the project there was no evidence of an NQF being developed on a coherent basis, but it was encouraging that impending VET project had this within its ToR, which should provide a useful basis with this CARDS project. MZOS has set up a working group to research on the still existing qualifications and the new qualifications by the introduction of the new Bologna cycles.
NVVO and NVZ will find a proper place within the HE system	Discussions with key figures in October 2005 did not generate a clear outcome within the project period; one final project outcome is a further paper on the issue.
The relationship between AZVO and the two Councils on the one hand and the HEIS on the other will be clearly defined	See the reference to the place of NVVO and NVZ above. In addition to the paper indicated there (which includes the place of AZVO), a final project outcome is a handbook on the principles underpinning QA in the EHEA which can be observed in whatever Croatian model is developed.
The AZVO will be functional and professionally staffed	Given the lack of clarity on its role, AZVO was not yet able to be fully functional. However, the staffing had become sufficiently determined for the project to provide them with some initial QA training (in addition to the training provided for the staff of the ENIC Office).
The specific needs for MIS within HE will be clearly defined	This will depend upon the resolution of other issues, but the next incoming CARDS 2003 project may provide a general outline for the needs and for its fulfilments.

#### ***4.5 Project management/coordination arrangements and stakeholder participation***

The project started remarkably delayed. However during the inception period it was evident that some preconditions for project implementation as described in the Terms of Reference of the Project did not exist. The Client, MZOŠ, lacked resources in particular in staffing Croatian ENIC Office. Since the change of the SPO and EC Delegation’s proactive role in late 2004 the Client has shown due commitment and cooperation have been supportive. Even the change of Director of the PIU three times during the lifetime of the project has not hindered project implementation. The decisions have been taken in the MZOS in an effective manner as well as supporting letters issued quickly.

Consequently activities that were originally scheduled to the second and third quarters were shifted to be implemented during fifth and even sixth quarters of the project. The accumulation of project

activities until the project phasing out period has caused some delays in reporting by the Consultant.

We have to emphasise that other sub-sectors of education were rather enthusiastic about the project, especially the VET sector, NGOs related to education and higher education especially and also some of the professional organizations. Concerning the VET sector, during the second phase of the project very active co-operation had been developed between the TAT and the VET Agency in the form of meetings and joint participation in seminars organized either by the project or the VET Agency.

As for the NGOs, we have established good working relations with the Croatian National Observatory of ETF, the SIC, the IDIZ-CERD and the Zavod za školstvo. Their members frequently participated in seminars organized by the project, and we have participated in their conferences.

Related to the recognition and qualification issues the project also set up relations with the Chamber of Commerce, and some of the professional organizations, like medicine and law.

Special emphasis has to be given to the Ministry of Defence with which from the fourth phase of the project an almost everyday contact has been established. The major emphasis was on the integration of military training into the civil higher education and so all the matters related to this: quality assurance, recognition, ECTS, mobility, programme design and learning outcomes. The responsible persons at the Ministry were the most enthusiasts in taking part of our seminars and also the satellite institutes under the auspice of that Ministry.

Other sectorial ministries having an interest in problems related to the recognition of diplomas and qualifications were much more reserved or had shown a lack of interest. This relates specially to the problem of the Work Book and the Ministry of Labour.

#### ***4.6 Project financing arrangements***

All in all relations with the Contracting Authority has been supporting and cooperative. However this being the first decentralised project in Croatia under the CFCU it has been reflected in a lack of experience in some extent. When written guidelines are asked they have been issued late or have been contradictory or even misleading. This is the case in particular in VAT issue and in approval of the interim reports. Part of the confusion may have been caused the fact that the project reporting periods do not go in parallel with the project invoicing. The real bottleneck has been the VAT issue which had not been settled down satisfactory from consultant's nor EC's point of view by the end of the project.

In the decentralised projects to come it is recommended that any guidelines would be handed over to the Consultant by the CFCU in a written form on an early stage of a project implementation – preferable during an inception period.

Initially it appeared that the incidentals budget would not be sufficient for project events, including the integrated seminars outside Zagreb. Savings were therefore made (a) by using the national per diem rate<sup>34</sup> for international experts working outside Zagreb, rather than the flat rate per diem

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<sup>34</sup> With hotel costs paid.

defined by the EC, and (b) by the Team Leader’s own car being used for transport. However, this was a lengthy procedure and in terms of project accounting a labour intensive experience.

The final back flash was experienced when the prolongation of the project by two weeks until 4 April 2006 (without any financial consequences) could not be issued because the request that was prepared by the Consultant on 14 February 2006 was not processed from the CFCU to the EC Delegation in a due course.

#### ***4.7 Sustainability***

From the beginning of the project it was appreciated that there were already a significant number of Croatian academics who were well aware of European developments and the consequent need for reform in Croatian HE. Initially this seemed a relatively closed group with many of its members lacking executive authority, but as the project progressed it became evident that the numbers were even greater than had been supposed and that they quite frequently included Vice Rectors and Vice Deans, particularly in Zagreb. The enthusiasm shown by students for HE reform was also noted.

At first it appeared that what was necessary for the sustainability of the project’s objectives was the identification, moral support and, as far possible empowerment, of these ‘champions for change’, but by the third phase of project implementation it was recognised that the primary problem was that the commitment to reform, not only within Higher Education itself but also outside it, was not being converted into a functional system, for example by the Rectors’ Conference taking a pro-active initiative.<sup>35</sup>

The sustainability of the outcomes of the CARDS 2002 project will largely depend upon whether the CARDS 2003 project carries these forward, e.g. through the development of the role of NVVO and AZVO, and through the development of QA within the HEIs. While this latter project is focussed on QA, provided this is not treated too narrowly it should encourage the development of the structures and coherent strategies necessary for the reform of Croatian HE.

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<sup>35</sup> See the Fourth Progress Report.

## **Annexes**

- *Updated Logframe Matrix from last Annual Report*
- *Summary performance data (purpose, results and expenditure – cumulative to date)*
- *Other*

## Logical Framework

	<p><b>Logical Framework</b></p>	<p><b>Title of project: Higher Education Mobility: Diploma Recognition and Legislation.</b></p>	<p><b>Estimated duration of project: 18 months</b></p>	<p><b>Page n° 37 -</b></p>
		<p><b>Country: Croatia</b></p>	<p><b>Prepared on: January 17<sup>th</sup> 2003</b></p>	

<b>Intervention logic</b>	<b>Objectively verifiable indicators</b>	<b>Sources of verification</b>	<b>Assumptions</b>
<p><b>Global objective:</b> The harmonisation of the Croatian Higher Education system with the standards and practices of the EU member states is furthered, thus opening the way to diploma recognition and facilitating Croatia’s European Integration process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HE institutions harmonised with the European statutes of HE institutions</li> <li>• Number of policy measures taken for harmonization of HE</li> </ul>	<p>Government sources Specific surveys UNESCO reports DG EAC reports University reports</p>	
<p><b>Project purpose:</b> <i>The higher education reform in Croatia is fostered by introducing academic achievements and competence recognition at policy and institutional level, in line with the Bologna Declaration. and the Lisbon Convention .</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of the National Information Centre for Academic Mobility and Recognition (NICAMR) / Croatian ENIC/NARIC office</li> <li>• Number of Faculties using the ECTS</li> <li>• (%) Increased two-way mobility of students, teachers and administration personnel at HE institutions</li> <li>• Number of exchanges within the framework of SOCRATES II/ERASMUS</li> <li>• (%) Increased public investment in HE</li> <li>• Number of stakeholders involved in HE reform</li> </ul>	<p>State budget Project report by NICAMR office Reports and publications of the MOST Evaluation of seminars and workshops, printed matter used in the information campaign Bureau for statistics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Law on HE and Scientific Research adopted by the Parliament</li> <li>• Continued government support for the harmonisation process of education systems</li> <li>• University/Academic support for introduction of change</li> <li>• Continued funding for NICAMR office</li> <li>• Croatian application for participation in SOCRATES II/ERASMUS approved by the EC</li> </ul>
<p><b>Results:</b></p> <p>1. The legislation that relates to higher education, recognition and student mobility is amended.</p> <p>2. The so-called NICAMR is further developed in order to ensure that it meets European Union standards and system requirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of new rules and regulations adopted or current laws amended in accordance with EU criteria</li> <li>• Establishment of NICAMR offices: number of personnel assigned to it (age, sex, qualifications), number of personnel trained as credential evaluators (age, sex, qualifications); attendance rate at seminars and workshops (age, sex, qualifications); number of recognized diplomas</li> <li>• (%) Reduced time gap between demand and confirmation of recognition.</li> <li>• Number of appeals to the decisions made.</li> </ul>	<p>National Gazette</p> <p>Statute of the office Training and workshops’ reports Certificates of credential evaluators NICAMR annual reports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act on Recognition and Equivalence of Foreign Certificates and Diplomas adopted by the Parliament</li> <li>• New legislation adopted by the Parliament</li> <li>• Acceptance by the academic community</li> <li>• Academics change to <b>competency based system</b> based on European learning outcomes model</li> <li>• Diploma Supplement produced and operational</li> </ul>

<p>3. The development and implementation of quality control systems is fostered.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality Assurance systems implemented and accredited by the NCHE using standards specified by the QAA</li> <li>• No. of meetings of experts from the CARDS 2002 and 2003 projects</li> <li>• No. of stakeholders involved in the quality control system</li> <li>• No. of institutions adopting the criteria developed meeting EU standards</li> <li>• No. of programmes for the implementation of the systems.</li> </ul>	<p>National Gazette Institutional audit trail established External examiners reports NCHE reports QAA reports Professional bodies reports Consultancy reports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QAA system properly implemented and enforced</li> <li>• Acceptance by MOST</li> <li>• Acceptance by academic community</li> <li>• Continued governmental funding</li> <li>• Government provision of a legislative framework for quality in HE institutions</li> <li>• Rectors office assumes the role of providing a basis for institutional audit and providing quality implementation systems in universities</li> <li>• Staff availability for training</li> </ul>
<p>4. The awareness on higher education harmonisation requirements is increased.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and quality of public communication editions (journals, brochures, handbooks, manuals, etc.)</li> <li>• Number of informative round tables and number of participants</li> <li>• Editorial office of journal established and functioning, two pilot editions published</li> <li>• Circulation list established</li> <li>• Level of sponsorship/advertising revenue generated</li> </ul>	<p>Publications and promotional material printed Project reports of NICAMR office Journal pilot editions published</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willingness of academic community to participate and make contributions to the journal</li> <li>• Funding from sponsorship/advertising</li> <li>• State funding</li> <li>• Adequate revenue/income for continuation past the two pilot editions</li> </ul>
<p>5. A higher education management information system is developed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equipment needs analysis drafted</li> <li>• MIS system technical specifications elaborated</li> </ul>	<p>HEMIS/FEMIS system and the system in NICAMR office working</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State funding adequate and available</li> <li>• EU/donor funding for further development of database and its extension to all the universities in Croatia</li> </ul>
<p>6. The ECTS is further refined.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full use of ECTS enabling two-way mobility</li> <li>• Codification mechanism established</li> <li>• The transcript of the Diploma Supplement</li> <li>• No. of bilateral agreements</li> <li>• New guidelines/models of good practice for ECTS implementation adopted.</li> </ul>	<p>Information package Diploma Supplement, other ECTS documents SOCRATES II/ERASMUS reports Consultancy reports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acceptance by academic community</li> <li>• Legislative change introduced</li> </ul>



**Table 1: Summary performance data (results) cumulative**

Cluster activity	Expected Results	Quantity	Quality	Execution
<b>Cluster 1</b>	<b>Legislation</b>			
Action 1.1	Comparative study of EU policies regarding recognition	1	Document: policy analysis based on SWOT	Done
Action 1.2	Proposal for amendments for laws on higher education	1	Document: background study on the law	Done
Action 1.3	Draft regulations for non regulated and regulated professions	1	Document: draft proposals	Done
	Analysis of the legal status of regulated professions	1	Document: background study and proposals	Done
<b>Cluster 2</b>	<b>Institutional Capacity Building</b>			
Action 2.1	Description of 3 different EU countries recognition offices	1	Document: description and comparative analysis	Done
	Proposal for organisational structure and function	2	Document: draft proposal Mission statement (draft)	Done
	Outlines for processes of recognition	1	Document: draft outlines, executive summary	Done
	Draft proposal for assessment criteria for the recognition of foreign qualifications	1	Document: draft outlines, executive summary	Done
Action 2.2	Draft outlines for archive and data base	1	Document: draft outlines	Done
Action 2.3	TA for Office personnel	1	Document: if needed	Done
Action 2.4	Training: Credential evaluators Additional: visit to 3 EU countries ENIC Offices; EC seminar on professional recognition	3	Document: presentations, mission reports of ENIC staff	Done
Action 2.5	Training: in house training for ENIC Office	1	Document: presentations	Done
<b>Cluster 3</b>	<b>Quality Assurance System</b>			
Action 3.1	Liaison with CARDS 2003			Can't be done
Action 3.2	Advice on documents to implement QA at HEIs	1	Document: Handbook on Quality Assurance	Done
Action 3.3	Advice on documents pertaining of internal and external QA	1	Document: Handbook on Quality Assurance	Done
Action 3.4	Guidelines on institutional planning	1	Document: Institutional Planning Other: training seminars	Done
Action 3.5	Develop systems for learning outcomes <sup>36</sup>	1	Document: Programme Design and Learning Outcomes	Done
Action 3.6	Training seminars for 3.5	8	8 training seminars	Done
Action 3.7	Training workshop on Quality Management	5	4 training workshops	Done <sup>37</sup>
<b>Cluster 4</b>	<b>Awareness Campaign</b>			

<sup>36</sup> This was developed in conjunction with Cluster 6 (integrated training seminars)

<sup>37</sup> The seminar at University of Zadar did not take place

Action 4.1.	Develop marketing strategy and information campaign		Information campaign: integrated seminars, NHEF	Done
Action 4.2	Refinement the journal ‘Mobile Student’			Deleted <sup>38</sup>
Action 4.3	Business and Marketing Plan			Deleted
Action 4.4	Development of editorial office			Deleted
Action 4.5	Edit and publish information materials	3	3 documents (EC, CoE, ESIB) in 15000 exampl.	Done <sup>39</sup>
Action 4.6	Seminar for students and media	2	2 seminars	Done
<b>Cluster 5</b>	<b>Management Information System</b>			
Action 5.1	Liaison with CARDS 2003			Can’t be done
Action 5.2	Technical specifications on general HEMIS	3	Document: technical specification, reports	Done
Action 5.3	Technical specifications on MIS (ENIC, Agency)	3	Document: technical specifications, reports	Done
<b>Cluster 6</b>	<b>ECTS</b>			
Action 6.1	Advice on codification mechanism on credential evaluation			Inserted into Cluster 2
Action 6.2	Develop transcript for DS			Deleted <sup>40</sup>
Action 6.3	Assistance for bilateral agreements	5	5 contacts, 1 agreement	Done
Action 6.4	Guidelines for ECTS	2	Translation and publication of ECTS Guidelines of EC in 5000 exampl.	Done <sup>41</sup>
Action 6.5 <sup>42</sup>	Study and background paper on NQF	1	Document: implementation study	Done
	Co-operation with other partners within the education sector and with stakeholders of HE for NQF		Document: memos of meetings	Done
<b>Additional Activities</b>				
Action 1	TA for military training		2 background study, presentatiostn	Done
Action 2	Workshops for MORH		5 workshops	Done
Action 3	Advice on OECD Country Study			Done

<sup>38</sup> Action deleted at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Steering Committee meeting in April 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Originally 1500 leaflet was planned; instead 3 main documents has been printed out in Croatian in 15000 exemplars

<sup>40</sup> It was not relevant when the project started. The universities could use the format defined by EC

<sup>41</sup> The project translated in an early phase the 2004 Guidelines, later translated and printed out the updated 2005 Guidelines in 5000 exemplars

<sup>42</sup> Added to the project activities in the Inception Phase

## **Outputs of the project operations for the whole period:**

### **Outputs of the project operations for the 1<sup>st</sup> phase:**

1. Provisional Guidance on Criteria for the Academic Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications (Hugh Glanville)
2. Provisional Notes on the Professional Recognition of Foreign Qualifications (Hugh Glanville)
3. Provisional Guidance on Procedures for the Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications (Hugh Glanville)
4. The Role of European Recognition Networks (ENIC and NARIC)
5. The case of Dr Jašnica Garašić
6. Briefing to the Ministers
7. European Commission: ECTS Guidelines 2004 (translated into Croatian by the project)
8. Description of ENIC/NARIC Offices in three EU States (Gábor Mészáros)
9. Power point presentations on recognition, NQF, and learning outcomes.

### **Outputs of the project operations for the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase:**

10. Power point presentations for the seminars.
11. Strategic planning in universities (background paper for the seminars) (in English and Croatian) (Hugh Glanville)
12. Autonomy and Accountability (background paper for the seminars) (in English and Croatian) (Peter Debreczeni)
13. 'The Classical Model of University Education and the Challenges of the 21st Century' (background paper for the seminars) (Peter Debreczeni)
14. SWOT Analyses for the universities (background paper for the seminars)

### **Outputs of the project operations for the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase:**

15. Power point presentations for the seminars.
16. Culture of Change (background paper for the seminars) (Inge Knudsen)
17. Mission Reports (Inge Knudsen, Patricia Georgieva, Carolyn Campbell, IJzebrand Werkman)

18. Some Remarks on the Role of the Agency for Science and Higher Education (AZVO) (Peter Debreczeni)
19. Propositions re AZVO (Hugh Glanville)
20. Mobility in Higher Education and Internationalization (Peter Debreczeni)

**Outputs of the project operations for the 4<sup>th</sup> phase:**

21. Power point presentations for the integrated seminars.
22. Power point presentations of the NUFFIC seminar
23. Mission Reports of the international STEs (Inge Knudsen, Patricia Georgieva, Carolyn Campbell, Colin Cina, Wendy Coates-Smith, Mona Dahms, George Kiloh)
24. Academic Administration as a Support to the Academic Process (George Kiloh)
25. Mission reports of the ENIC Office staff (3 reports: Maastricht Seminar, visit to NUFFIC and FINHEEC)

**Outputs of the project for the final phase:**

26. Mission report of the ENIC Office staff (visit to Hungarian ENIC/NARIC Office)
27. Quality Assurance in Higher Education: a Manual (Hugh Glanville)
28. Power point presentations for the AZVO staff
29. Power point presentations for MORH
30. Power point presentations for the Media Seminar
31. Power point presentations for the Student Seminar
32. Mission Report Ann Margaret Justice
33. Mission Report of Vilmos Sándor
34. Presentation of Vilmos Sándor
35. Transformation of the Hungarian Military Education (Miklós Szabó rector of ZMNE)
36. Regulated professions in Croatia (Sinisa Rodin)

37. Regulations for those who have lost etc (Sinisa Rodin)
38. Historical background of the legislation in Croatian HE (Davor Rajčić)
39. Laws and other legal texts regulating Croatian HE (Darko Bosnjak)
40. Certification and Recognition (Peter Debreczeni)